

Russia and the West: The New Normal?

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After the Cold War, the political and expert communities shared a firm belief that the system of international relations was in a state of transition. To this day, many books and debates begin with statements to the effect that this transition is not yet over. Moreover, we hear increasingly loud voices saying that the rules of the game have been eroded and reduced to chaos and that international processes are no longer amenable to governance. The same can be heard in Russia as well.

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A unique situation has indeed taken shape over the last quarter century, one that is qualitatively different from that of the preceding two centuries (until the late 1980s), when international relations had a rather clear structure based on stable coalitions. These were subject to frequent reshuffling, with each crisis or major conflict testing their durability. But the coalitions were rapidly reformed to reflect changing national interests and balance of power. In other words, the system quickly regained equilibrium.

In practical terms, this meant that each international player had to choose between allies and rivals and clearly define its interests. International relations remained in a state of anarchy and membership in coalitions was an effective means of survival in this “war of all against all”.

A totally different picture emerged from the collapse of the bipolar world order. On the one hand, there was a huge US-centered alliance. The author is referring to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the system of bilateral arrangements with a number of Asian countries. The Americans attempted to cement the favorable outcome of the Cold War for US interests by preserving and strengthening the institutions they had done so much to create.

On the other hand, however, many important and fast growing players sought to avoid alternative coalitions or putting forward an alternative conception of the world and international relations. China, India, Brazil, and Russia (until a certain point in time) were against taking resolute steps, positioning themselves as supporters of a multi-polar world and multi-vector policies. In fact, this signified that they wished to cooperate with everyone, while retaining wide latitude to maneuver. This strategy proved quite successful against the backdrop of economic globalization, making it possible to concentrate resources, develop, and at the same time, avoid sensitive issues and costly rivalries. They were also satisfied that the US, though posing as the center of the unipolar world, was not encroaching on their interests or did so to a limited extent. America’s unilateral moves evoked criticism but generally were swallowed. The European Union, which avoided assuming an independent security role, found a nice niche in the system as well.

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A unique situation has taken shape, where several major players at once are allowed a free hand. But how long will this state of affairs last? Free floaters tend to acquire political influence and become more ambitious in their foreign policy. Moreover, their conflict-free model is under increased pressure.

The conflict between Russia and the West is the first serious signal. Russia has clearly made its choice, openly challenging the post-bipolar world. We can long debate the reasons behind the 2014 crisis in Ukraine and the subsequent split. The West was excessively arrogant and carried away by its projects in the post-Soviet space. Russia was excessively intolerant of these plans. The European security system was out of balance. Russia had accumulated sufficient resources. Political leaders have ambitions. And finally, there were local antagonisms in Ukraine that triggered the crisis.

But there is another and much more important issue. Is the conflict between Russia and the West the beginning of a general process that shapes new and reforms old coalitions? If so, each player will have to take sides and face tough choices. Or is this fluctuation just a historical aberration, an irregularity that does not portend any tectonic shifts?

Judging by all appearances, Moscow shares the former point of view, proceeding from the assumption that US policy is destabilizing as is. This invites the use of a countervailing strategy based on preemption. The implicitly realist logic behind the fight for a place under the sun is ascribed to other major players. This means that sooner or later they will start a game of their own.

But it cannot be ruled out that this assessment is a mistake. If the post-bipolar world proves stable, Russia will be marginalized and unable to make a comeback without considerable political concessions. Ultimately, this stability will be determined by major world players' consistency in strategic decision-making and in addressing some long overdue dilemmas. It is the totality of these decisions that will influence the pendulum's vacillations. The dilemmas are as follows.

The China dilemma means the need to choose between joining the US-centric system and attempting to evolve its own regional and later global projects. Thus far this choice is at the level of economy and trade. Up till now, China has avoided politicizing it. But the issue is gradually becoming political. The US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) trade pact has marginalized China even though it is the key trade partner for almost all current TPP members. Problems are cropping up on the political level. Regional players are concerned with China's growing power and activity in the World Ocean. In turn, this generates dilemmas for America's allies in the region. Should they rely on US security guarantees or build up their own forces? This is clearly seen in Japan's policy as it gradually departs from its former security principles.

Of course, the China dilemma creates a strategic dilemma for the United States itself. What is to be done with China? Should it be perceived as a strategic challenge? If so, the capacity to contain China, both militarily and economically, should be built up. But if carried too far, the US is likely to sustain huge economic losses. Paradoxically, the world hegemon is seriously constrained as it plans its China policy. The unequivocal pro or con choice is fraught with huge risks. Either the US wakes up too late to the reality of a new military giant in the world, or it will miss out on the benefits of partnership with China. Beijing in this situation has the strategic initiative. But US and Chinese situational decisions in favor of containment can well trigger a series of responses. At some point, this spiral will be impossible to stop.

What does this mean for Russia? If Washington and Beijing retain stable points of contact, Russia will find itself in an extremely unfavorable situation. In fact, there are signs of this right now, with some Chinese banks showing reluctance to work with Russia for fear of losing their share on the US market. If, however,

disagreements grow, China will seek to expand and consolidate its alliances in the region. In this situation, Russia will be in a good negotiating position. It is a tall order for the United States to contain both Russia and China.

Second, there is the EU dilemma. It would seem that the conflict with Moscow removed the Euro-Atlantic solidarity issue from the agenda. But the Syrian crisis has demonstrated that NATO is unable to guarantee European security or protect Europe from terrorism and refugees. The EU itself has no effective security tools. If, however, individual countries take security into their own hands, this puts the EU's main principles and advantages in jeopardy. A case in point is provided by the frequent threats by several countries to close their borders.

In this environment, the EU will feel a growing need for security organizations of its own—at least a European border service and intelligence. These may promote further security integration. The EU is quite likely to achieve division of labor in this area with NATO and neutralize Washington's inevitable concern. But in this case, the EU will become more important politically and have an opportunity to conduct a more independent policy. Brexit will only help this process, since a country that traditionally sought to play an independent role and potentially could have blocked Brussels' far-reaching security plans will now be outside of the EU.

This course of developments does not mean an easy life for Russia. The EU has proved to be a tough and aggressive player in the economic and humanitarian spheres. Security is unlikely to be an exception. Moreover, the process itself is certain to be protracted. But sooner or later, this may lead to a revision of the European security concept itself.

The Turkish dilemma is also of importance for Russia in the European context. Will Turkey pursue European integration and its NATO role or try to become an independent regional power center focused on the Middle East? The latter option is fraught with considerable unpredictability and chaos, something that squares with Russia's conception of the emerging world order. But in this case, we will have to prepare for intense rivalry with Turkey or seek situational agreements.

Finally, the Indian dilemma is also important both for Russia and future world order. The question is how anxious India will feel in the face of China's growing might and how its military and political relations with the United States will proceed. So far, a "military alliance of two democracies" seems unlikely. But if it does materialize, it will be a significant event marking the final end of free floating by major powers. For Russia, this alliance is fraught with the loss of its large-scale ties with India, which today are increasingly confined to the purchase of military equipment.

The key Russia's problem is not so much what to choose in these dilemmas. It is much more important that the powers involved in each of these have time for decision-making. Russia, for its part, has made its first move and will have to operate in a totally different environment.

Elites and Society: Lessons of the NATO Summit in Warsaw

Following the end of the Cold War, the failsafe performance of Western institutions of democracy became conventional wisdom. It was believed for a quarter century that these institutions ensured the optimal model of cooperation between the elite and society.

They supposedly made the elite responsible and accountable to the society and ensured there would be feedback. Large social protests were considered peripheral—typical of the unstable South of Europe or the

post-communist East, which could be taught the rules of government over time. Democratic values were also traditionally linked with security issues. NATO positioned itself as an alliance of democratic nations. However, the dialogue between elites and society has been revealed to have shortcomings of late, and this is bound to affect international security.

Several simultaneous events overshadowed the NATO summit in Warsaw. The referendum in Britain caused serious concern among NATO leaders. This issue had to be urgently added to the agenda although formally Brexit had nothing to do with NATO. Another series of terrorist attacks in Europe made terrorism a daily threat in Europe. This was clear even before the summit but the new acts of terror showed that the threat was growing and words alone would not stop it. Finally, Ankara's NATO partners strongly criticized the attempted military coup in Turkey and the subsequent response by the Turkish government, thereby damaging the alliance's reputation, to put it mildly.

Meanwhile, judging by the Warsaw summit's final communiqué, NATO's key goal is to deter Russia. It devotes significant space to instability in the Middle East but judging by the character of the proposed decisions the alliance considers the Russian threat to be an obvious priority. The communiqué clearly states what specifically NATO finds lacking in Russia's conduct and what actions have been or will be taken to deter it. There is essentially no issue on which Russia is viewed as a potential partner. In fact, quite the opposite—Russia's role as the "spoiler" is repeated ad nauseum. For example, Russia is strongly criticized for its support of Syria's Bashar al-Assad Government, which NATO regards as essentially no better than ISIS.

The narrative about the terrorist threat is telling. The final communiqué discussed it at length, although it offered few concrete measures compared to suggestions on deterring Russia. In fact, the plan advocates just a few measures—supporting the global coalition (but without direct involvement in it), continuing the mission in Afghanistan (also fairly limited), partnership with Jordan, Egypt, and some other countries in the region, intelligence sharing and joint patrolling of sea borders.

The bottom line is that the communiqué reflects serious imbalance in how these two threats are perceived and the recommendations for action. In the case of Russia, there are many words and many actions whereas in the case of terrorism, there are many words and few actions.

Meanwhile, the reality is the reverse. Indeed, the Ukrainian crisis came as a serious shock to the European security system. A major conflict erupted in the center of Europe. It is no less of a problem for Russia than NATO. The failure of Moscow, Washington, and Brussels to prevent or settle the conflict at the early stages shows how divided they are. Mutual military deterrence will only aggravate rather than overcome the tensions.

Meanwhile, the threat of radical Islamism is growing every day. Importantly, its character is fundamentally different from that of a traditional interstate conflict. It is permeating the fabric of society both in the West and Russia. The power of this threat lies in its ideas, the willingness of people in Europe to sacrifice their lives for it. These ideas are reinforced by a powerful network organization NATO cannot cope with because it is designed for something else. NATO's major deterrence—nuclear and conventional forces and missile defense—is completely useless against terrorist ideology and networks. The alliance is helpless against them without fundamental structural changes.

What does this have to do with the dialogue between elites and society? It is directly related. The alliance exists owing to taxpayer money. One of the results of the Warsaw summit was the stated intention to increase military spending. Judging by everything, the biggest share will be spent to deter Russia even though the actual physical danger to people is coming from a completely different direction. Thus, the elites and society find

themselves on opposite sides of the barricades. The elites take resources from society but do not protect it consistently against urgent threats, instead spending them to chase phantoms. Moreover, this phantom struggle may have serious consequences. Russia-NATO mutual deterrence is fraught with escalation and conflict, which neither side needs and which will only strengthen radicals throughout the world.

The problem is that this disconnect between the elites and society is turning into a trend in the developed world. Those who voted for Brexit by no means opposed Britain's European future. Rather it was a vote against their own elite and its focus on global issues and abstract concepts that have little to do with the lives of ordinary people. The British political system should be given credit for making this referendum possible. The big question is what conclusions bureaucrats in London and Brussels will make and how such conflicts will be accommodated in other EU countries.

The political crisis in Turkey also revealed serious internal contradictions, albeit of a different character. Turkey is where NATO meets the Middle East. It is a critically important country for the alliance but surprisingly the summit's final communiqué devoted little attention to it. The attempted coup after the summit did serious damage to NATO, unlike the imagined Russian threat. The coup put NATO on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, Turkey is too important to seriously discuss kicking it out of NATO. Unlike many other members, Turkey is a real supplier of security rather than merely a consumer. Turkey has one of the largest and best-trained armies in Europe and the Middle East and a vital geographical location. It is important for Brussels both for deterring Russia and countering threats from the Middle East. That said, by ignoring the coup and the response measure, NATO is seriously undermining the consistency of its ideology. It is no longer obvious that the alliance is a community of democracies, in which rule of law and human rights reign supreme. Obviously, the societies of NATO countries are bound to notice this inconsistency.

Quantifying the gap between society's expectations and the elite's actions is a task for sociological studies. For the time being, we can only speak about such a gap as a hypothesis. However, if it proves right, NATO will have to overhaul itself eventually. The European security system requires a flexible institution designed to collectively counter threats of a new type—internal conflicts, acts of terror and, most important, the spread of radical Islamic doctrines (in cyber space as well).

Russia should be an inalienable part of this security system and one of the architects of the new institutions of Europe's collective defense. We have to admit that Russia's perception of threats mirrors NATO's. We are also preparing for yesterday's war, even though we too are a target for terrorists of all stripes. The immediate task for both sides is to avoid senseless escalation. Otherwise, dialogue between elites and society may collapse completely, with imminent domestic repercussions.

Russia and NATO: New Normal?

Due to the Ukraine crisis, relations between Russia and NATO are definitely at a nadir for the entire period since the end of the Cold War. Their deterioration has been abrupt, snowballing, and irreversible. As a matter of fact, Brussels regards Moscow as its top security challenge and at a minimum has made Russia an issue in the final communiqué of its Warsaw summit. In comparison with its other strategies including those for the Middle East and terrorism, the alliance has developed a most detailed Russia policy that comprises plans and specific measures to be taken in various situations. Moscow's official documents also define NATO and its possible expansion as a key challenge, while the modernization of the Russian forces is primarily designed to counter the potential of its member-states.

As of now, one might describe the condition of Russia-NATO relationship in medical terms as stably grave. The acute phase, which makes it impossible to predict outcomes and the depth of the crisis, appears over. But the crisis has so far failed to settle even one underlying problem. Moreover, things are getting worse, implying that further aggravation and the deeper escalation of the conflict are likely.

A situation like this would have hardly seemed strange 30 years ago, when the two blocs were entangled in an all-out ideological and military race. However, the world has radically changed. Both Russia and NATO are facing increasingly dangerous emerging challenges and threats. However, instead of focusing on current and future menaces, the two parties appear to be reproducing Cold War logic with a lose-lose outcome. In addition, the losses are far from calculable, as they may either remain within current limits or grow considerably if more crises emerge. To this end, quite important seem answers to the following questions: Why are Russia and NATO again becoming competitors? What are the drivers of the Russia-NATO relationship and the factors affecting its essence? What is to be done to make the relations more constructive?

Nevertheless, before attempting to provide answers, we should spell out our basic approach, i.e., the conception of an appropriate status of security in Europe, which boils down to the notion that neither Russia nor NATO needs an armed conflict with potentially dreadful consequences. Today, the two sides work to prevent the calamity through mutual containment, but in the long run, this standpoint provides for a no-win scenario. First, containment is fraught with competition growing into a full-scale conflict. Second, it requires huge resources that should be channeled towards handling more dangerous challenges, more specifically radical Islamism. Hence, we should find a formula that would rid both sides as minimum of the need to restrain their counterpart. As a maximum, the formula should revive chances for cooperation. This is an extremely intricate political goal that now might seem utopian, but shedding this goal would bring enormous costs and maintain high security risks.

The Russia-NATO Crisis Pathway

The abovementioned basic approach hardly seems innovative. Skeptics would certainly highlight there has recently been an attempt to supplant containment by cooperation. But this was a huge flop symbolized by the Ukraine crisis that is seen by many as the main catalyst of the aggravating European environment. Indeed, the Ukrainian mess has become a powerful trigger that has brought the Russia-NATO relationship into a different state. However, this conundrum seems rather a consequence than the cause. Disagreements have been accumulating at least since the late 1990s, gradually getting worse each year and producing the Ukrainian eruption and a spasmodic situation change. Hence, what to be done is to identify the defects of the bilateral relationship which have caused the current status of affairs.

The most obvious reason quite naturally lies in the eastward expansion of NATO. Russia has been definitely wary about the process since its very onset and has seen it as killing the idea of equal and indivisible security, a violation of the balance of forces, and a threat to Russia's security. NATO invariably countered the charges with the right of countries to be independent in joining alliances, especially as was specified by the Russia-NATO Founding Act in 1997. The discussion of the matter between Moscow and Brussels was increasingly similar to a deaf-and-dumb talk. Russia was sufficiently lenient about the entry of former Warsaw Pact and Baltic states but became visibly more irritated when it concerned encroaching on the post-Soviet space. Although the membership of Ukraine and other countries of the ex-USSR appeared extremely questionable and was seen by the alliance in the very faraway future, Russian diplomacy was working hard to stop or impede the process.

These actions of Moscow hardly mean a fanatic desire to do harm to the West but rather have frequently omitted rational grounds concealed in the same Founding Act.

As a matter of fact, along with recognizing the right of each state to independently define its security policy and membership in alliances, the two parties also specified at least two more basics for their relationship. First, they regarded the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as the key organization responsible for the creation of the new security system in Europe. Second, the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (the CFE Treaty) was seen as a major guarantor for maintaining the balance of forces, its implementation being a precondition for moving past containment. A successful adjustment of the CFE Treaty to the new environment (disintegration of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact), as well as strengthening of the OSCE would take the issue of self-determination of countries toward alliances off the table. With an effective arms control system and overall security organization at hand, Russia would not have worried about NATO expansion or even seen it as a threat.

But events took a different path. NATO countries failed to ratify the renovated CFE Treaty adopted by the OSCE Istanbul summit in 1999, while Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and other countries ratified the document. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania flatly refused to sign the document, which means that after their joining NATO they formed an uncontrollable grey zone along Russian borders. The OSCE has been gradually losing its function in security matters, whereas NATO has been de facto growing into the key organization on European security. As a result, it was quite natural for Moscow to perceive the expansion of the alliance as a problem, this sentiment rising in step with the erosion of the CFE Treaty dialogue.

Quite significant for the failure of Russia-NATO relations was the overall deterioration of the strategic stability environment. The issue had traditionally been a Moscow-Washington bilateral affair, boiling down to nuclear missiles. Of course, Russia was also unhappy about the US's withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, the subsequent discussion of the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system in Europe and the construction of certain elements in the Old World. Russian proposals on a joint BMD arrangement were shown a cold-shoulder, although the issue was discussed by diplomats and military experts on both sides. There was an achievement, i.e., the new Strategic Arms Reduction (START) Treaty of 2010, but the ongoing deployment of the BMD in Europe remained a major Russian concern specified by the START Treaty preamble. Besides, while prior to the Ukraine crisis the West insisted that the BMD was not directed against Russia, during the Ukraine events, more voices emerged in favor of using the BMD for containing Russia, only fueling Moscow's long-standing suspicions. Of course, the faulty strategic stability dialogue between Russia and the United States also damaged Russia-NATO relations.

Western capitals were also accumulating grudges about Moscow's mounting activities in the security area, with the new NATO members from East Europe concerned about the possible military rise of Russia. The situation was exacerbated by anti-Russian sentiments in these countries, their morbidity about the communist past that was growing into a black legend and turning Russia into a significant alien. The fears were largely exaggerated, and in practice, the East Europeans were quite reluctant about increasing their defense spending. In all fairness, Russia was also overstating the NATO military threat, especially in public discussions and mass media. In fact, countering NATO has turned into a profitable product that guarantees more political capital and support from large societal segments. Similar to the East European post-communist countries, Russia was also in the midst of a political transition with all relevant consequences for the public conscience. The Russians felt bad about the collapse of the Soviet Union, so public sentiments also provided an important negative factor.

Finally, there was the instability of several post-Soviet regimes and a series of color revolutions. Moscow perceived the initial color revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine of 2003 and 2004 without excessive antagonism. But the subsequent anti-Russian policies of both states substantially chilled the attitude of Moscow that began perceiving the color revolutions as anti-Russian ploys of the West and elements of hybrid war. By the time of the 2013 maidan, Moscow was firmly associating the color revolutions with the hand of the West and the desire to oust Russia from the post-Soviet space with grim consequences for its security.

Actually, Moscow's viewpoint does not appear fully convincing since the maidan of 2013 was largely triggered by intra-Ukrainian causes and the weakness of the Ukrainian state. However, neither Russia nor the United States nor the EU has been able to resolve the crisis jointly despite the presence of relevant preconditions. Russia's extremely abrupt follow-up steps—reunification with Crimea and support for the East Ukrainian rebels—were taken on the breeding ground of trust undermined during the past 20 years and the institutional base of European security. The Ukraine crisis is a chain of erroneous decisions, faulty assessments, and exaggerated fears on both sides. In the presence of effective institutions, it could have turned into just an odd fluctuation. But in the absence of such institutions, this fluctuation has brought fundamental changes to the European continent.

Drivers of Russia-NATO Relations

Regrettably, containment is the key element of Russia-NATO relations of today. In fact, what we can see is the new normal that appears fairly difficult to get rid of. However, this trend is hardly the most dangerous one. Things can go much worse if the new normal undergoes another crisis with the worsening of the relationship. In order to avoid this scenario, the sides should soberly evaluate the factors (governing parameters) of the Russia-NATO interplay, singling out major strategic factors and minor tactical factors. The latter seem important since it then could serve as a kind of the Ukraine situation and provoke distress in the new normal, triggering yet another crisis.

The strategic factors seem as follows:

(1)The condition of threats beyond the Russia-NATO relationship. There is every ground to believe that the overwhelming instability in the Middle East may engulf other regions and have long-term effects both on Russia and NATO countries including the USA. Particularly vulnerable are those countries in the Mediterranean region, i.e., Turkey, Greece, Italy, and France. Russia's weak point is the possible destabilization in the Caucasus and risks in Central Asia. The role of NATO in settling Syria and other problems is still secondary, with the United States remaining the key actor. But if Russia and the USA achieve progress in handling Syria and engage in building a new Middle Eastern security system, the Russia-NATO milieu may improve. Meanwhile, NATO perceives the activities of Russia and Syria against radical Islamists with suspicion rather than with support.

(2)The state of NATO and its ability to counter immediate threats to Europe. The alliance is able to unquestionably contain Russia but is unfit to repel such challenges as refugees, Islamist terrorism, or disintegration of states in the European periphery. Hence, the European taxpayer is supporting the containment of Russia, while threats are mounting from the opposite side. The same goes for the Russian taxpayer who also provides for containment of NATO. Sooner or later, this inconsistency will strike. The future of NATO hinges on its ability to transform into a more flexible alliance adjusted to counter emerging threats. To this end, note the fresh EU Global Strategy that outwardly outlines the strengthening of the EU's role in security issues

despite statements that NATO remains a key partner in this field. The successful construction of the EU security structures will visibly affect NATO, with the domestic stability of member countries playing a major role for the entire bloc. The recent coup attempt in Turkey, which almost brought about a civil war, is seen in Brussels as something momentous since the alliance wants to be seen as a community of democratic states.

(3) The condition of Russia's economy and its policies. The power and stability of the Russian state after the breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) had been for a long time underestimated by the West. However, today, it seems hardly reasonable to overstate Russian potential. Moscow faces numerous unsolved problems pertaining to economic modernization and the development of technologies and human potential, which have a direct impact on Russia's political clout. Thirty years ago economic troubles virtually made the Soviet Union review its attitudes to the West. No doubt, this factor will work now with the account of mistakes made the late 1980s.

Here are the key tactical factors:

(1) Peace process in Donbas, as well as the stability of the Ukrainian state and the entire post-Soviet space. The Ukraine situation remains wobbly. The collapse of the Minsk process, resumption of fighting in Donbas, and expansion of instability beyond its borders would inevitably worsen the Russia-NATO relationship. The alliance would hardly interfere militarily but any aggravation of the crisis would badly affect European security.

(2) Incidents at sea and in airspace, especially in the Baltic and Black Sea regions. Dangerous maneuvering of Russian and NATO ships and aircraft is fraught with the risk of accidental collisions that might cause an unwelcome escalation and a local conflict. The importance of this factor is accentuated by painful and excessive response to such incidents on the part of regional NATO and neutral countries.

(3) The host of black swans in Europe's periphery, such as the bombings of the UN convoy in Syria or the Syrian government contingents by the US-led coalition that almost torpedoed Russia-US agreements on Syria settlement reached with enormous efforts from both sides.

What to Do?

The perception of the drivers in the Russia-NATO relations, as well as the risks of deeper contradictions prompts a number of measures to be taken. As a minimum, these should minimize the damage inflicted by the current paradigm, and as a maximum, channel them into a more constructive mode.

(1) Preservation and advancement of the Russia-NATO Council that should remain a key tool for communication between Russian and NATO leaders. The link should be permanent and must prevent unwelcome consequences of the marine and airspace incidents, as well as other unintentional and poorly controllable factors. Besides, the mechanism should be used for a strategic dialogue on emerging challenges and threats.

(2) Resumption of talks on conventional forces in Europe bearing in mind that its closure was a key reason for the current conundrum. At the same time, one should be aware that the re-launch cannot mechanically copy the CFE Treaty due to the changed technological and political environment.

(3) Preservation of the treaty on intermediate and shorter-range missiles as a foundation for nuclear missile security. The issue has traditionally been a Russian-American affair but it directly affects the security of NATO European members that would be affected by its erosion.

(4) A pause in NATO expansion, which implies not only Ukraine and Georgia, about whose membership the alliance is skeptical, but also neutral Sweden and Finland, both being deeply entrenched NATO partners. However, their formal entry would affect their stand vis-à-vis Russia and divest them of the honest broker status in relations between Russia and NATO. In its turn, Moscow should lift the concerns of these countries about marine and airspace incidents in the Baltic.

(5) Mutual restraint in building up military contingents in the areas of Russia-NATO geographic contacts.

(6) Resume cooperation in Afghanistan taking into account the previous positive interaction.

(7) Implementation of the Minsk accords. Although NATO is not an institutional party in the Donbas peace process, the Ukraine crisis directly affects its dialogue with Russia. Hence, what we need is the coordinated action of Russia, France, Germany, and Ukraine within the Normandy group, as well as the United States as NATO's key actor for peace in Eastern Ukraine.

All these measures should be eclipsed by the long-term vision of the European security, with the sides resuming talks on the strategic framework of the relationship and adjusting the Helsinki principles to the emerging challenges through strengthening the OSCE as the institution for pan-European security.

Russia and NATO in the Baltic

The Baltic of today is a most intricate area for Russia-NATO interaction. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, all of them being members of the alliance, serve as its frontier zone in direct contact with its Eastern neighbor. Even before the Ukraine crisis, these countries had been skeptical about security cooperation with Russia. Moscow also had some questions and disliked many things, among them Poland's intention to deploy elements of the American BMD system; the Polish, Estonian, and Lithuanian boycott of the adopted CFE Treaty; their interpretation of the Soviet past, etc. At the same time, all these issues had never caused any sort of a serious crisis in Russia-NATO relations and had no systemic impact that would make matters worse. Moscow was quite serene about their joining the alliance in 1999 and 2004, although later it became increasingly wary about the bloc's further expansion, as Russian diplomacy worked hard to hamper the process.

The Ukraine events have drawn the Russia-NATO relationship into a deep systemic crisis, with Moscow seen by Brussels as the key security challenge, which implies that its containment has become an inherent component in their bilateral activities. The Russian view is symmetric, the only difference being in the fact that NATO and prospects for its expansion had been perceived as a challenge long before the Ukraine predicament. Moscow has regarded its Ukraine policy after March 2014 as a result of lengthy and gradual erosion of relations.

Currently, Russia, and NATO have set their mutual attitudes at the lowest points since the Cold War. Reciprocal rejection seems to be the new normal. However, this stability is superficial, since it conceals imbalances and escalation risks. Escalation may be swift and snowballing, even at a catastrophic scale. Incidents at sea and in the airspace, the defrosting of the Donbas conflict or growing antagonism over Syria may ignite aggravations that risk open local confrontation. Today, such a scenario seems unlikely, but both NATO and Russian top brass are quite serious about such possibility.

To this end, the Baltic appears to be a weak link, as it may become a theater for more, although unintentional, provocations. On the other hand, the area seems quite suitable for decreasing risks and a gradual normalization of relations. A breakthrough in this convoluted region could push the entire relationship toward a brighter future. This duality gives rise to several fundamental questions. In what way does Russia-NATO

relationship determine the Baltic security? What factors define the dynamics of relations in the regional security realm? What are the probable scenarios? What could be done to reduce the risk of disagreements escalating into an open conflict?

Of course, these questions might unveil the strategic prospects for the Russia-NATO relationship, i.e., specific intentions and a way to reconcile the interests and goals in the context of a changing environment in Europe and its periphery. Also, important are the relations of Russia and NATO with the still neutral Sweden and Finland. Their rapprochement with the alliance seems inevitable and irreversible, which may aggravate their relations with Russia.

Russia-NATO: The Security Dilemma in the Relationship System

The security dilemma appears to offer the best way to describe the Russia-NATO relationship after 2014. The dilemma contains several key features that often come up asymmetrically, emerging in the varying dimensions in political and the official discourse, and materializing with different intensities.

First of all, the security dilemma suggests a high degree of uncertainty, including the goals, the potentials, and determination of the parties to use available assets. NATO's perception appears more accentuated, to a large extent because of the suddenness of Ukraine developments. Brussels seems to have been taken unawares. As a matter of fact, the 2013 NATO Secretary General report (published in January 2014) describes Russia exclusively as a partner on Afghanistan, terrorism, and other areas. But six months later, at the Wales summit, NATO presented an opposite reality, with European security after a long period becoming issue number one and Russia being perceived as a threat to the European order. Other surprises for NATO include the Syria operation, the swift collapse, and even swifter restoration of the Russia-Turkey relations, as well as a series of smaller episodes and incidents. Brussels was taken by surprise by Moscow's determination and depth in employing force and political methods. Some of Russia's steps were absolutely unprecedented during the post-Cold War period, among them military operations far from its territory, reunification with USSR territories, etc.

In a nutshell, Russia has been firmly labeled as a dangerous and unpredictable actor. While previously Moscow was reactive and stayed in the wake of the West (Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq), after 2014, it turned the tables to place NATO in a qualitatively novel environment.

The Russian vision was somewhat different, with the expansion of NATO seen as its long-term and irreversible endeavor that aggravated the already substantial violation of the balance in NATO's favor. The problem remained unsolved after the collapse of the adapted CFE Treaty, with the blame put on NATO partners, since none of them has so far ratified the new treaty. The situation was exacerbated by strategic stability impairment through the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and deployment of the BMD infrastructure in Poland and the Czech Republic. In addition, Kremlin made its Western partners partially responsible for the color revolutions in the post-Soviet space, regarding it nearly as a form of the hybrid war. Beginning from the mid-2000s, Moscow was coming to the idea that Western leaders were sure about Russia's decay and the need to softly oust it from European politics, preserving the façade of friendship and partnership in areas where cooperation was helpful for NATO. Moscow perceived the 2013-2014 maiden as a provocation, if not launched then tacitly supported by the West. Russia must have overestimated the role of the West in the Ukraine revolution set off by a complex of intra-Ukrainian processes, but European leaders have definitely underestimated the need for an equal dialogue with Russia, pushing Moscow to the extremes when its attitude was again ignored.

The Ukraine crisis has delivered a hard blow to practically all mechanisms of Russia's cooperation with NATO, EU, and the USA, and exacerbated Europe's security dilemma. As a result, even imperfect communication mechanisms mitigate the security dilemma, alleviating disagreements and escalation risks. Relations have been frozen or suspended in practically all areas, even those unrelated to Ukraine, among them not only and not so much as the streamlined partnership on Afghanistan and countering drug traffic and terrorism. Much more important was the emerging pressure on the basic regimes in the nuclear realm. The BMD dialogue has been deadlocked, with Moscow perceiving the deployment of its components in Romania as a direct challenge. Russia's withdrawal from the weapon-grade plutonium agreement has become a symbolic gesture to indicate an end to cooperation with the United States in nuclear weapons control. The sides are building mutual grudges over short- and medium-range missiles. Although a Russian-American issue, it also directly affects European security. Even cooperation on Syria collapsed despite the existence of the Islamic radicalism threat that seemed common to Russia, the USA, and its NATO allies.

Escalation of the arms race and the potential for containment are the security dilemma basic components. Both Russia and NATO proceed from the notion that they are building up their defensive rather than offensive potential. In an almost absolute absence of trust, these arguments hardly make both Moscow and Brussels happy. The West insists that in 2000-2015, Russia tripled its defense spending (according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SIPRI], USD 28,838 to USD 91,081 in 2014 dollars). Moscow fairly reasonably replies that the rise is connected with military reform and improvement of the forces after the collapse of the 1990s, and that the rise is hardly comparable with the US military build-up scale. A comparison with NATO figures will make the gap even more visible.

The security dilemma is aggravated by NATO's and Russian military activities, at least reflections that the sides regard each other as a priority threat and are taking appropriate measures. Nonstop exercises, the deployment of additional contingents (as of now, insignificant in number), and incidents in airspace and at sea hardly make the borders more tranquil.

Finally, there is the so-called spiral of fear, an integral feature of the security dilemma. To this end, the media of both sides acquire much importance, which on the tip from establishments boost the enemy image and iteratively exaggerate even routine military activities. The information war mechanisms have a different nature and structure but work really hard on both sides. Politicians and the top brass have become hostage to the simulacrum and phantom threats generated by mass media.

The Security Dilemma in the Baltic

The systemic changes in the Russia-NATO relationship have given the Baltic security a new color. While previously the skepticism of the Baltic alliance members about interactions with Russia could be attributed mostly to domestic goals (Russia as the "significant other" and a reference point for building one's identity), the Ukraine crisis has made Brussels take their concerns very seriously. Consequently, Moscow responded badly by driving the security dilemma to a next level. After the Ukraine crisis, the Baltic turned into a most vulnerable point for escalation due to a number of factors that correlate with the common Russia-NATO framework after the Ukraine crisis.

Number one factor is the overall uncertainty about Russia's further intentions. Brussels and other Western capitals are serious about scenarios of hybrid and open military actions against Baltic States. Their argumentation is often far-fetched and inconsequential, bringing Moscow to a loss. The craziest include

restoring historic justice by capturing Narva (a sort of repeat of Crimea) or landing on the Gotland Island, with the Swedes already preparing to repel this aggression. However, due to the misunderstanding of Russia's general strategy or its perception as intentionally anti-Western, even these bizarre grounds have drawn a wide response, especially as Russia has been long perceiving NATO's actions there as potentially hostile. At the same time, the Baltic states of NATO are well known as lobbyists for containing Moscow. No wonder, the post-communist countries of the region demand from the alliance a demonstration of readiness for their defense if things get worse. No wonder, real steps to contain Russia have been made in the Baltic. This uncertainty is intensified by differences in the institutional structure of Russia and NATO, as the former is a sovereign state and the latter—an international institution, which generates differences in the promptness in taking decisions and in institutional inertia.

Factor number two relates to the strategic decisions of the two sides for building up their regional potential. Quantity-wise, they should not be exaggerated, as the three NATO battalions can hardly change the regional balance of forces. The same goes for deploying the Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad area, which are normally used to scare the EU public. In essence, these moves are minimalist and symbolic. However, their qualitative role is high. NATO has taken concrete steps to contain a possible threat and displayed the bloc-wide solidarity. The battalions are multinational, so any action against them would mean aggression against the entire alliance. For its part, Russia also demonstrates a determination to counter both NATO reinforcements and possible BMD threats. Due to a high degree of uncertainty, even such small steps may have disproportionately high repercussions, which are of course specific to various airspace incidents. Moscow is irritated by American reconnaissance flights along Russian borders, some of them with shut down transponders. The interception of such flights traditionally gives rise to biased criticism in the West. But in some cases, Western grudges are quite grounded, as it this relates to Russian military aircraft flying over NATO ships or airliners.

Factor number three concerns regional geography, primarily direct border contacts between Russia and NATO members. Of particular, significance is the spatial compactness, which raises the probability of unintentional air incidents. And of course, it concerns the detachedness of the Russian territory, as Kaliningrad Oblast is isolated from the rest of Russia and surrounded by NATO members. Naturally, Moscow is worried. Until now, Moscow showed restraint about the militarization of Kaliningrad but under the current conditions a buildup is very likely. Note that the sides tend to suspect each other of possible unexpected military activities around Kaliningrad.

Factor number four is the presence of two neutral states that could act as game changers. Theoretically, the neutrality of Sweden and Finland could promote stabilization of the region, with Helsinki working as a mediator between Moscow and Brussels basing on its experience and prestige. But in practice, both tend towards a close partnership with NATO. At the extreme, they have discussed joining the bloc, with the trend gaining ground at the backdrop of the Ukraine crisis. In the current environment, the rapprochement of Sweden and Finland with NATO appears irreversible. The question is how far it will go and how Moscow will respond. Either way, these developments should deepen the regional security dilemma, with the least evil outcome being their close partnership with NATO in the absence of formal membership.

Factor number five lies in the lack of progress in settling the Ukraine problem and the aggravation of other differences. The Ukraine controversy provides the long-term negative grounds within the Russia-NATO relationship, with things likely to get worse. Differences with the USA on Syria and other matters also solidify the downbeat background for the Baltic. In a nutshell, there seems to be a systemic paradox, with the cause of

the Baltic trouble lying beyond the region that at the same time is gathering a potential for power play.

The Baltic Scenarios

To this end, the Baltic scenarios may take the following routes:

Scenario 1: Sustained containment with the security dilemma preserved. The sides rely on mutual containment and minimal dialogue. Marine and airspace incidents are highlighted by the media but fail to cause military escalation even if accidents occur. The buildup of potential is symbolic, as the sides prefer to save their resources. The negative backdrop in Russia-NATO relations holds, among other things due to the lack of progress over Donbas. The sides use containment for domestic and political mobilization. The Post-communist NATO states win, with the political clout rising and the real military threat low. Finland and Sweden drift toward NATO but stay out. As before, Russia does not make the region a priority for military construction.

Scenario 2: Inconsistent containment. The security dilemma intensifies, with the external environment deteriorating: The Minsk process is deadlocked and military action in Donbas resumes. Antagonism on Syria grows. A series of incidents at sea and in the airspace gives rise to drastic weapons buildup to be taken up by the other side. Russia prioritizes the region for military concentration. Finland and Sweden accelerate rapprochement with NATO. The region becomes an arena for a local political crisis, although communication channels remain.

Scenario 3: Regional conflict. One of the sides ups the ante in order to receive concessions from the opponent. One of them regards the move as a way to solve other problems. Either side is able to take this line of action. The region plunges into a conflict situation. However, the opposing side does not yield and openly counteracts to generate a brief conflict that ends in a draw. The relations rise to a new level of hostility, with the dialogue discontinued. The situation balances on the verge of a massive Russia-NATO conflict. Finland and Sweden join the alliance and offer unconditional military support. The scenario is also likely if one of the sides loses the local conflict.

Scenario 4: The security dilemma shrinks. The set of common or specific challenges make mutual containment hurtful for both sides that switch to confidence-building measures. The Donbas conflict remains but acquires a positive dynamic. Russia and the United States selectively cooperate in the Middle East. Mistrust still exists, with the uncertainty level gradually going down.

Scenario 5: An overhaul of relations is initiated by a side to improve the situation. Such steps are likely to be related to the role of a concrete political leader or leaders, which are to overcome the resistance of the containment-oriented institutions. We see a drastic revision of Russia's relations with NATO and the EU, as well as a compromise on the Donbas settlement. The sides launch a review of the Founding Act, work to strengthen the OSCE as the Europe-wide security institution, and discuss conventional armaments control. NATO is reformatted to counter new challenges.

Of course, these scenarios are schematic while the political reality is much more complicated. At the same time, they show possible vectors in the development of the situation and make one ponder about the basic goals of Russia and NATO in their policies toward each other.

Russia and NATO: Choosing a Future

The inertia or projection of today into the future is an intrinsic feature of the human mind. We tend to believe that situations will develop in steps and in a linear mode. The author is sure that most people would find Scenarios 4 and 5 highly unlikely. Scenarios 2 and 3 seem suitable for the current state of affairs but are also

unlikely because of the high price for both sides. Most probable seems Scenario 1 which allows for some low-cost muscle flexing.

The problem is that linear scenarios shed linearity much more frequently than we expect, which means that sustainable containment may as well bring about surprises and boil down to a deep crisis unmanageable by the sides. The loss of control over Russia-NATO relations in the Baltic and other areas is a real threat.

On the other hand, any initiatives on the partial or complete amendment of the logic of the relationship (Scenarios 4 and 5) will seem marginal both in Russia and in the West. At that, the perestroika and new political thinking experiences of the late 1980s would retard rather than speed up changes for the better. In the long run, both Russia and the West are deeply frustrated with the outcomes of the Cold War. However, history shows that any qualitative change begins with initiatives launched by the minority side which is normally better knit, coherent, and determined vis-à-vis the majority. It is the minority that makes up the centerpiece of the discussion and often achieves qualitative changes. In contrast to the idealistic belief in the future of the 1980s, the sides will have to display an utmost pragmatism and expect disappointment any moment. Diplomats and statesmen of today are facing problems much more convoluted than in those days because they will have to simultaneously seek solutions for the 2014 crisis and for the deep-rooted causes emanating from the Cold War outcomes. At that, their activities would be legitimate only if their parties manage to evade losses, save face and bring results to both sides, a most complicated and nontrivial task.

The New Normal in EU Global Strategy

The “new normal” in EU-Russia relations has been a fixture in political and expert debates throughout the last two years. Dramatic political differences sparked off by the Ukrainian crisis made it impossible for both sides to continue being partners as before. The feeling that business as usual was no longer on the agenda dominated analytical publications, minutes of meetings, and political addresses. But for a long time, neither Russia nor the EU had a clear vision of a new pattern for relations. Today, this pattern is becoming more apparent, at least in the EU Global Strategy, the new foreign and defense policy doctrine.

To delineate the contours of the new relationship with Russia, we must understand what the Strategy is all about. Russia is not the focus of attention. The key factor seems to be its overall logic which, in turn, informs the approach to relations with Russia.

The most important element in the Strategy is reinforcing the EU’s independent security role and making the EU a major regional and global political player. The document represents an attempt to remove the long-standing imbalance between the EU’s economic power and its international political capabilities. Until quite recently, it was hardly possible to portray the EU as an independent political force, despite the long-standing debate over formulating a common security policy. It was focused on promoting its soft power and economic influence. But the EU played a peripheral role in international security issues, remaining in the shadow of the US and NATO. The new Strategy unequivocally reflects Brussels’ resolve to boost its political independence, while retaining close ties with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Interestingly, the document regards security as an integrated whole, including both purely military threats and numerous humanitarian and economic challenges (energy, migration, failing states in neighboring countries and regions, etc.). Accordingly, the EU bills itself as a force that must independently respond to these challenges and be capable of the widest possible spectrum of actions from classical containment to averting internal crises in neighboring countries. Admittedly, this interpretation is quite justified. In effect, the Strategy

addresses security gaps not bridged in full by NATO or the United States. For example, NATO is unlikely to respond effectively to migration challenges or to stop the influx of migrants. It is not designed to deal with failing states in unstable countries, but this is what causes humanitarian problems. Even in the Ukrainian crisis, Brussels' capacity to act and autonomy from Washington were in question.

Of course, we should not overestimate the EU's likely drift from NATO and the United States. But if this Strategy is implemented, we will inevitably see a reformatting of NATO and Transatlantic relations. Sooner or later, the "US and the rest" arrangement will be the "US-EU and the rest", and this will impact NATO. This is unlikely to be formalized in law but may well become political reality.

The quest for greater independence will be achieved in at least three ways: first, developing Europe's own industrial and technological infrastructure to provide the military with the necessary equipment; second, evolving common Security institutions (such as an EU intelligence service); and third, joint efforts, coordinated by Brussels, to deal with the entire spectrum of security issues.

The three ways will inevitably erode the role of individual EU countries. But in exchange, they should have a more efficient security system that will cut costs through division of labor, cooperation, and synergy. Politically, this arrangement will please numerous small countries reluctant to increase defense spending. But it may also undermine the political role of major players like France, Germany, and Italy.

In the economic sphere, however, the EU would welcome greater convergence with the North American economies and closer cooperation with ASEAN and the bigger economies of the Asia-Pacific region. Here the EU faces challenges of economic development, trade, and cooperation with other integration alliances (save for the Eurasian Economic Union)—an area where it traditionally has been strong.

Regarding relations with Russia, the Strategy reflects Mogherini's five points. Russia is portrayed as a source of numerous security threats to the EU. Besides the conflict in Ukraine, there is a threat of hybrid warfare, which Moscow has been accused of waging in the last two years. But the Strategy does not define the amorphous concept of hybrid warfare, and therefore quite logically avoids suggesting any countermeasures. Energy is also discussed in the context of security, where the "Russian threat" looms large as well. An important aspect here is enhancing the role of the EU and the role of its legislation in the energy sphere. Accordingly, individual EU countries will see a decline in their status. But the EU will hardly be able to sever all cooperation with Russia, for which reason the Strategy, like the five points, implies cooperation on a limited number of issues.

What Does all This Mean for Russia? And How Will the "New Normal" Work?

First, the Strategy is aimed at making the EU the key element of the European security system. Currently, Russia is a threat from this system's perspective, a country that is alien to it. Even if the existing disputes are resolved and the parties resume their partnership, Russia's role will at best be marginal. It is losing its partner status in the new European security architecture and has just two options—either play a marginal role or force others to heed its views. The latter would hardly be in the interests of Russia or the EU.

Second, the Strategy fails to solve the fundamental contradictions that led to the Ukrainian crisis. At the very least, it limits opportunities for a versatile policy, as it forces individual countries to choose between the EU and Russia. This will complicate Russia's relations with countries that will attempt to derive benefits from cooperation with both Russia and the EU. The logic of containment rather than dialogue will be used to prevent crises like the Ukrainian disaster.

Third, Russia's bilateral relations with individual EU countries, even the bigger ones, will deteriorate, and it will have to elaborate a separate policy for security cooperation with the EU if the Strategy is ultimately implemented.

Fourth, the prospects for EU-EAEU cooperation are unclear, even though this is one of the few mechanisms for promoting relations with Russia in a constructive way. If this mechanism fails to start working, it will be more difficult for Russia and its partners to implement the idea of Greater Eurasia.

Fifth, cooperation on issues where EU and Russia have overlapping interests will be tactical rather than conceptual and strategic. This means greater difficulty in making positive cooperation experiences into something systemic.

As it is only natural, much depends on how EU itself succeeds in achieving its plans. There are many stumbling blocks on the way, while threats beyond relations with Russia may prove much more serious, making it more expedient to abandon containment in favor of cooperation.

EU-Russia: Selective Engagement and Strategic Security Dialogue

Neither Brussels nor Moscow seems to have a clear understanding of what issues need to be included into the list of partnership destinations.

The new Global EU Strategy is a landmark event. It formalizes an attempt to transform the European Union into an independent center of world politics and further growth of its responsibility in international security matters. In case of its successful implementation, the EU will attain a greater potential and political weight. The EU will become a new qualitative political player, cooperating closely with NATO and solving a wide range of security issues—from conventional deterrence to new challenges and threats. They include migration, cyber security, energy, sustainability of states in transition, etc. The EU's role in the formation of a new security system in Europe will increase.

Russia in this new strategy is an opponent to the European Union on a number of fundamental issues. Possible cooperation is limited to a small number of topics. Russia is considered as an alien element in the European security system, a troublemaker, which infringes the order that emerged after the Cold War. Deterrence is the key element of policy toward Russia. Unfortunately, Russia itself keeps a reserved attitude towards the EU.

Certainly, both the EU and Russia leave some gaps for partnership (so-called selective engagement). The concept of selective engagement is still very amorphous. Neither Brussels nor Moscow seems to have a clear understanding of what issues need to be included into the list of partnership destinations. And even if such a list is drawn up and functions on both sides, the selective tactical cooperation does not guarantee the cumulative result. There is no answer to the questions—what exactly we want? Where and how do we go? In other words, the selective engagement does not have the strategic vision. This vision will be substituted by mutual deterrence and the perception of each other as a strategic threat.

Such situation is detrimental for both Russia and the EU. Firstly, it can hardly solve all the problems that caused the current situation in relations between Moscow and Brussels. Secondly, the divided Europe will undermine our efforts to counter the growing number of threats and challenges. Meanwhile, for Russia, the majority of challenges defined in the Global Strategy of the EU, are as important as for the European Union. Violation of the European order harms Russia. The country has long been a target of radical Islamists. Russia is also vulnerable in the digital environment, as vulnerable are its neighbors in the West and in the East. Influx of

refugees and migrants is everyday experience for Russia, although now with less intensity than in Western Europe. Finally, Russia is losing from the statesmanship crises in the neighboring countries and regions.

What to do in this situation? First of all, it is necessary to maintain lines of partnership both parties are interested in. It is necessary to avoid the selective engagement shrinkage to purely nominal and secondary issues. On the contrary, the list of common topics for selective engagement should grow, as well as the depth of their elaboration. The overall objective is to turn the selective engagement into a greater engagement, where the cooperation on a narrow list of issues will become a self-sustaining system.

However, in an increasing political role of the EU, this approach will be clearly inadequate, even in case of success. It is necessary to start a strategic dialogue on the future of the European security, understood in a broadest sense. And also, we need a dialogue on the EU and Russia's place in this system, their interactions in its creation and development process.

Such strategic dialogue will be extremely difficult in the current conditions. But if Russia and the EU are able to achieve results in this direction, this will consolidate the European Union's role as a new center of international relations with the ability to take responsibility for the security issues. Russia also will be able to assume the role of a partner in the creation of a new security system, avoiding the marginalization and its role as the common enemy.

In the beginning the agenda of the strategic dialogue on security issues between the EU and Russia could include the following questions:

The first is overall assessment of existing threats and challenges, as well as the principles on which the European security should be based. The Helsinki Final Act remains relevant. But it appeared in fundamentally different conditions. It was a response to the threat of a large-scale conflict in Europe between the two military blocs. The current situation is absolutely different. Threats and security issues became much more complex. So the Helsinki principles should be adapted to new realities. They need to be converted into a modern strategic document, which would be perceived by all the forces in Europe as a prescription for actions and not as a rhetorical exercise. Obviously, the discussion of the Helsinki principles will require a new debate on the OSCE reform. The very fact of the EU new political role will inevitably require such a reform. The United States and other interested parties should be partners in such dialogue.

The second is the dialogue on new approaches to the conventional arms control. This idea was expressed in a recent article by German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and requires urgent attention, despite the restrained attitude both in Moscow and in several European capitals. The collapse of the adapted CFE Treaty has undermined fundamental principles of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act. Without a transparent regime of the conventional arms control, the NATO's eastward expansion inevitably caused contradictions with Russia. The problem has not been solved so far. Careful analysis of mistakes, parameters of the future regime, and steps for its development are required. The EU could be a significant partner in the discussion over the new regime. And the success of the initiative would strengthen the new role of the EU and would remove security dilemma in its relations with Russia. This would create the preconditions for systemic solutions of the Ukrainian crisis beyond Minsk agreements.

The third is creation of a coordinated system to counter radical Islamism and terrorism. Today, this issue is assessed in the logic of a tactical interaction among many "new challenges". There is a large number of other issues, where the cooperation with the EU is possible and necessary. However, the severity and complexity of the threat from radical Islam require a separate interaction and working out of joint mechanisms—from

countering the Islamist propaganda to concrete humanitarian and special operations.

These three issues are enough to launch a strategic dialogue between Russia and the EU in the field of security. Subsequently, the list of questions could be expanded. Furthermore, such a dialogue can and should be conducted in parallel with the selective engagement and its transition to greater engagement.

The overall aim of these measures is security issues in Russia-EU relations, including the EU partners, their joint participation in the construction of a new equal and indivisible security system in Europe, coordinated partnership to counter common challenges.

Conclusion

Russia has clearly made its choice, openly challenging the post-bipolar world. We can long debate the reasons behind the 2014 crisis [in Ukraine] and the subsequent split. The West was excessively arrogant and carried away by its projects in the post-Soviet space. Russia was excessively intolerant of these plans. China just seeking expand and consolidate its alliances in the situation of Belt and Road that Russia will be in a good negotiating position. EU will become more important politically and have an opportunity to conduct a more independent policy in this time. This time Russia should be an inalienable part of this security system and one of the architects of the new institutions of Europe's collective defense.

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