Forum

Responses to ‘Deter and Engage: Making the Case for Harmel 2.0 as NATO’s New Strategy’

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THE HARM IN HARMEL: WHAT THE TRANSatlantic ALLIANCE NEEDS IS A NEW CONTAINMENT

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Ulrich Kühn’s piece is a welcome intervention on the subject of NATO’s strategy in the security environment, which deteriorated due to the instability that Russia encourages in Europe’s Eastern approaches. It invokes the Harmel Report to strike the point that NATO’s current strategy overemphasises power solutions to the new predicament, and what it needs is more engagement with Russia. That engagement,
the argument goes, should be facilitated by a reinvigorating of the concept of cooperative security through the OSCE, an implicit recognition of Russia’s sphere of influence through an explicit check on possible NATO enlargement, and acquiescence to the post-industrial despotic nature of the government in Russia.

A dose of realism in NATO’s relations with Russia would certainly be useful. For two decades now, those relations have been characterised by what a senior EEAS diplomat once described to me as a “mutual assured disappointment” that finds its roots in both Western triumphalism and Putin’s revanchism.

Sure, less hubris and a keener strategic way of thinking that would relate means to ends, and vice versa, are called for. So is engagement with Russia. However, this engagement needs to be, first, realistic and, second, in a proper balance with deterrence through both hard power and societal resilience measures. I propose that this balance can be more felicitously established through a strategy of new containment.1

**HARD FACTS, HARD CHOICES**

The Russian Federation has turned the tables on the European security order when, in a breach of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act (1975), its armed forces invaded Ukraine, a sovereign neighbour to whom it had owed security assurances through the Budapest Memorandum (1994), annexed a part of its sovereign territory, Crimea, and have incited a rebel insurgency in other parts of the country ever since. For years, Moscow has also conducted large-scale (“total”) military exercises that feature NATO as the adversary in their scenarios. Finally, the Kremlin’s track record in the area of arms control related to European security has also been rather bleak. The U.S. has alleged that Russia is in breach of the INF treaty (1987) because it has conducted tests of new (or, more likely, modified) cruise missiles. According to the most recent New START data exchange, it already maintains more warheads mounted on ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers than the U.S. (U.S. State Department 2015), having increased the numbers of both warheads and launchers during the treaty’s duration. (This does not necessarily mean that Moscow would not reduce both so that they would be below the ceiling set by the treaty for February 2018. However, it clearly goes against the treaty’s spirit of progressive disarmament.) Regarding conventional weapons, Russia first suspended its participation in the CFE treaty regime (2007), and earlier this year it withdrew from it completely. As a consequence, multilateral arms control in Europe is now a most remote prospect.

These are hard facts that must be recognised. This is not to shame Russia’s government and extol the virtues of ours, but to dismiss as facile propositions for restoring an order based on the spirit of ‘cooperative security’. How is a rules-based security order to be restored in Europe through the OSCE with a government that, driven by a combination of revanchism and revisionism, demonstrably seeks to re-
visit the status quo on its own terms, and is doing so through a combination of both soft and hard power means? How would implicitly recognising Russia’s sphere of influence under those conditions be different from appeasement?

It also must be recognised that Russia is not a superpower. German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt once famously described the Soviet Union as “the Upper Volta with (nuclear) missiles”. It remains so. Moscow uses its coercive power to reassert itself in what for some two centuries used to be the Russian Empire. It is reckless and erratic, and that creates real risks for NATO. But those risks should not be embellished.

The security order in Europe must be restored. But it must be restored on the Transatlantic alliance’s terms – that is, on the principles of authentic, cosmopolitan and inclusive liberal politics, and on the values of sovereign equality, autonomy and the international rule of law. We must not be intimidated into accepting anything less while recognising that these principles are our common aspiration and a norm against which to judge also the behaviour of our own governments.

**THREE PILLARS OF A RENEWED CONTAINMENT**

To restore the crumbling order, a new containment is called for. George Kennan, it should be remembered, initially devised containment not as a military strategy, but as one resting on three pillars (Gaddis, 2005): (1) a reconstruction of and a return of prosperity to Eurasia’s rims to remove the causes of the societal malaise making them vulnerable to penetration by Soviet ideology, (2) exploitation of tensions inside the Soviet bloc and the international communist movement more generally, and (3) strategic talks that could pave the way to a settlement of momentary but acute differences and eventually a modification of Soviet conduct.

The new Transatlantic strategy may draw on this blueprint. A more equal distribution of deterrence capacities across NATO’s territory as a proportional adaptive measure would be prudent. But the strategy should not just be military, and so it should involve not just NATO as a primarily military alliance would. (Needless to say, Kennan was anything but an advocate for the founding of NATO, and decades later he would make a strong case against its enlargement – see Kennan, 1997.)

First, societal deterrence and resilience against expansionist tendencies will best be achieved by means of a flourishing Transatlantic economy and restoring Europe’s compact determining shared political norms. It will be further solidified by a renewal of trust in the political elites and institutions that could once more be seen as true societal articulations that are generative of solidarity rather than alienation generated through austerity and rising inequality. This will take steam away from the ascending anti-systemic movements that thrive on popular frustration and anger.

Second, instead of fomenting dissent, credible plans for prosperity and stability based on fundamental liberal norms should be presented to Russia’s neighbours to
discourage them from bandwagoning with the assertive Kremlin. The EU, rather than NATO, should be playing the decisive role here. The potential of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) to encourage political and economic reform in the ‘neighbourhood’ has been all but exhausted. Therefore, the neighbourhood should be made the incubator of the new ‘global’ approach that would integrate all of the EU’s external policies from defence and security to trade to development – an approach foreseen in the EU Global Strategy, which is now being drafted.

Third, strategic engagement should be maintained and have its intrinsic value recognised, but only as a pillar in the more comprehensive structure of the new containment strategy. Such engagement should be carried out on the traditional multilateral fora, but also, for example, in the nuclear arms control process, particularly if this process takes a multilateral turn (see Smetana and Ditrych, 2015). During the Cold War, the strategic dialogue between the two superpowers generated mutual trust and a better understanding of the other’s intentions. Today, the two nuclear superpowers’ cooperation in strategic matters holistically conceived – and that means considering the deterrence costs of global modernisation of nuclear arsenals, but also, for example, taking seriously Russia’s concerns about the strategic instability stemming from the imbalance in modern high-precision conventional weapons – is perhaps the most promising area where these results may be emulated. In addition, the 3+3 (or 5+1) format with the EEAS’s facilitation has proven an effective institution to achieve the Iran nuclear deal and could continue as a venue for searching for pragmatic solutions in the Middle East, again with a possible broader value in engagement across the existing divide. Finally, somewhere down the road talks about conventional arms control in Europe could be resuscitated since it is such an obvious factor of regional (in)stability.

Like Stalin’s Soviet Union, Putin’s Russia does not seek to reverse the European order through war. NATO outspends Russia ten times in defence (NATO, 2015; Gaddy and O’Hanlon, 2015), and while Moscow could make use of strategic surprise and achieve initial advances in places like the Baltics, it could not prevail in any sort of real war, including, needless to say, a nuclear one. On the other hand, also like Stalin’s Soviet Union, Moscow uses political warfare to expand its influence to Russia’s immediate neighbourhood, but also among European societies through instilling in them radical doubts about the world out there by creating new ‘pluriversa of facts’ and causal claims linking them together (cf. Pomerantstev, 2014), and through fear by raising awareness of hybrid warfare via public documents such as the ‘Gerasimov Doctrine’.

These expansionist tendencies must be checked. The engagement that Kühn argues for should be an important component of any such effort. But this engagement must take into consideration hard facts, it must be built into a broader strategy, and it must be based on a clear commitment to values – which bring consistency
and therefore also the clear purpose and effectiveness that are indispensable to any such strategy if it is not to become mere appeasement.

The new containment is a blueprint for such a strategy.

ENDNOTES

1 I have articulated an early version of this argument in Ditrych (2014).

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ENGAGE WITH RUSSIA? SURE, JUST DON’T THROW THE EUROPEAN SECURITY ORDER UNDER THE BUS!

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In the previous issue of New Perspectives, Ulrich Kühn made a strong case for an update of NATO’s strategy towards Russia. Taking a page from NATO’s history and a book (or two) from IR theory, Kühn argues that the Alliance should prepare a new strategy (Harmel 2.0) which would address the questions posed by Russian actions in the realms of power, order, and values better than the current policy of the Alliance.

I agree with his general assessment that the deterrence track of NATO’s response to the Russian challenge has been in the foreground so far. We have not seen any comparable in-depth discussion within the Alliance on the rationale and terms of a
possible détente with Russia, perhaps because NATO was too busy responding to Moscow’s assertive behaviour. The run-up to the July 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw seems to be an appropriate time to think about the development of the engagement track and build it up into an approach that would best fit our overall policy goals towards Russia and the countries in the joint neighbourhood area.

I can also subscribe to a number of specific proposals made by the author, including the need to move beyond the purely military dimension in addressing the threat summarized as ‘hybrid warfare’, and the necessity to pay more attention to the economic dimension of the crisis, use the West’s ‘soft power’ more wisely, and pursue NATO–EU cooperation. The vast majority of his recommendations can be implemented – or indeed are being implemented at the time of writing – not as an alternative to but in parallel with the military deterrence measures. But I address some specific proposals of his which I see as questionable, including his take on enlargement policy, further in this intervention.

However, there is one major missing element in Kühn’s otherwise persuasive argumentation. It has to do with the realm of order, namely the nature of European security as such. While the article discusses at length the challenges to the European arms control regime and NATO enlargement issues, it seems to gloss over the essence of the problem facing the European decision-makers: the incompatibility of the Western and Russian visions for European order. While Kühn mentions the need to restore the order based on the Helsinki principles, his recommendation is to convene a high-level conference to discuss the problem (2015: 146), which hardly captures the centrality of this issue for the future of Russia-West relations.

**THE INCLUSIVE EUROPEAN SECURITY ORDER**

The European security order, as formulated in the early 1990s, was based on the premise of Russia remaining an insider. The OSCE and the Council of Europe emerged as pan-European regimes while including Russia. Both NATO and the European Union expressed on numerous occasions their willingness and readiness to forge a closer partnership with Russia. On the European Union side, we have seen the cooperation with Moscow in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, and later the emergence of the Four Common Spaces, as well as the ill-fated concept of the Partnership for Modernization. In the NATO–Russia framework, the 1997 Founding Act and the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council gave Russia a platform for dialogue with the Allies – even if not the decision-making rights it wanted. While Russia criticized the quality of the relationship and protested about the perceived discrimination against it, it could not complain about the West’s lack of interest in engaging it in building a common security order.

The prevailing Western approach highlights that the European security order still needs to be based on the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the principles of the Charter of
Paris for a New Europe and the ‘Europe whole, free and at peace’ vision of the 1990s. Russia’s actions in Ukraine are an unprovoked assault aimed at the heart of the security order of post-Cold War Europe and the basic principles of non-use of force, inviolability of borders and territorial integrity of states. Importantly, these principles were not imposed on, but voluntarily accepted by all sides, including Russia. After all, as recently as 2010 all OSCE countries, including Russia, pledged at the Astana Summit to “recommit ourselves to the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals” (Astana, 2010).

According to the Russian narrative, however, the post-Cold War security order in Europe was built based on a western design, with gradual and detrimental changes to the geopolitical status quo happening as a result of NATO and EU enlargement processes. From the Russian viewpoint, the security order in Europe can operate properly only if the security interests of Russia are taken into account. Moscow envisages maintaining a sphere of influence in the ‘near abroad’ area, although the means to implement this concept may vary from military measures, through fostering political and economic links, all the way to maintaining a Russian information dominance. Russia considers the western discourse on principles and values underpinning the European security order as a cynical pretext for attacking its political regime. The current Russian approach seems to combine a rhetorical commitment to upholding the existing principles of the security order with their practical re-interpretation in line with the balance of power principle. There is also a(n) (tacit) expectation that the major European partners and the US will accept the new reality. The model for Russia seems to be the Yalta/Potsdam style of big power arrangements, and not the spirit of Helsinki, let alone Paris.

**NO GOING BACK TO THE FUTURE**
If a new Harmel 2.0 strategy is to be formulated, it needs to confront the issue of dissenting ideas of the European security order head-on. Unlike in the mid-1960s when the original Harmel exercise was initiated, today we depart from a different point. Firstly, there are no existential fears about the future of the Alliance, and no need to justify its utility or importance. The search for NATO’s purpose, which was in full swing in 2013–2014 as the ISAF mission in Afghanistan came to an end, was made futile by the emergence of new security challenges in the East and in the South. Secondly, today there is no equivalent of the Soviet Union of the 1960s, which, on the one hand, exercised full control over the strategic choices of the communist camp in Europe (as vividly demonstrated almost immediately after the adoption of the Harmel Report by the crushing of the 1968 Prague Spring), but, on the other hand, seemed to come to the point where it was ready to recognize “the advantages [...]

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of collaborating in working towards a peaceful settlement” (Harmel, 1967). Instead, we are confronted with a Russian leadership that is willing to challenge the status quo, even at a risk of a conflict with the West. There is no hierarchical communist camp, but we rather need to take into account in formulating our policy a diverse group of sovereign states in the NATO-Russia joint neighbourhood with their own aspirations and interests, first and foremost, Ukraine and Georgia.

Finally, and crucially, our understanding of “a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe accompanied by appropriate security guarantees” (Harmel, 1967) has advanced significantly as compared to the 1960s. The Helsinki Decalogue and the Paris Principles have provided a platform for anchoring the common security in Europe not to the balance of power, but to the freedom of choice, democratic standards, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and peaceful cooperation between states. This is a uniquely European take on regional order (later adopted by the European Union as its own), which served as a foundation for the largely peaceful transformation of European relations in the post-Cold War era, and which many still find inspiring – as demonstrated by the Maidan ‘revolution of dignity’.

When re-visiting the two-track approach of deterrence and détente and tagging it again as “not contradictory but complementary” (Harmel, 1967), we should be clear that the long-term aim of our strategy should be Russia’s return to its full adherence to the existing rules of the security order in Europe, and not the initiation of a process that would replace the current order with a vintage 1960s version of it. Russia, an important actor inside the European security system, is refusing to play by the old rules and is trying to force the implementation of new ones that would be more beneficial from the viewpoint of its national interests. Accepting the Russian position and focusing on ‘re-establishing order’ would constitute the most fundamental re-orientation of Western policy since 1989 and a de facto admission of the collapse of the vision of the European security order which we have been promoting for the last 20 years. It would also almost certainly contribute to the erosion of the adherence to the liberal values inside a number of Western countries – an issue which Kühn rightly identifies as a major challenge.

DETER AND ENLARGE
The issue of NATO enlargement demonstrates quite well the different approaches to the problem of order. Can the European order really be strengthened by striking a bargain with Russia along the lines suggested in the article, i.e. by pausing the Eastern enlargement in exchange for Russia’s ‘reliable security guarantees’ to the countries concerned? The most likely result would be more disorder. Russia would treat such an offer as a carte blanche to intervene in these countries’ affairs, as it would see it as an acceptance by the West of the notion that the sovereignty of the countries neighbouring Russia is limited.
RESPONSES TO ‘DETER AND ENGAGE’

It seems that the European order would rather be strengthened if Russia addressed the core concerns which make some of its neighbours seek NATO membership and make some NATO members ready to support them. After all, the applicants took a sovereign decision to seek NATO membership. Depriving them of the right to make this choice (leaving aside the question whether NATO should admit them) would turn the clock back to Harmel’s – and Brezhnev’s – era.

In a nutshell: devising the new ‘rules of the road’ for emergency situations, a return to arms control, and identifying the areas of dialogue with Russia is fine. But let us not sacrifice our long-standing commitment to the common security order in Europe on the altar of engagement.

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“DETER AND ENGAGE”: A NEW NATO STRATEGY FOR TAMING RUSSIA

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Dr. Ulrich Kühn’s intervention is an honest-minded, comprehensive and professional analysis of the current deadlock in Russia-NATO, or rather wider Russian-Western relations, and it is based on profound research. It is motivated by NATO’s current troubles and organised around three key ideas. Firstly, Kühn sees “Europe entering a new phase of increased competition and tension” (2015: 127). Secondly, he wonders whether “NATO [is] really ready for the challenges this new phase brings” (ibid.). Thirdly, the intervention seeks a new long-term strategic framework to improve NATO-Russia relations by reviving the principles and practices of the Harmel doctrine (ibid.).

Kühn suggests that this framework is based on three ‘pillars’ – power, order and values – and that a flexible balance of these three would provide for a long-lasting sta-
bility in Europe and the Euro-Atlantic space. Based on his accurate analysis of the theory and implementation of the Harmel doctrine – and the challenges of the post-Cold War period – Kühn claims that balancing these three pillars would provide NATO with the grounds and instruments to ‘deter and engage’ Russia. He concludes that “today, NATO has deficits in all three realms of security” and that “NATO’s current response to the conflict with Russia is almost solely based on the concept of power” due to both “Russia’s seemingly unexpected and aggressive power play” and “the Alliance’s internal challenges in the economic as well as the societal realm” (Kühn, 2015: 128). The author’s long-duree analysis of the NATO, wider European and Euro-Atlantic security strategy through the prism of the Hobbesian realm of power, the Grotian realm of order and the Kantian realm of values can be criticised for overly emphasising the second – Grotian – structural pattern. Nevertheless, this allows Kühn to expose the key elements and weaknesses of NATO’s policy and to explain their rationale and consequences. The analysis of the latter is sharp, coherent and in many cases rather critical. Along the power paradigm, the author seems to share the realists’ zero-sum perception and thinking, in which even slight changes to the relative distribution of power are problematic, and (quoting Joseph Grieco) “the fundamental goal of states in any relationship is to prevent others from achieving advances in their relative capabilities”, and “self-help is the order of the day” (Kühn, 2015: 129).

Accordingly, in the volatile world of international relations, which is dominated by the geopolitical approach of the key players, it is clear to see why Russian foreign and, more recently, security-military policy have focused on independence and self-sustainability. A lack of viable alternatives has meant that self-help has become the guiding principle for Russian strategy in the realm of order. As Kühn (quoting others) notes:

...institutionalized order often favours strong states (or alliances), which act even more powerfully through the related institutions, and the ways that powerful states promote through institutions exactly those principles and norms that are in their national interest (cf. Drezner, 2008; Thakur, 2013). Beyond this, institutions can be directly or indirectly exclusive by their very own nature, thus precluding any broader cooperation (cf. Charap-Shapiro, 2014). The neoclassical realist William Wohlforth (2015: 8) has argued that the United States’ security commitments under NATO are exclusionary by definition: “States against which those commitments are directed – especially China and Russia – can never be wholly integrated into the order.” (Kühn, 2015: 131)

In this regard, the Trans-Pacific Partnership is only the latest example of this. Dr. Kühn also directly criticises NATO’s approach in the realm of values and notes that pressing Russia in that dimension now is at least counterproductive and trig-
gers counter-criticism. He claims that this further reinforces the Alliance’s approach in the realm of order to produce an exclusionary and provocative position that would exacerbate the consequences of the self-interested actions that dominate the realm of power. Overall, Kühn identifies the core problem in NATO-Russia relations as lying in the second realm and consisting of a “fundamental disagreement between NATO and Russia about the order undergirding European security.” While focusing on this second realm is therefore logical, Kühn sees that Russia is most concerned about “cement[ing] the status quo (thus blocking further NATO enlargement to the East),” which would “prevent a large scale confrontation” (2015: 144–145).

I share much of this analysis. However, Kühn’s conclusions and recommendations raise serious doubts regarding their effectiveness in ‘taming’ Russia by keeping it in a deter-engage synergy/dichotomy, but also regarding his proposals to deal with the increased competition and tension in Europe and the impact that this will have on NATO’s – and Russia’s – ability to deal with new global challenges.

**RUSSIA IN AN ORDER OF DISORDER**

Dr. Kühn’s analysis of the problem of order is, unfortunately, rather mainstream. Firstly, he thinks in terms of the previous war and/or order and, secondly, his analysis follows a parochial, non-inclusive tradition which is limited to the borders of NATO member states. This not only ignores several key drivers and dynamics of the changing architecture and landscape of European security, including the role of perceptions – both in Russia and within the alliance – but also the extension of NATO operations into Afghanistan.

While Article V works far away from Europe it is, paradoxically, not ‘switched on’ in NATO’s ‘near abroad’ in Eastern Europe. As Kühn writes, “if the war in Ukraine has shown anything, it is that NATO Allies will not go to war for Ukraine’s territorial integrity... The basic fear of most Allies is that NATO could end up in a hidden, or worse, an open proxy war with Russia. Putin knows that and is therefore, tactically seen, in a better position” (2015: 146). Professor Egbert Jahn is even more direct: “Because NATO accepts the fact that Russia has a de-facto blank cheque to intervene militarily in the post-Soviet space (with the exception of the Baltic countries), there is no danger of an escalation of the war in Ukraine to a Third World War. Russia is only running the risk of limited economic sanctions...” (Jahn, 2015: 171–172).

Many Western (and some Russian) analysts see a frozen conflict as a highly probable outcome in Ukraine. This situation would effectively serve as a guarantee against Ukraine joining NATO, as the Transnistrian situation does for Moldova. NATO’s ‘open door policy’ – the type of enlargement advocated by Kühn (2015) for ‘better times’ – intentionally or unintentionally fuels Russia’s suspicions that the West seeks to shrink the space in which its blank cheque to intervene militarily is valid. Thus NATO’s policy helps destabilise Europe directly, but also indirectly by fostering
a renaissance of unconstrained realpolitik on the part of security actors in the region. If pursued further this would undermine the very foundations of the alliance and the European security order itself.

The existing volatile status quo in Europe cannot be taken as a legitimate ‘order’ per se. This lack of ‘order’ stems from the lack of a peace treaty to end the Cold War. This inconclusive moment ushered in a ‘post-Yalta’ period that saw the gradual destruction of the European/Eurasian political-security system. Some of the cardinal changes were consensual – e.g. the dissolution of the CMEA and the Warsaw Treaty Organization – while others – primarily the NATO enlargement – were not and from the outset triggered sharp protests. Russia was not alone in perceiving the enlargement in ‘Hobbesian’ power terms, predicting that it would lead to the deterioration of the system of arms control treaties established during and shortly after the Cold War. And so it happened, leaving the current status quo much more vulnerable than previous ‘orders’ and open to arms control violations by both sides.

However, the enlargement also caused another problem for NATO – that new members wanted the alliance to be as it had been during the Cold War – firstly, geared to providing military security against Russia and, secondly, US-centred and US-guaranteed. This perception of NATO contradicted several trends observable in the late 1990s: (1) Russia-NATO relations – though not rosy – were on the rise; (2) the European Union took efforts to strengthen its foreign policy and security identity (the CFSP and the CSDP); and, finally, (3) the United States as the centre of the then unipolar world started to divert its attention from a comparatively stable and peaceful Europe to other regions. Thus, because they wanted to join the older version of NATO, the new members de facto became a serious barrier to progressive NATO and EU security thinking and institutional modernization.

Some strata of Russian society, with the loss of Russia’s global power posture and having seen the NATO enlargement, the unilateral US withdrawal from the ABM treaty and the subsequent new ABM plans, experienced a sort of humiliation. Russian ruling elites were even more concerned about what they see as the chain of partly American-inspired colour revolutions in former Soviet Republics. This combination of humiliation and a perceived threat to Russia’s power means that Kühn’s idea of pausing, rather than ending, NATO enlargement would be seen as insufficient to guarantee Russia’s security and sovereignty and thus would not provide a solid foundation for fixing the European-Eurasian security order.

NEW THREATS – NEW WAYS TO STRENGTHEN EUROPEAN SECURITY

However, the aforementioned issues are only part of the story. Contra Kühn, the essence of the European security problem has to do with the cardinally new security environment, which includes new challenges and threats that cannot be solved
in the ways suggested in his intervention. These new challenges and threats for both Russia and NATO are, firstly, terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism and the protracted destabilisation in the Middle East, North Africa and Afghanistan; secondly (though in connection with the first set), the current wave of migration with all its destabilising social-economic and security consequences; and, thirdly, the changes in the nuclear balance and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Despite these serious and emerging threats, NATO and the EU continue to present Russia and its supposedly eventual ‘hybrid’ actions against the Baltic states as the key threats rather than terrorism and uncontrolled migration. This is mainly the result of ideology rather than sound analysis – the ideology of radical nationalist forces in their member states, with the Law and Justice (PiS) party of Jaroslaw Kaczyński in Poland being the most recently seen example. Prioritising such fake or virtual threats at a time when the real threat of terrorism is so clear (as was tragically shown in Paris) is damaging for both European security and NATO.

By preparing to fight in the previous (cold) war, NATO cannot protect Europe from the real threats it faces and will not be a suitable partner for Russia in this regard. This undermines the security order that is a necessary prerequisite for joint actions against the global threat of terrorism, a threat that does not respect alliance borders. Europe, NATO and Russia need other solutions, mechanisms, institutions and instruments, including those that can revive or at least preserve the remnants of arms control. They need high-level decisions and a legally-binding solidification of the status quo. However illiberal such an order may sound and however little it may suit those who have yet to catch the NATO or EU trains, it is what Europe, NATO and Russia need.

Such an understanding could help the two sides overcome difficulties in finding common positions and, eventually, sharing responsibilities outside of Europe, such as in Syria. Conversely, engagement on these issues could help normalise NATO-Russia relations in Europe. The recent agreements on Iran (the sixet format) and Ukraine (the Normandy format) show that high-level ad-hoc formats are more effective than institutions such as the OSCE. However, in evaluating the possibilities and benefits of such cooperation, the question of values also needs to be considered.

In 2009 the academician Yevgeny Primakov suggested the notion of ‘strategic values’ in the joint counteraction against nuclear proliferation, reduction of nuclear weapons, and the settlement of regional crises. He asked rhetorically: Is it possible that Washington could neglect the vital shared interests of the world community for the sake of significant, but transient differences and let them outweigh the strategic values that are necessary for stability and security in the world? Strategic values would, by definition, re-orient the international community to strategic problems, and lead it to work towards arms control agreements and, in general, towards a
restoration of international law, which suffered greatly in the disorder of the post-Cold War order. Crucially, strategic values bridge the ideological and political divide between Russia and NATO, but also the divide between Judeo-Christian and moderate Islamic traditions. Such strategic values can guide a joint NATO-Russian restoration of the European security order in a way that is fit for the world of today rather than the war of yesterday.

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MORE REALISM, PLEASE! A REPLY TO DITRYCH, KULESA AND KOBRINSKAYA

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The renewed confrontation between Russia and NATO has led the latter to rethink its defense approach with the aim of reassuring its frontline allies and deterring Russia. So far, defense planners and politicians in Washington and Brussels have mainly concentrated on offsetting potential Russian advantages in the conventional and hybrid warfare realms by rotational deployments, increased training and maneuvers, and efforts toward strengthening national resilience strategies. Even in the nuclear realm, some advocate a tougher stance towards Moscow. While almost all these measures bear a reasonable (military) logic, NATO has so far missed the chance to couple its enhanced defenses to a diplomacy track aimed at miti-
gating – together with Russia – the risks that emanate from the renewed con-
frontation.

The purpose of my intervention in *New Perspectives* was to remind the NATO al-
lies that NATO’s most successful defense strategies, such as the 1967 Harmel Doc-
trine, were combinations of elements of power (to deter) and order (through engagement), and that today’s approach towards Russia is based largely on power alone. Even worse, such an approach might help to further damage the post-Cold War European security order, which already suffers from Russia’s illegal war in Ukraine.

In their responses, Ondřej Ditrych, Łukasz Kulesa and Irina Kobrinskaya engage with my arguments and take issue with some of my recommendations. I am very grateful for the opportunity to discuss this important topic with these esteemed au-
thors and to *New Perspectives* for providing the much-needed room for intellectual debate.

To begin with, there are large areas of agreement between Ditrych, Kulesa and me. We agree that strengthened defense arrangements are needed to deter Russia from threatening the security of NATO allies, and above all, NATO’s frontline states. Furthermore, we concur that another practice that is needed here is engagement and dialogue with the Kremlin in parallel to the strengthened defense. There is also agreement that we need a European security order and that such an order should not depart too far from the essentials we all (including Russia) have agreed on in Helsinki (1975) and Paris (1990) and which Russia has violated blatantly in Ukraine. The disagreements that exist between me and the two respondents are largely in regard to two significant issues. First, on the question of what strategy would best be suited for confronting Russia, Ditrych pleads for a renewed power strategy of containment and sees Russia as challenging the status quo. Second, on the question of what the future European security order should look like, Kulesa cautions against departing from the Helsinki/Paris acquis and sees a pause to enlargement (as sug-
gested in my intervention) as contrary to the existing principles of order.

With Kobrinskaya it is the other way around. We disagree on the need for NATO to secure the Baltic States – in Kobrinskaya’s words, “the result of ideology rather than sound analysis”. We also diverge on the issue of a common European security order – Kobrinskaya sees the post-Cold War security order as based on a “lack of ‘order’” due to “the lack of a peace treaty to end the Cold War”. And we are also at odds over the question of how to deal with Russia’s illegal actions in Ukraine. While I have suggested an inclusive high-level dialogue to openly address all the differ-
ences between the two sides, Kobrinskaya recommends that NATO and Russia should commonly concentrate on transnational threats like terrorism while (indi-
rectly) ignoring the fate of Ukraine and thus also the latest cause of the larger and more deep-rooted West-Russian confrontation.
At the same time, there is also some room for consensus between the three respondents and me. We all agree that a dialogue between the West and Russia is needed and that Europe needs strengthened efforts in the realm of arms control, which is an important point of convergence in light of NATO’s upcoming 2016 summit in Warsaw.

**GETTING REAL ABOUT THE RISKS OF ‘NEW CONTAINMENT’**

Let me begin with Ditrych’s take on a strategy of “new containment” towards what he sees as a Russia seeking to “revisit the status quo on its own terms”. Ditrych basically prescribes a policy mix of deterrence, resilience and engagement – with a clear stress on the former two. I agree that a containment of Russia is needed when it comes to the safety and security of our allies. NATO has to contain Russia to stop it from intimidating its NATO neighbors and to prevent it from inflicting possible damage in the civilian and military realms. As far as one can see, NATO is already on track in addressing its shortcomings in this regard, yet much more needs to be done in the civilian realm of good governance to prevent the Kremlin from interfering where large Russian minorities are involved. In that sense, containment would be a good old status quo policy.

However, if we talk about the early definition of containment of George Kennan (see Gaddis, 2005) and translate it into today’s world – which would mean removing the causes of post-Soviet states’ vulnerability to Russian penetration – it takes on a largely different and, to my mind, dangerous quality. It triggers the question of what means the West has at its disposal to contain Russia and stop it from interfering in countries such as Georgia, Ukraine or Moldova, but also of its willingness to use its various means for this purpose in this region. I would argue that currently it has very few. The West might have certain capabilities (from economic sanctions to its supply of military hardware), but it does not have a vital interest in the countries neighboring Russia. On the contrary, however, Russia has a paramount interest in keeping those states in its sphere of influence or at least in constraining their freedom of choice.

Ditrych pleads for “a dose of realism in NATO’s relations with Russia”. I would add that NATO needs much more realism, not only in its policy, but also in the general debate about Russia, in terms of both its theoretical approach and its practical policy considerations. George Kennan, as Ditrych admits, was a realist and he saw NATO enlargement as a mistake of historical dimension. To quote Kennan:

Such a decision [i.e., NATO enlargement] may be expected to inflame the nationalistic, anti-Western and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion; to have an adverse effect on the development of Russian democracy; to restore the atmosphere of the cold war to East-West relations, and to impel Russian foreign
policy in directions decidedly not to our liking. [...] Russians are little impressed with American assurances that [NATO enlargement] reflects no hostile intentions. They would see their prestige (always uppermost in the Russian mind) and their security interests as adversely affected (Kennan, 1997).

As a realist, Kennan understood the importance of the Russian longing for prestige, which is closely linked to Russia maintaining a sphere of influence. Prestige develops as an interplay between two actors: the one who is engaging in some sort of action and the other who recognizes these actions favorably. With the beginning of NATO enlargement, the West first dismissed the notion of ‘favorable recognition’ even though it recognized the Russian unease and responded with certain soothing measures borrowed from the concept of cooperative security (e.g., the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act). With the following rounds of enlargement, the West also dismissed the fact that Russia wants to maintain a sphere of influence and that it still had the necessary means to exert power in this sphere. And that is a crucial point: a true realist recognizes the fact that Russia has a sphere of influence. He does not conclude that because this sphere is not akin to the Western model of (mostly) voluntary spheres of influence, it does not deserve recognition. He does not have to share or excuse the Kremlin’s autocratic worldview behind that sphere of influence. A realist is guided by hard facts and not policy illusions. A realist would therefore pose a valid question: how is it possible to ‘contain’ Russia in the post-Soviet space without ending up in a tit-for-tat of more bloodshed, less security and destabilization?

Being realistic about hard facts which most in the West (including me) do not like should not be confused with “appeasement”, as Ditrych implies. Appeasement is the act of a weaker party in which it gives in to a stronger party because it hopes for and seeks relief from the stronger party’s threats. There is no appeasement policy in NATO’s dealings with Russia, and in no part of my intervention have I argued for such a policy. But indeed, if the term implies that peace can be brought to Ukraine by NATO pausing its enlargement plans until a time when Russia starts to re-define its own understanding of what constitutes a great power in a globalized world, then yes, I would deem such a long-term strategy wise and responsible.

It was Kennan who hoped for an eventual modification of Soviet conduct – a policy which inspired Egon Bahr’s formula of “change through rapprochement” (Bahr, 1963). Those realists knew that dealing with the Soviets would take time and that pressure alone would not succeed. They were right, and one should draw the right lessons from their strategies.

And that brings me to the European security order. Yes, Russia has trampled on Europe’s common principles and norms with the war in Ukraine. There is no excuse for, or relativization of, that fact. Ditrych asks: “How is a rules-based security order to

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be restored in Europe through the OSCE with a government that, driven by a combination of revanchism and revisionism, demonstrably seeks to revisit the status quo on its own terms, and is doing so through a combination of both soft and hard power means?” Well, the answer might be similar to the way that was was found in in 1975, when the West sat down with an anti-democratic and inhumane bloc of Communist states to agree on rules designed to avert a further worsening of relations. If security talks were possible with Brezhnev, why shouldn’t they be possible with Putin?

**GETTING REAL ABOUT WESTERN HYPOCRISY**

Being realistic about the prospects of such talks also means acknowledging that the world has fundamentally changed since 1975. The near-perfect state of power equilibrium is not with us anymore, and the West is today (still) globally dominant. These conditions actually hamper identifying a common ground because they systemically allow the West to act from a position of superiority which is prone to the danger of hubris. Ditrych’s take is quite telling in that regard: “The security order in Europe must be restored. But it must be restored on the Transatlantic alliance’s terms,” he claims. Here Kulesa is more nuanced and correctly points to the fact that the Helsinki order was an enterprise that Moscow and the West commonly agreed upon. He warns of losing sight of this common foundation: “we should be clear that the long-term aim of our strategy should be Russia’s return to its full adherence to the existing rules of the security order in Europe, and not the initiation of a process that would replace the current order with a vintage 1960s version of it.”

Kulesa is right, but he misses two important points. First, he fails to mention the principle of the ‘indivisibility of security’, which was not a part of the Helsinki Deca-logue, but a part of its preamble (CSCE, 1975) and was reiterated in every important NATO-Russia document throughout the last two decades. From the Russian point of view, it basically means that the sheer existence of NATO as an exclusive defence organization runs counter to the principle. This argument cannot be easily discarded by talks of NATO’s non-offensive intentions. Existing threat perceptions (and even misperceptions) and concerns about spheres of influence have to be addressed head on; otherwise they become long-term strategic obstacles to cooperation and security. Therefore when I argue for a high-level OSCE meeting I have exactly these kinds of obstacles in mind. To be clear, and here I am as close as possible to Kulesa, the principles of the European security acquis are not archaic or redundant – rather they need reinvigoration and adherence. This also means addressing the Helsinki accords’ ‘birth defects’ – such as the contradiction between states’ sovereign freedom of choice and the indivisibility of security. These defects need to be addressed in an open, constructive and honest manner.

Kulesa is also partially ignoring who was ‘behind the steering wheel’ when the European security order ‘faced the fast approaching bus’. Without getting into the
nitty-gritty details of the two sides’ adherence to commonly agreed principles during the last 25 years, both Russia and the West sometimes did not care about the principles and/or interpreted them according to their own preferences. NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia during the Kosovo War was at least questionable from the point of international law. The non-ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty by NATO members was the result of the U.S. Congress taking the CFE hostage for the resolution of a number of sub-regional conflicts which involve Russia (cf. Kühn, 2009). The U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was only possible “because Russia was too weak to do anything about it” (Goldgeier and McFaul, 2003: 312). The 2003 Iraq War was in clear disregard of international norms. Again, don’t get me wrong; this list is not meant to excuse Russia’s illegal actions in Ukraine – but it puts them in perspective. It would be much easier for the West to blame Moscow if it would have always played by the very same rules it now calls for. However, it did not, and that is part of the problem.

**GETTING REAL ABOUT RUSSIA’S SOFT POWER DEFICIT**

Another problem is the inability of Russian politicians (and international relations scholars) to face the reality of Russia’s systemic weaknesses – and to change them. A realistic and honest assessment would come to the conclusion that the Russian economic and societal model lacks attractiveness in comparison to the West. The real threat to the Russian sphere of influence is therefore not NATO’s military machinery, but the people of Ukraine, Belarus or Georgia longing for better living conditions. Here, Russia has almost nothing to offer, and that bitter reality becomes most clear when Irina Kobrinskaya writes about her understanding of a future European security order. “Europe, NATO and Russia,” she writes, “need high-level decisions and a legally-binding solidification of the status quo. However illiberal such an order may sound and however little it may suit those who have yet to catch the NATO or EU trains it is what Europe, NATO and Russia need.”

What Kobrinskaya basically suggests is a 19th century ‘concert of great powers’ model to solve the problems of the 21st century. In such a model, states like Ukraine would be mere bargaining chips. As a foundation for such an order she suggests an approach akin to the 2008 Medvedev European Security Treaty draft, that is, “a legally-binding solidification of the status quo” – another unrealistic proposition, given the inability of Washington to conclude legally-binding foreign and security agreements; and it is additionally unrealistic because the United States would almost never accept a codified end to enlargement.

It is therefore a realistic assessment to come to the conclusion that we face a systemic deadlock in West-Russian relations where the concepts of the past are either not applicable anymore, or only partially, and where convincing new concepts have not yet developed. The debate in this forum makes that quite clear. While Kobr-
skaya wants to go back to the 19th century, Ditrych suggests a concept from the late 1940s, I recommend the lessons of détente, and Kulesa wants a continuation of the post-Cold War European security order. If the task would have been to write a text that is forward-looking and realistic, we all would have partially failed. However, if we understand the current confrontation as an invitation to think anew about the reasons of the crisis and the shortcomings of our respective foreign and security policies, and if we start addressing those in the spirit of realism, we might have the chance to formulate alternative concepts which are better suited to bridging our differences.

ENDNOTES

1 The first Helsinki principle speaks of “sovereign equality [and the] respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty”. This principle includes explicitly the right “to be or not to be a party to bilateral or multilateral treaties including the right to be or not to be a party to treaties of alliance”. It follows directly after the preambular recognition of the “indivisibility of security in Europe”. Over the years, both stipulations have become key principles of the European security order. Particularly the agreements of the 1990s – most prominently the NATO-Russian political-military cooperation – have made the principle of the “indivisibility of security” a central declaratory element of the new political order. Even though the Cold War is long gone, 41 years after their inception, these two principles are still at the declaratory heart of the European security order. In relation to each other, they form a classical paragon of an internal contradiction, as every party could basically find any sovereign decision of any other party to join any treaty or alliance to be an infringement to its security and hence contrary to the indivisibility of security. Lawyers call such a discrepancy a *contradictio in adjecto*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY