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This publication receives funding from the European Parliament.

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Journal Website
www.springer.com/12290
Electronic edition: link.springer.com/journal/12290

Subscription Information

European View is published twice a year. Volume 15 (2 issues) will be published in 2016.
ISSN: 1781-6858 print
ISSN: 1865-5831 electronic
For information on subscription rates please contact Springer Customer Service Center:
customerservice@springer.com

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European Security: A Defining Moment?

Volume 15 • Number 1 • June 2016

EDITORIAL

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European security: a defining moment?

Mikuláš Dzurinda

Published online: 7 June 2016
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‘Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free.’ Even if they still partly ring true today, the first words of the 2003 European Security Strategy would probably not be written in 2016. The context in which we think about security and formulate strategies has changed dramatically. Since 2003 the EU has expanded by 13 member states and NATO by 9 member states. The Lisbon Treaty has created new Common Security and Defence Policy institutions, and introduced a mutual defence clause, invoked for the first time last year. Moreover, revolutions in Eastern Europe and in the Arab world have radically changed our neighbourhood. We have witnessed a financial and economic crisis, Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine, the rise of the so-called Islamic State, violent terrorist attacks in the very heart of Europe and a refugee crisis unprecedented since the Second World War. The instruments and institutions of European security stem from a different time and are not able to deal with the world’s changed realities. To adapt, the EU needs a new strategy, and new tools to implement it.

In our neighbourhood, Russia has increasingly used military means to achieve political goals. As you will be able to read in this issue of the European View, Europeans differ on how to deal with Russian aggression and whether NATO should provide

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permanent forces in Eastern Europe, thereby reassuring the Baltic countries, Poland and others. Our answer, however, must be firmly rooted in our transatlantic alliance and must abide by international law. Recognising the de jure annexation of Crimea by Russia would represent a diminution of European security. Reaffirming the rule of law vis-à-vis Russia and strengthening our security partnerships are essential to guaranteeing our common security. As Prime Minister of Slovakia, I strived to bring my country into the EU and NATO. I have myself witnessed the strength that lies in our transatlantic and European partnerships.

The barbaric attacks in Paris and Brussels were attacks on our Western and European communities. It is Europe’s values and ways of life that are under threat. Our response must therefore be a European one, made in cooperation with our allies. European security and defence could become the new driving force of the EU, especially in this time of rising Euroscepticism and disillusionment with Europe. The time has come to place European security at the forefront of the European project.

In the wake of such tragic events, we all have an important responsibility to propose concrete solutions on how best to strengthen European security. The authors in this issue offer suggestions on how to assure cybersecurity, formulate a digital foreign policy, improve intelligence sharing, and establish a real Security and Defence Union. They also clarify the role institutions, such as NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, should play.

This issue of the European View delivers important contributions to the debate about a new European security strategy. We are witnessing a defining moment in European security. Defending our citizens is not only fundamentally important: it is literally a matter of survival.

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Mikuláš Dzurinda is President of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies.
Why there will be no Helsinki II—and why confidence building with Putin’s Russia is a bad idea

Roland Freudenstein

Abstract Over the last 10 years, Russia under Putin has turned into an illiberal empire that is determined to weaken the West as a precondition for its own survival. This fact is still not fully appreciated by those Western leaders who believe that a return to cooperation with Russia is both necessary and possible. Germany’s Social Democrats are particularly prominent among these leaders. They intend to use Germany’s 2016 presidency of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to lay the groundwork for a step-by-step confidence-building effort, eventually leading to a new European security architecture. Such hopes are utterly futile. They are based on old illusions about détente and Ostpolitik. Moreover, they are understood by the Kremlin to be signs of weakness and appeasement. Instead of answering every Russian act of aggression with new offers for talks, the West should prepare for a long confrontation with Russia, maintain unity, and strengthen defence and deterrence.
Introduction

When Germany took over the presidency of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in January 2016, its ambitions were high. For months, German Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier had been doing an interesting double act of simultaneously raising the stakes and dampening exaggerated expectations (Auswärtiges Amt 2015). But one thing was clear: Germany’s presidency was going to become a text-book example of soft power working to solve hard security problems. It would also help to boost the image of the German Social Democrats (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)—the troubled junior partner in the coalition with Chancellor Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (Christlich Demokratische Union).

The idea looked simple enough: without officially watering down the West’s rejection of Russia’s violation of basic European principles through the annexation of Crimea and its ‘involvement’ in Eastern Ukraine, a new effort would be made to return to confidence building. Step by step, lost trust would be re-established in a three-pronged approach. First, there would be pragmatic cooperation on issues of global relevance, such as nuclear non-proliferation, fighting terrorism and stabilising the Middle East. This element, of course, would not be tied to the OSCE and would happen under US leadership—but it would nevertheless be essential to what was to follow. In parallel, the OSCE would help to solidify the ceasefire under the Minsk II agreement. And this, it was hoped, could eventually lead to a lasting peaceful solution to the war in Ukraine. Alongside this, the EU would reach out to the Eurasian Union in some kind of structured cooperation. This was considered a particularly smart move by many in Berlin and Brussels, who believed it would allow the EU to improve relations with Russia while officially upholding the boycott that is in place as a result of Russia’s aggression since 2014. Then, at an unspecified future date, a process could be established to create, together with Russia, a new rules-based system in Europe—possibly even something deserving of the title ‘New European Security Architecture’. Hence, a ‘new Helsinki’ would be the final outcome. Some of these elements, especially the pattern of looking for ways to rebuild confidence with Russia by simply sideling the Ukraine topic and looking at the Eurasian Union as a potential partner, had already been proposed by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini in a semi-official paper in early 2015 (Foreign Affairs Council 2015).

The rationale for these actions was twofold. First, there was the concern that any further escalation between Russia and the West, whether over Ukraine or any other problem, must be prevented—lest it lead to an increasing risk of all-out war. Second, it was thought that cooperation with Russia on many issues is badly needed and that the current stand-off between the West and Russia is therefore untenable.
What part of ‘no’ don’t we understand?

Alas, by mid-2016, and halfway into Germany’s OSCE presidency, very little has been achieved. Minister Steinmeier himself is visibly frustrated, but that only seems to reinforce his dogged determination not to give up. The only field in which there has been any progress (although this may only be in the eye of the beholder) is in the Middle Eastern dossier with Syria and Iran. Otherwise, the deadlock is visible on many fronts. First of all, Minsk II is in limbo. None of the strategic elements of the ceasefire negotiated in February 2015 looks closer to being implemented, more than a year after its conclusion. The number of incidents may be significantly lower than in early 2015, but the ceasefire is being violated on a daily basis, with an increasing tendency, and in 90% of all cases by rebel forces and Russians. On none of the other important points has there been any palpable progress: not in the withdrawal of foreign troops (i.e. Russians) from the Donbas, not in the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front line, not in re-establishing Ukrainian control of the eastern border, nor in carrying out internationally observed, free elections in the Donbas. Consequently, EU sanctions against Russia are being upheld, albeit with grumbling from Italy, Austria, Hungary, Greece and certain other member states (Kanter 2015). So far, it has been Chancellor Merkel who has kept the sanctions in place, despite these misgivings. Her firmness vis-à-vis Russia is in stark contrast to the attitudes of both of the smaller coalition partners in Berlin—the Social Democrats and the Bavarian Christian Social Union (Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern).

What is more, cooperation with the Eurasian Union is not in sight—largely because that organisation is in no way comparable to the EU, and most Central European members of the EU would hardly approve.

An error wrapped in a fantasy inside a delusion

Consequently, a sense of frustration and disappointment is palpable in the corridors of Berlin and Brussels. And yet, none of this should come as a surprise. The plan for slow confidence building was built on false premises. The first and foremost of these is a fundamental misperception of the character of Putin’s Russia. Second, a fundamental error has been made in assessing the nature of both the current conflict between Russia and the West, and the one between Russia and its neighbourhood, above all Ukraine. And third, these two mistakes have led to an erroneous assumption about what is achievable, and desirable, in Europe.

On the characteristics of Russia under Putin, much has been written in recent years. The issue concerns Russia’s centralised power structure, which is focused on Putin,

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1 Although the OSCE is committed to blaming ‘both sides’ for violations in their daily reports, Western diplomats are ready to admit in private conversations that those violations almost always come from the Russian/rebel side.
but also the amalgam between the state administration, the justice system, the armed services, business, organised crime and right-wing ideologues (Gessen 2013). There is also a huge volume of literature on Putin’s attempts to recreate the Russian Empire (Lucas 2014). Putin’s list of priorities has been widely discussed and focuses on staying in power for as long as possible, which is why, from his viewpoint, a Russian Maidan has to be prevented. In turn, this is why no successful democracy can be allowed to exist within Russia’s neighbourhood, which thus leads to the manifest intention to weaken NATO and the EU (Freudenstein 2015).

Herein lies the second error of the confidence-building plan: the nature of Russia’s conflict with the West. Steinmeier and many of his colleagues in other EU member states, as well as his comrades among the Social Democrats and, to be honest, many European conservatives as well, are still pretending that we are living in some kind of bad dream. They hope that Putin will either suddenly wake up and realise the damage he is doing to Europe and his own country or that he and the people around him will at least slowly begin to understand the issue—with the help of a sympathetic West which admits its own mistakes in getting to where we are. What all these actors are incapable of seeing is that instead, this conflict has largely mutated into a zero-sum game, not only in the eyes of Putin himself, but in those of virtually the entire Russian elite.

Another good example of the character of East–West delusions is the debate around the positioning of troops on NATO’s eastern flank. The proper reaction to Russian aggression, and the one most abhorred by the confidence builders, would be a permanent deployment of significant numbers of new troops, such as one or several brigades. This is precisely what Poland, Romania and the Baltic states are hoping for. But there is no consensus for this move among NATO’s 28 member states. This is why the best that they will get at the July 2016 Warsaw Summit is a boost to rotational deployment. Militarily, this may or may not make up for permanent ‘boots on the ground’, but politically the allies’ refusal to build bases sends exactly the wrong signal to Moscow. The real rationale for ‘persistent’ instead of ‘permanent’ deployment is purportedly the dogged determination of leading NATO members to stick to the unilateral declaration added to the NATO–Russia Founding Act.² In this text, the West pledges not to deploy significant numbers of troops to former Warsaw Pact countries. This is supposed to signal to Russia how much we would appreciate a return to normality. Alas, it is read in Moscow as another sign of Western weakness and indecision.

Now, according to what we know, a ‘return to the status quo ante’ is impossible with Putin’s Russia—that much is even admitted by the ‘confidence builders’, and is being emphasised by the Russians themselves all the time (Trenin 2016; Kortunov 2016). Steinmeier and his colleagues, however, still cling to the fantasy that a situation can and must be achieved in which Russia’s security demands are met while the post–Cold War values of a Europe ‘whole and free’ are upheld. But this is impossible. Anything

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² Whether Chancellor Merkel’s apparent endorsement of this determination represents her convictions or is the result of a compromise with the Social Democrats, is an open question. But the result is the same in either case.
that would come close to satisfying Russia would be equivalent to recognising spheres of influence, and therefore telling Eastern Europeans that they have to live in a state of diminished sovereignty because they are, unfortunately, living in the wrong place at the wrong time: that is, they are neighbours of Putin's Russia. Moreover, the West would have to refrain from any attempts to support democracy beyond the eastern borders of the EU, forget about the enlargement of either the EU or NATO, and recognise Russia's right to support every tyrant allied to Moscow throughout the rest of the world. None of this is acceptable if the West wants to remain faithful to its fundamental values in any significant way. To make it abundantly clear: Putin demands nothing less than giving up the spirit of the Paris Charter of 1990, even the spirit of Helsinki in 1975, and returning to a very specific interpretation of Yalta in 1945.

However, even if there was such a comprehensive deal, it is very doubtful whether the relative stability of the Cold War could be recreated with Russia under Putin. One of the Russian president’s trademarks of recent years has been his incalculability—which is also proof of the strong personalisation of Russia's power structure. If, as many observers claim, the violation of internationally agreed rules has become an element of identity for the new Russia, then no ‘grand bargain’ will ever survive over a longer period of time with a Russia that rejects the very idea of rules.

Of course, against this backdrop, one might still argue that there is no harm in at least trying to reach an equitable deal with Russia because, as the saying goes, talking is better than shooting. The first problem with this truism is that by the time it is uttered, the shooting has usually been going on for quite a while, just not by the West—as demonstrated by the situation in Donbas. So the alternative is not war or peace, but different degrees of violence at best. But the second and more important danger is that the obsession with negotiating deals is the wrong message to send to Moscow. If every Russian act of aggression is answered with an appeal to ‘both sides’ to ‘exercise restraint’, with a ‘de-escalating move’ and an offer of talks, Putin will draw the conclusion that he can just continue to shred the rules of post–Cold War Europe, as we have seen. Arguably, it was not Steinmeier’s calls for de-escalation that saved Mariupol and the other East Ukrainian cities from assault by Russian and rebel forces in the autumn of 2014 and early 2015, but the West’s imposition of sanctions and Russia’s fear that even more might follow. Moreover, the obsession with talking in the face of Russian aggression also sends a devastating signal to all democrats in Eastern Europe: it corroborates their fear that a ‘Russia first’ attitude still reigns in Western Europe, that the West does not stand up for its proclaimed values and that their own attempts to defy Russia’s imperial claims are doomed to fail.

However, if it is so clear that there will be neither a return to Cold War stability nor a grand bargain for a new European security architecture (because both would be totally incompatible with our values, and very probably unsustainable for Putin’s Russia anyway)—then we need to answer the question of why so many European politicians are still deluding themselves.
The phantom pain of Ostpolitik

Many factors come to mind when trying to explain the blindness to the facts of the confidence builders all over Western Europe, and in parts of Washington as well. Depending on the individual case, there is fear of military confrontation as well as disinterest in supporting democracy in Eastern Europe, and there is profit seeking as well as a genuine admiration for Russia and even Putin—or various combinations of the above. Russian influence is often a factor, but it is only one among many. Even Germany’s Christian Democrats are not immune to the aversion to conflict and preference for dialogue inherent in Western democracy. But in the case of the German SPD, there is one particular motivation: in order to understand German Foreign Minister Steinmeier’s inability to grasp the basic realities of Putin’s Russia and the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood, one has to reach back into the twentieth century and look at the strategic concept of Ostpolitik. This strategy began as ‘change through rapprochement’ (Wandel durch Annäherung) in 1963 and reached its heyday in the late 1960s and the early 1970s under Chancellor Willy Brandt.

Under this strategy, recognition of the status quo between the blocs, including the partition of post-war Germany, was to become the precondition for overcoming this status quo. Trade and civil society connections would facilitate the process. In other words, especially in its early phase, Ostpolitik was a kind of peaceful regime-change strategy. Of course, none of this was possible without the US-led détente, within which the concept was quickly embedded. In a way, the same principle used in the case of Germany was applied to East–West relations in general. This reached its climax in 1975, with the Helsinki Final Act. Ostpolitik was not only an important foreign policy initiative from post-war West Germany, but was, above all, German Social Democracy’s only contribution to world politics in the second half of the twentieth century. This goes a long way to explaining the zeal with which Social Democrats in the twenty-first century have dealt with Russia, including its increasing aggression under Putin since 2007. It was during Gerhard Schröder’s chancellorship that the idea of a ‘modernisation partnership’ between the West and Russia was born. In essence, this was nothing but an extension of ‘change through rapprochement’: Russia would, step by step and encouraged by incentives of economic, technological and cultural cooperation, adopt standards such as the rule of law, checks and balances, pluralist democracy and, eventually, a truly cooperative foreign and security policy.

There are three fundamental problems with this approach. The first two become obvious when looking at Ostpolitik’s track record in its later stages, in the early 1980s. German Social Democracy made two fateful mistakes at the time. In 1980 and 1981, it sided with the Polish Communists during the imposition of martial law against the Solidarity (Solidarność) trade union, which had become a pro-democracy movement. Like dissident groups in other Warsaw Pact countries, Solidarity openly and deliberately invoked the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. In that situation, and lamely appealing to realpolitik, the SPD forsook the original regime-change idea of Ostpolitik, and declared Solidarity a danger to world peace. Its position was in sharp contrast to that of Mitterrand’s France, Thatcher’s Britain and Reagan’s US, all of whom did their utmost to condemn General Jaruzelski’s crack-down, enact sanctions against his regime and support the Polish
opposition in every way possible. In other words, when Ostpolitik finally showed results, German Social Democrats behaved like the sorcerer’s apprentice, desperately trying to undo what they themselves had started.

Second, détente was always accompanied by the upholding of deterrence, and so was Ostpolitik, initially (Techau 2016). By the early 1980s, however, the SPD under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt had been rocked by a ‘peace movement’ opposed to the deployment of the intermediate range nuclear weapons that mainstream politicians considered indispensable to maintaining deterrence. As a result, Schmidt’s party refused to follow the logic of deterrence alongside dialogue any longer, opted for unilateral disarmament, and began a decade-long cycle of appeasement and irresponsibility in foreign and security policy.

The third problem with this approach, which became apparent in the late 2000s, is what the ‘modernisation partnership’ with Putin’s Russia has achieved. Not only has this partnership not contributed to moving Russia closer to democracy and the rule of law, but it has had the opposite effect. Russia is using the increased economic and societal ties brought about by this relationship to boost its own influence in the West through hybrid methods such as corruption and information warfare. The amalgam of Russian business, state structures, intelligence services and even organised crime has, in many EU member states, successfully penetrated society. Slovakia and the Czech Republic are cases in point. Instead of us ‘Westernising’ Russia, Russia has corrupted us.

These issues are not the fault of German Social Democrats alone, but they bear a good part of the responsibility. What can be seen here is a very peculiar obsession with past successes, a failure to fully face the truth about where the SPD went against its own principles and wishful thinking about the grim reality of doing business with Russia under Putin.

What is to be done?

What is the alternative to the doomed approach of trying to return to a cooperative relationship with Putin’s Russia, let alone a new grand bargain? The answer is that there will be—there has to be—a long stand-off. The other alternative would be the end of the West as we know it. Putin is now betting that the West will not last in its current form, and he is trying to give a helping hand to its end with his hybrid methods and support for extremist parties in the EU. Our best bet is to hope that Putin and his system will go before he succeeds, while preventing all-out war (through maintaining and actually rebuilding deterrence). Hence, a long confrontation lies ahead of us.

Meanwhile, there will and should be areas of cooperation, mostly in the context of the UN, and on topics such as nuclear proliferation, fighting Islamic State and other fields of common interest which still exist. But this will be limited to specific topics and will not develop into comprehensive cooperation on global security—if only for the simple reason that Putin’s Russia is diametrically opposed to the West on so many questions of global democracy and the rule of law.
One other field in which there should be more cooperation is extending the mechanisms for fast emergency communication in case of military incidents, especially at sea and in the air. This may be the only valid rationale for reviving the NATO–Russia Council, because on all other points it will only serve to confirm that we agree to disagree.

As to the OSCE, the contact group on Ukraine and the observer mission in Donbas should not be suspended by the West, but their dwindling relevance should be clearly acknowledged. No strengthening of OSCE structures will help to paper over the existing cracks between the West and Ukraine on the one hand and Russia on the other. The idea of making Russia, the aggressor, part of the institutional framework meant to solve the confrontation, was a bad one to begin with.

Most importantly, and building on the NATO summits of Wales in 2014 and the upcoming one in Warsaw in 2016, the West will have to further strengthen its defences in order to reconstruct military deterrence. Of all the policy elements that have been lost in the last 25 years, the spirit of deterrence is one of the most important—a fact that the confidence builders have not sufficiently appreciated, to put it mildly.

Finally, Germany—and this goes well beyond Social Democracy—must let go of the habit of promoting a very unhealthy German–Russian bilateralism. This concerns ‘hard’ issues, such as energy security: the Nord Stream II pipeline project is politically devastating for energy solidarity in Europe. In Central Europe it evokes justified fears of a Rapallo-like German–Russian deal behind their backs and against the interests of countries such as Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic states. It also concerns ‘soft’ issues, such as the many formal and informal communication formats Germany and Russia have developed over the last 25 years. These have miraculously survived even the boldest Russian aggression against the fundamental values of post–Cold War Europe, and crack-downs on civil society and Western non-governmental organisations in Russia itself. In fact, the confidence builders consider conferences such as the St Petersburg Dialogue to be even more necessary ‘in times of crisis’. But as long as it is only Germans talking to Russians, these events send precisely the wrong signal to Central Europeans (see above) and to the Russian side, which must have the impression that Germany can still somehow be pried away from its Western allies into some kind of special relationship with Russia. Hence, this format should be either enlarged to include participants from Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the US, or scrapped altogether.

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References


Roland Freudenstein is the Policy Director at the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies.
A Security and Defence Union

Georg Emil Riekeles

Abstract  Security and defence have become the new front lines of the European project. The time has come to build a Security and Defence Union capable of delivering security to Europe’s citizens and the wider continent in a challenging international environment. It should be based on five qualitative leaps: a security strategy for Europe, an institutional revamp, renewed military ambition, integration of defence capabilities and a new partnership with NATO. With the forthcoming Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, the follow-up ‘white book’–process and the Commission’s defence action plan, 2016 offers the strategic sequence necessary for the Union to move forward.

Keywords  Global Strategy | Common Security and Defence Policy | White book | Collective security | Strategic autonomy | Permanent headquarters | Hybrid threats | EU–NATO | Brussels+

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the European Commission.

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Published online: 14 June 2016
Introduction

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has an indisputable way with words. When, in 2015, he compared the EU’s foreign and security policy to a ‘bunch of chickens’ and called for the establishment of a ‘European army’, he certainly caught the attention of his audience. The response in Berlin, where the notion of a European army is well established in popular opinion and coalition agreements, was cautiously supportive. In London reactions were unsurprisingly dismissive and derisive (despite recent positive polls). Stockholm’s Carl Bildt (2015) tweeted ‘. . . what about starting with a European air force?’, presumably half in earnest, half in jest; whereas from Paris, Prime Minister Valls allegedly quipped, with distinctive French pride and lament, ‘l’armée européenne existe, c’est la France’ (Flora et al. 2015).

These reactions capture the current state of European defence. It is no use invoking what is actually called for by the treaties, namely the ‘progressive framing of a common Union defence policy’ (art. 42(2) Treaty on European Union). Political will and the solidarity to act together cannot be written into treaties. To the honest European observer, there should be no doubt that the Commission’s vision for the future is not about returning to Clausewitz-era standing armies but rather about building a European security architecture capable of facing today’s and tomorrow’s crises (European Political Strategy Centre 2015a, 2015b, 2016). As matters stand, the ability of the EU to collectively ensure its security and defence is in serious doubt. Situational awareness, preparedness and decision-making capacity, as well as civilian and military instruments to act decisively across a broad spectrum of internal and external crises, are all lacking today.

In 2015, Juncker’s stealth attack proved to be in vain. The European Council of June 2015, initially expected to focus on defence matters, became another non-event in the consolidation of European security. Faced with competing priorities, leaders easily let the opportunity slip. May they be forgiven—2015 was still an age of relative innocence. Russian aggression in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, the slaughter of hundreds of thousands in Syria and the spread of Islamic State still seemed to most to be distant realities. This time around, just a year on, there is time for neither wordplay nor divisions. War, strife and threats that seemed far away have moved into our cities and our homes.

This June’s European Council offers a second chance. Just as European leaders in the spring of 2012 awakened from their torpor to propose a Banking Union to overcome the eurozone and sovereign debt crisis, the moment has come to build a Security and Defence Union. It should be based on five qualitative leaps: a collective security strategy for Europe, an institutional revamp, a military ambition fit for today’s security

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1 According to a YouGov poll, the British public is surprisingly positive about the idea of an EU army: 36% support the idea, 29% are opposed and 36% were undecided (Wells 2015).

2 Just as von Clausewitz (1989) recognised, in his time, that conflict and war do not only play out on the military field through acts of force, but also as socio-political phenomena through the economy, technology, politics, social forces and psychology.
challenges, the integration of military capabilities, and a new partnership and sharing of roles with NATO.

A collective security strategy for Europe—at last?

As terrorist bombs and Kalashnikovs seem to strike at will at the heart of Europe, we should need no further convincing that the world around us is changing for the worse—and that we need to react to it.

The tide of refugees, beyond the humanitarian crisis, is only the most visible expression of the return of a strategic reality in which cold external winds chill our hearts, putting the safety and cohesiveness of our societies, and of the European project itself, under severe stress. For the first time in two decades the West must regroup and reassess, and find the resources for a combined step change in Europe’s two principal security organisations. In parallel with NATO’s strategic adaptation expected at the Warsaw Summit this summer, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini’s forthcoming *Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy* must answer above all the question of what to do to deliver more security to Europe.3

Security and defence have become the new front lines of the European project. The *Global Strategy* offers the opportunity to consolidate the Union as a security community on three conditions: it must propose a new narrative on what the Union is about; it must create a consensus on threats and interests, cementing commitments to solidarity between Europe’s nations; and it must give impetus to a reorganisation of the Union’s collective means to act in the new security environment.

The first condition is to forget yesterday’s mantra of the EU as a ‘global player’, which has been spun out of the EU’s successive idealistic visions of building peace, then enlargement and finally having an international role for the good of all. This last, universalist ‘promise does not work for today’s challenges. The Union’s much-fabled ‘transformative power’ (Leonard 2005), our capacity to export our values and stability, is, in reality, limited. Equally weakened is the belief in ‘effective multilateralism’, which became a cornerstone of former High Representative Javier Solana’s 2003 security strategy (European Council 2003), as a sufficient answer. Let us face it: if we are to avoid importing the world’s crises and instability, our own security and defence must now become our fundamental priorities.4 What is needed from leaders in June is a com-

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3 See High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2015).
4 Mark Leonard went as far as suggesting that *self-preservation* is now the most pressing demand when discussing the renewal of Europe’s security strategy and his own 2005 ‘transformative power’ concept at the EU Institute of Security Studies Annual Conference ‘Towards an EU Global Strategy’ on 22 April 2016 in Paris.
mon strategic narrative that puts collective security at the heart of preoccupations: may they therefore choose ‘In defence of Europe’ as the new ‘bumper sticker’ for the Union’s external action!

The second prerequisite is recognition of the changing realities of collective security. Threats come in hybrid forms; through a multiplicity of actors, state and non-state; and unfold on a new continuum from global commons, through our extended and immediate neighbourhood, to the heart of our homeland. Ultimately, diplomacy and crisis management abroad is also homeland security. A new strategy must recognise the simultaneous need to protect at home, secure in our vicinity and enable and support partners to become security providers beyond (Domecq 2016). Delivering security to citizens requires the forging of a consensus on shared vital interests and new means to act on them, be this in terms of common efforts to track down terrorist networks; securing our borders; managing crises in our neighbourhood; or addressing security concerns along trade routes, or in cyber- and outer space.

The third condition is acknowledging the new demands on EU capacity and capabilities across the full civilian–military spectrum. A tougher environment raises important questions, in particular for the EU’s military ambition and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Years of under-spending is crippling European defence, just as the lack of political will and neglect has every so often left the CSDP powerless and immobilised (Major and Mölling 2016). The Global Strategy must not only prepare the Union for the use of force when necessary, it must also make sure that it has the capacity to do so. In a world of complex interdependencies, deciding how to ensure Europe’s freedom of action and strategic autonomy through own capabilities and a domestic industrial and technological base becomes ever more vital. The answer lies in new collective commitments to defence investment and cooperation. To get there, the EU will need to follow up on the Global Strategy with a security and defence ‘white book’–process for the first time in the history of European defence, as recently proposed by Michel Barnier and Dutch and French defence ministers. It should carry out a root and branch review of the Union’s crisis management framework, military level of ambition and defence capabilities priorities.

Institutions (and permanent headquarters), yet again

At the risk of provocation, institutional issues are at the heart of the matter. As strong centripetal forces make their mark in Europe, the Union can only renew its capacity to act in common in foreign policy and defence if leaders assume strong ownership. This is true of the forthcoming Global Strategy, but also goes further: today’s changing security landscape highlights the need for iterative processes capable of forming a consensus

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5 The idea of an EU defence white book has been an ever recurring issue since the 2001 Belgian presidency, but was recently championed again by the Dutch and French defence ministers and Michel Barnier, Special Adviser to the President of the European Commission, at the informal meeting of defence ministers in Luxembourg in September 2015.
on priorities and strategy. In 2013, Europe’s woes and responses centred on the euro-zone, in 2014 on Russia and Ukraine, in 2015 on borders and refugees, in 2016 so far on terrorism—who knows what is next? Collective security deliberations must become a systematic fixture of the European Council, underpinned by the regularity and stability that only institutions can bring.

In principle this is no more than what the treaties provide for: ‘The European Council shall regularly assess the threats facing the Union in order to enable the Union and its member states to take effective action’ (art. 222(4) Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). In practice, this should go far beyond today’s rather casual and fickle exercises. Increasingly complex and horizontal crises cannot be adequately met without further institutional consolidation of some sort. Should the Union one day face a complex crisis, such as wide-scale cyber-attacks or the collapse of critical infrastructure, the many uncoordinated crisis platforms across the institutions and 28 member states might simply not be up to the task. In an ambitious Security and Defence Union, EU institutions would add value in everything from information sharing, intelligence and joint contingency planning to decision-making, coordination and the mobilisation of a range of operational instruments.

On the civilian side, a novel approach and a new crisis architecture is slowly coming to life in response to the refugee crisis through the Integrated Political Crisis Response arrangements and reinforced operational means, such as the EU’s Civil Protection Mechanism and the Emergency Assistance instrument for faster crisis response within the EU. In reaction to the increasing complexity and permanence of terrorist threats, the European Counter Terrorism Centre, set up just last January within Europol, is being scaled up to take on a broad spectrum of front-line tasks from information sharing and threat assessment to coordination, the fighting of online terrorist content, emergency response and investigation. To take the measure of new hybrid threats, the Commission and the High Representative have just proposed the consolidation of European (inter-institutional) intelligence in an EU Fusion Cell, as well as the establishment of crisis protocols between institutions and with member states (European Commission and High Representative 2016).

Change is on its way, yet what are missing are often the more decisive institutional steps, as illustrated by the protracted debate on a permanent operational headquarters (OHQ). The threat of vetoes has long loomed large over this aspect of European integration—so large that established doctrine has almost come to be that the EU should not have full-blown crisis arrangements of its own. Now the writing is on the wall. Without situational awareness, contingency planning and reaction capacity at the Union level, whether in terms of strategic communication or other means, the preparedness against hybrid threats will remain insufficient. The lack of a permanent OHQ and integrated crisis management platforms leads to basic inefficiencies such as competition

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6 See European Council (2014).
7 See European Commission (2016).
between different missions and operations, and prevents effective civilian–military strategy and planning, intelligence gathering, exercises, and command and control at the Union level. Going half-way will always result in half-measures: the EU must now act decisively by establishing an OHQ structure that can address both internal and external contingencies.

Looking further ahead, the treaties’ strong commitments to solidarity are at the heart of what the EU as a security organisation should be about. The two key articles, the mutual assistance and solidarity clauses, need not remain bilateral and essentially unprepared instruments. Taken together and operationalised, they would allow the Union to be better prepared and united across a continuum of crises, from natural disasters, civilian emergencies such as the refugee overflow, and security threats and terrorism, to hybrid challenges and defence (European Political Strategy Center 2015a; Biscop forthcoming). In institutional terms, what the Union should be looking at is not only mapping the role of each institution and actor but ultimately also the creation of a ‘European Security Council’ of its own, bringing together senior-level officials from military, diplomatic, intelligence, law enforcement and other bodies to advise at a strategic level.

**Levelling up military ambitions**

The ‘white book’ follow-up process to the Global Strategy—if leaders can agree on a mandate in June—offers the Union the first significant opportunity since 1999 to set a new military level of ambition. Tough questions must be answered: against what threats, and with what objectives should we shape our future security and defence instruments? How can we address the CSDP’s current operational weaknesses, be it in terms of the availability and deployability of military force, solidarity and burden sharing in operations or civilian–military complementarity? What degree of autonomy is the CSDP aiming for, and what effort in terms of capabilities does that entail?

Lofty targets will not in themselves deliver security. Rather than setting new headline goals, the priority should be a review of the CSDP objectives, the so-called Petersberg tasks, to reflect a new reality of merging external and internal threats. In a capable Union most military missions short of NATO’s collective defence should be within reach. This requires a scaling-up of the Union’s means to act across a broad spectrum of operations, from territorial and border security at home to capacity building and expeditionary missions abroad.

The Petersberg tasks already provide for ‘peace-making’ or higher-intensity missions. To a jittery European public and inexperienced institutions Serval-type operations, tracking down Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb fighters with bullets and bayonets in far-off Malian mountain ranges, seem unrealistic. Still, in an increasingly fragile environment, it is in our common European interest (and not just France’s) to shore up fragile states, prevent Islamist ‘overruns’ and fight terrorism, even in distant Africa. The demands on EU crisis management and peace support will only increase, and to remain
with the French taxonomy, the CSDP must now gear up to deliver *Barkhane*- (anti-insurgent) and *Sangaris-* (securitisation and stabilisation) type missions of its own.\(^8\)

For this, EU crisis management tools also need to be resized. The ‘never-used’ Battlegroups should be transformed into a truly modular rapid response concept. Supplemented with air and sea components, and special forces as necessary, they should be available and capable of performing tasks from crisis management and peace support operations to temporary border missions, disaster relief and the protection of critical infrastructure. The EU’s military leadership must be given responsibility, together with framework nations, for the pre-identification of multinational forces that meet the standards required for different operations over rotations longer than the current six months.

National contributions would be compensated for by new guarantees on burden-sharing. A strengthened institutional set-up and new financing tools are necessary to facilitate force generation and decision-making for all types of EU missions. The bet must be that a common security strategy and the availability of military threat assessments, planning, and command and control arrangements will in time go a long way towards facilitating the political decision-making that today is wanting. In addition, a dedicated fund or partial EU budgetisation should cover the deployment cost of missions and, in the case of the Battlegroups, also certain standby costs.

These are not the only lessons to be learned from a changing situation. Europe’s sea and land borders highlight how civilian and military options must be better integrated. The Mediterranean is currently the testing ground for cooperation between different maritime functions, from national maritime operators and EU agencies, such as Frontex, to CSDP and NATO missions. Making progress towards a large-scale integrated maritime information system is becoming a matter of urgency, while the proposal for EU border and coastguard capacities should in time lead to more ambitious EU maritime capabilities.

The CSDP make-over must also prepare the EU to deal effectively with hybrid threats, drawing on national means and best practice as well as new institutional capabilities. A comprehensive tool-box could range from civilian and military advisory missions and exercises to operational support in specific circumstances, such as emergency border control; evacuation; or chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear protection. Cyber-space is another priority domain where the Union must go beyond regulatory approaches towards capacities in common to face the new reality of digital weaponry and commercially and strategically motivated thefts and destruction.\(^9\)

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\(^8\) ‘Coalition of the willing’–type operations as provided for under Article 44 of the Treaty on European Union could be an interesting option for the future.

\(^9\) An increasing number of articles, such as the *Financial Times’s* recent in-depth article on Iran’s cyber-capabilities, provide eye-opening accounts of an ongoing revolution in defensive and offensive cyber-capabilities (Jones 2016).
Last but not least, a revised CSDP must recognise the need to rely on effective partnerships for security and development, whether they are with the UN, regional and local actors on Africa’s continent, or with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and NATO in our eastern neighbourhood. Efforts must be directed as a matter of priority towards sustaining state functions such as the police, judiciary and military in partner countries through so-called capacity building for security and development. Today the military dimension of this effort is wide of the mark. Existing tools in the context of both CSDP budgets and development policies must be put to their best use, but a dedicated financing instrument linked to or similar to the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace\(^\text{10}\) will be needed if the Union is serious about stepping up collective action for stability.

Jump-starting the capabilities integration cycle

Executing full-spectrum military interventions requires robust war-fighting capabilities: armoured vehicles, attack helicopters, frigates, strategic lift, tanker aircraft, satellite communication, intelligence and so on. By and large Europe has had (or has had access to) these capabilities so far, which has provided a sense of enduring security. Yet existing technologies and systems are now old, duplication is rife, and investment and collaborative efforts have ground to a halt. Not only do we have 23 different light armoured vehicles in Europe today, but, as a renewal of naval capabilities is announced, 7 European nations are launching 7 parallel frigate programmes. This ongoing ‘renationalisation’ of defence (Keohane 2016) is a race to the bottom that defies all logic.

The days when national sovereignty and security could be assured through national means alone are coming to an end. Budgetary constraints, defence inflation, technological changes and cost escalation (Wolf 2015) will force a paradigm shift: member states, big and small, and Europe as a whole, must either acquire capabilities through cooperation or risk losing them altogether. Still, today the European Defence Agency’s (EDA) Capability Development Plan is ailing due to a lack of common priorities and serious member state engagement, just as past initiatives, whether the EU’s Pooling and Sharing or NATO’s Smart Defence, have delivered only meagre results.

More bite is needed to sustain a new cycle of integration in defence capabilities. The upcoming defence ‘white book’ must establish quantitative and qualitative investment commitments,\(^\text{11}\) identify key collaborative capability projects for the coming years and connect bottom-up capability efforts with the necessary top-down political steering. A European Semester–type process, whereby national and bilateral defence planning and procurement priorities are regularly reported to the EDA and discussed by ministers,

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\(^{10}\) See European Commission (2015).

\(^{11}\) These could be based on the NATO Wales pledge of increasing defence spending up to 2 % of GDP, but the qualitative elements as already enshrined in existing but non-binding EDA benchmarks seem just as important. For more information on these see EDA (n.d.).
should be instituted to achieve more synchronisation. In this, focus should be placed on capabilities with the highest operational impact, and on prospects for European cooperation and supply chain integration.

In parallel, Europeans must prepare for formidable shifts in military technology. A decade ago military research and technology would have been ahead of civilian research and applications by several years. This is no longer the case today, with key strategic technologies in aerospace, cyber-technology, robotics and man-to-machine interfacing becoming globally available. The US has announced a new defence innovation initiative—the ‘3rd Offset Strategy’—to counter the growing military-technological might of China, Russia, Iran and others. For Europeans, whose own investment in military research and development is down by 35% in just 10 years, this raises serious questions and risks a widening technology gap within NATO (Fiott 2016).

If Europeans are to retain the ambition to decide their own security and be a reliable partner in NATO then they have no choice but to join this innovation race. There can be no enduring military effort or long-term strategic culture without own capabilities and a defence industrial–technological base to sustain them. Supporting collaborative efforts in capability development and enhanced investment in defence research and technology hence stand out as fundamental priorities for the European Defence Action Plan announced by the Commission.

One area of action should be to support greater investment in critical technologies through a future defence research programme. The investment of €3.5 billion over seven years, as suggested by the European Commission Group of Personalities (Group of Personalities 2016), will add an indispensable ‘fifth player’ to the European research and technology effort, and will also serve as a catalyst for member state buy-in in a new capability-planning process. Together with the EDA, the Commission can also use its wide range of industrial policy tools, from small to medium-sized enterprises and raw material policies to certification and standardisation, to support European capability priorities and cooperation.

Last but not least, the EU should act much more decisively on incentives and financing for collaborative defence projects. A major step forward would be to recognise common European projects, as opposed to national ‘go-it-alone’ approaches, as structural budgetary efforts in the context of the application of the Stability and Growth Pact. Specific fiscal incentives, beyond the EDA’s current VAT exemption, should also be considered. In terms of financing tools, a fresh look must be taken at the European Investment Bank instruments, including the potential for a next-generation European Fund for Strategic Investment. The EDA also needs a dedicated bridging capacity or start-up fund to overcome the lack of synchronisation in national defence budgets that holds back common projects today.
EU–NATO: from Berlin Plus to Brussels Plus!

General de Gaulle reputedly said of NATO that it is ‘the defence of Europe by Americans’. The question of what Europeans should be able to do together without Uncle Sam is as relevant today as then. In his recent ‘Doctrine’ interview in The Atlantic (Goldberg 2016), US President Obama made it starkly clear that the US expects less free-riding from Europeans in a tougher, multipolar world. Changing realities should also prompt a strategic rethink: the spirit of Berlin Plus and the old division of labour in which NATO carries out territorial and collective defence while the EU acts as a low-intensity crisis manager abroad, in particular on the African continent, no longer holds true. The EU’s recent exploration of hybrid threats, strongly pushed by the UK, the US and NATO, is just one acknowledgement that in the face of diversifying threats, our collective security in a broader sense cannot be NATO’s sole appanage.

The final area in which Europeans must collectively step up their efforts is therefore that of EU–NATO relations. Years of mutual suspicion are in the process of being traded in for a new partnership, no longer based on the wrong question of ‘what the EU is not going to do’ but on the right one, namely ‘what the EU should do and how to do it together with NATO’. NATO and the EU are complementary security organisations on a continent that needs more, not fewer efforts. Collective territorial defence, pre-positioning, air policing and reassurance measures are not in themselves enough. The broader concept of collective security must be addressed by articulating the two organisations’ comparative advantages, avoiding duplication as well as limiting preconceptions of role-sharing.12

This summer’s back-to-back European Council and NATO summits must be seized upon to establish a roadmap to fully develop EU–NATO synergies. In the area of hybrid threats common protocols and even joint hybrid teams should be envisaged, while fully respecting each organisation’s decision-making autonomy. Defence capacity building, maritime situational awareness, exercises and cyber-defence are further areas to be considered for reinforced cooperation (Stoltenberg 2016).

More significantly and looking ahead to a potential deal on the unification of Cyprus, the EU and NATO should not only deepen information exchange but could also break new ground in the sharing of operational means, such as rapid reaction instruments. In an ideal partnership between the two organisations, the separate EU Battlegroups and NATO Response Force concepts would give way to the creation of a European brigade-sized stand-by force for expeditionary operations, acting as the necessary complement to NATO’s Very High Readiness Joint Task Force’s role in territorial defence. To sustain this, the EU and NATO should also closely coordinate their respective capability development processes, for instance through a Framework Nation Concept common to the two organisations. Such a ‘Brussels Plus’13 partnership makes eminent sense:

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12 Norway’s then Minister of European affairs, Vidar Helgesen was amongst the first to highlight the EU’s new, critical and complementary role to NATO’s in collective security (Helgesen 2015).

13 The concept of a new ‘Brussels Plus’ partnership was coined by General Patrick de Rousiers (2016) at a Dutch EU presidency conference.
whether made available for territorial defence, CSDP or NATO, European capabilities ultimately serve the same fundamental purpose, our collective security.

**Conclusion**

2016 is a year rife with existential threats for the Union, but also one of significant opportunity—not least for European security and defence. The forthcoming *Global Strategy* and NATO’s Warsaw Summit, together with the potential EU Security and Defence ‘white book’ and Commission Defence Action Plan, offer an unparalleled strategic sequence.

It is no longer time for incremental steps in CSDP or national defence capabilities, but for thinking anew about the essential decisions that bind Europeans together. If European leaders can find the courage to step out of the ‘fog of peace’, technocratic bickering and the grip of history, they can deliver a step change in the collective capacity to ensure security for the citizens of Europe and the wider continent through the establishment of a Security and Defence Union.

Will all 28 member states join or will the numbers be smaller? It is useless to pretend that this question does not exist. The possibility of moving forward in smaller groups of permanent structured cooperation—both outside and within the treaties—is there. Who will be *in* and who will be *out*? Ultimately that is up to the leaders and peoples of Europe to decide. But in security and defence, let us still believe that strength lies in numbers!

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Only NATO can defend Europe

Janusz Bugajski

Abstract  Twenty-five years after the end of the Cold War, there is no viable alternative to NATO’s security umbrella over an expanded Europe. The eastern part of the continent is confronting a revisionist and expansionist Russia. Its stability can only be ensured by an effective alliance that establishes permanent bases in the most vulnerable regions as a deterrent to Moscow’s aggression. A strong US presence within a broad alliance that includes all of Europe’s democracies is in America’s national interest and that of all NATO members. This is needed to preserve security across the European continent and to assist in confronting assorted threats to the transatlantic commonwealth.

Keywords  NATO | Europe | Russia | Threats | Deterrents | Challenges | Capabilities

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Published online: 29 March 2016
Introduction

Twenty-five years after the end of the Cold War, there is no viable alternative on the horizon to NATO’s security umbrella over an expanded Europe. The idea floated a quarter of a century ago that Europe could scale down its defences and even dismantle the North Atlantic Alliance exposed a flawed fixation on an ‘end of history’ scenario that has never materialised. In practice, the forces of state nationalism and imperialist revisionism in Russia have proved stronger than those of liberalism and international cooperation with the West.

In many respects, a ‘return of history’ scenario has become more evident in and around Europe, with Russia re-emerging as a revanchist power and threatening Europe’s entire eastern flank. In addition, the EU itself faces existential problems, from the financial and institutional to the demographic and political. In a potentially unstable and fracturing continent, NATO is the sole remaining institution that upholds international security. And it may become the sole multinational organisation that can provide Europe with a measure of coherence. Moreover, NATO is the binding glue of the trans-Atlantic link with Washington.

NATO without alternatives

Several Western European states have hosted US bases since the creation of NATO in April 1949. Since the end of the Cold War and the dismantling of the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s, numerous voices among the new NATO members have called for permanent bases that would include US troops in the eastern part of the continent. Such voices have grown louder as Russia under President Vladimir Putin has become increasingly assertive and is now threatening the independence of numerous states, from the Baltic region to the Black and Caspian Seas.

A NATO alliance that encompasses all of Europe with a permanent multinational military presence in Europe’s east is essential for four fundamental reasons. First, there is no viable alternative to NATO’s political and military structure. The EU does not provide security or generate confidence among states facing potential aggression. The EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy is primarily a diplomatic mechanism, which openly acknowledges that NATO remains responsible for the territorial defence of Europe. Although the EU has engaged in several peacekeeping, policing and humanitarian missions, NATO possesses the main combat force not only of its European members, but most importantly of the US, which contributes a disproportionate share of Alliance troops, equipment and other resources.

A strong NATO alliance is the backbone of European security. Proposals for a European Army simply dilute and distract attention from the only capable multinational Western security organisation. A European Army would not only siphon off NATO’s already limited assets and diminish its capabilities, but would also trigger rivalries between
Europe and North America over the deployment of military forces. Additionally, it could split Europe between countries committed to upholding close security relations with the US and states at a safer distance from Russia that see a lesser need for American security guarantees. Such an outcome would in effect grant Moscow a strategic victory over NATO.

The second reason an effective NATO is needed is that it contributes to ensuring the institutional integrity of members, together with promoting regional stability between them. Its entry stipulations include functional statehood, minority rights, civilian control over the military and settled borders with all neighbours. All new members have had to fulfil these criteria. Such conditionality also generates confidence for foreign investors and sets the stage for the integration of member states into the EU.

The third rationale for an expanded NATO concerns the sovereign choice of every independent state to determine its alliances and security links and not remain vulnerable to pressure from predatory neighbours such as Russia. In this context, it is important to distinguish between Russia’s national interests and Moscow’s state ambitions. If Russia’s neighbours join NATO, this poses no threat to Russia’s security—contrary to the Kremlin’s claims. However, it does thwart Russia’s ability to control these countries’ security postures and foreign policy.

Russia’s ambitions revolve around expanding the ‘Eurasian’ zone in which Russia is the dominant political player. ‘Eurasianism’ involves two interconnected strategies: transforming Europe into an appendage of the Russian sphere of influence and debilitating Atlanticism by undermining Europe’s connections with the US.

The EU occupies a pivotal position in Russia’s strategy as it can either strengthen or weaken the Kremlin’s approach. Moscow views a unified EU foreign policy that is synchronised with Washington’s and undermines Russia’s aspirations as a threat that needs to be neutralised. The EU’s democratisation agenda is also perceived as a pernicious ploy to undermine Russia’s agenda of supporting pliable governments in neighbouring post-Soviet states. Furthermore, EU standards for government accountability, business transparency and market competition endanger Russia’s economic penetration, which is primarily based on opaque and corrupt business practices.

An accommodationist Western approach that concedes some special ‘national interests’ to Russia not only is unacceptable to all the independent states that emerged from the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc, but also whets Moscow’s appetite for further imperial aggrandisement. Paradoxically, consenting to Russia’s asymmetrical ‘national interests’, through which it claims a privileged role in influencing its neighbours’ affairs, is more likely to result in a collision with NATO than a more dynamic approach. If the Kremlin operates with the conviction that it has a free hand to methodically undermine countries along its borders, this could result in serious miscalculations when it overreaches by sparking conflicts with Alliance members.
Emerging threats from Moscow

The fourth and most important reason why a substantial NATO military presence in Eastern Europe is vital is that it forms the most effective deterrent and responder to major new threats. Two core challenges emanate from Russia: expansion and implosion. Moscow's primary objective is to restore Russia as a major pole of power in a multi-polar world. The overarching goal with regard to the West is to reverse US influences in Europe and Eurasia. Russia's neo-imperial project seeks predominant influence over the foreign and security policies of immediate neighbours so that they will either remain neutral or support Russia's agenda. In effect, Russia seeks dependent protectorates along its borders, tied into institutions controlled from Moscow (Bugajski and Doran 2016).

While its goals are imperial, the Kremlin's strategies and tactics are flexible, and this can make them more effective than if they were rigid. Moscow engages in enticements, threats, incentives and pressures, while claiming it is pragmatically pursuing its national interests. It pursues asymmetrical offensives by interjecting itself in its neighbours' affairs, capturing important sectors of local economies, subverting vulnerable political systems, corrupting national leaders, penetrating key security institutions, challenging territorial integrity and undermining international unity.

Moscow is also not averse to using direct military force, as exemplified by the war against Georgia in August 2008, followed by the forced partitioning of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the attack on Ukraine in March 2014 with the annexation of Crimea. According to a recent report by RAND Corporation, given current force deployments, Russia could steamroll across the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with ground forces reaching the three capitals in a matter of hours. Without a more intensive regional presence, NATO forces would not have the ability to defend its most exposed states (Shlapak and Johnson 2016). Hence, the factor of deterrence may have limited value if Moscow decides to test NATO's response.

The RAND report mirrors the concerns of Chairman of the NATO Military Committee General Petr Pavel, who has warned that Moscow could conquer the three Baltic states within two days despite their NATO membership. This is possible because of Russia's ongoing military expansion, NATO's relatively slow-moving command structure, and the decline in Alliance capabilities because of lowered defence spending and the withdrawal of US forces, including two heavily armoured US divisions from Germany, with only two now remaining in Europe.

Russia's potential implosion could present an even more unpredictable future in which NATO would need to manage the multi-regional repercussions. A huge failed state on Europe's doorstep would have various destabilising consequences for the continent—whether refugee outflows, the spillover of violence, civil wars or the emergence of new aspiring states. Paradoxically, Putin's attempts to construct a new Russia-centred dominion are likely to accelerate the country's decline.
An economically and militarily overstretched Russia may witness escalating economic, social, political and sub-regional turmoil and present even more menacing challenges for Western policy. NATO needs to assess the possible consequences of the chaotic downfall of the Putinist system and prepare contingencies for the conflicts that this may generate. In particular, Russia’s neighbours must be shielded from the most destabilising scenarios of civil conflict and Russia’s violent fragmentation, which could spill into NATO territory. By positioning permanent NATO bases in the countries bordering Russia, the Alliance would be better prepared for the negative consequences.

**NATO realism**

NATO’s European flank remains dependent on the US for its security, as its defence expenditures have been seriously depleted since the end of the Cold War. Without American involvement Europe would be unable to deter an increasingly belligerent Russia. Europe’s demilitarisation over the last decade has coincided with Russia’s military build-up (Michta 2015). The US provides 70 % of all NATO defence spending, while Europe’s contribution to NATO’s military capability is less than 25 %, and the figure is steadily falling. Several countries have decimated their equipment to such an extent that they may be incapable of deploying more than a few thousand troops in the event of outright war. Meanwhile, Russia is re-arming to the tune of $700 billion over the next decade and plans to introduce the next generation of armour, aircraft and missiles, and to modernise its nuclear forces.

Since the end of the Cold War, US officials have been prodding their European counterparts to increase defence spending in line with NATO guidelines of 2 % of GDP. Several US defence secretaries have challenged their allies to stop cutting financial support for NATO in the face of emerging and escalating security threats. They have argued that this could result in Europe’s ‘demilitarisation’, particularly in Western Europe, where political leaders and publics are becoming increasingly averse to the deployment of military force. Shortfalls in funding and capabilities will make it difficult for the Alliance to handle several simultaneous security dangers. Over the past decade only a handful of NATO members have consistently spent 2 % of their GDP on defence. During 2015 the defence budgets of several members, including the UK and Germany, actually shrank, despite pledges issued at NATO’s Wales Summit in September 2014 to increase financing of the military. In stark contrast, several front-line NATO states have decided to steadily increase their defence budgets in the face of growing threats from Russia. These include Poland, Romania and the three Baltic states.

In addition to increased funding, the European allies must also pursue military modernisation and become capable of defending all of NATO’s borders rather than operating under the traditional formula of simply being able to retaliate and allowing the extended deterrent to be provided primarily by Washington. There are legitimate concerns that most European states could not realistically meet the goals of optimal capability without significant reforms to their military structure and the elimination of waste, duplication and mismanagement in their defence bureaucracies. If the current feebleness in
defence spending and capabilities continues, the next US president will come under increasing domestic pressure to curtail the American commitment to Europe’s security. This will certainly suit a revisionist Kremlin that continues to test NATO’s defences along Russia’s western flank.

In response to conventional military threats from Russia, it is essential to have an effective tripwire by ensuring the permanent presence of soldiers from various NATO states in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, the most exposed members bordering Russia. Moves in this direction, through the use of air policing units, regular military exercises and the creation of small bases to accommodate the planned NATO Rapid Reaction Force, were taken as the war in Ukraine unfolded during 2014 and 2015. Nonetheless, fears remained that without a more permanent stationing of substantial multinational NATO forces in the front-line states, these countries could be quickly overrun by a Russian assault.

At a mini-NATO summit in Bucharest on 4 November 2015, nine countries—Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia—signed a declaration calling on NATO to maintain a permanent presence in the region to deter Russian aggression. Since Moscow’s assault on Ukraine, NATO has taken initial steps to bolster the defence of vulnerable members by adding combat aircraft support to NATO’s Baltic air policing mission: dispatching a dozen F-16 fighters to Poland, and deploying Airborne Warning and Control System reconnaissance aircraft in Poland and Romania to help patrol NATO’s eastern borders. NATO has also drawn up defence plans for Poland and the Baltic states, including guarantees of NATO’s military response to outside attacks.

Deliberations have also intensified over the potential hosting of NATO military infrastructure. However, at the NATO Summit on 4–5 September 2014, alliance leaders did not endorse the positioning of permanent bases in Eastern Central Europe despite the urging from Warsaw and the three Baltic governments. Instead, they agreed to create a spearhead contingent within the existing NATO Response Force—a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). Once formed, it would be capable of deploying at short notice along NATO’s periphery and would consist of land, air, maritime and Special Operations Force components.

It is intended that the VJTF will include 4,000 troops trained to move on 48 hours’ notice to hotspots in any NATO member state. Nonetheless, this contingent would be too small to counter the massive military might Russia has deployed along its western frontier. The spearhead force is to be part of a wider NATO response force of 13,000–30,000 troops that could take weeks to deploy in a crisis. It will benefit from equipment and logistics facilities pre-positioned in Eastern Central European countries, but the troops will not be permanently stationed in the region (NATO 2015). The force could be used as a mobile tripwire when dispatched to a threatened state. However, at this stage in its deployment, it is difficult to estimate the effectiveness of a relatively small VJTF contingent in deterring Russia’s outright invasion of a NATO member.
In February 2015, NATO decided to establish six command centres in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria to connect national forces with NATO reinforcements. They will be used for logistics, reconnaissance and planning missions with a multinational headquarters in Szczecin, on Poland’s Baltic coast. This will enable the rapid influx of thousands of NATO troops in the event of a crisis. The positioning of military hardware without the presence of US and other Allied troops is premised on the assumption that the local armed forces would be capable of defending the country for a sufficient time to allow for the timely arrival of more substantial NATO units.

Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey has stated that America’s military is ready to ensure the deployment of high alert forces within 48 hours to NATO countries bordering Russia (Jointo 2015). If this is insufficient to stem a Russian attack, then Washington will be ready to use additional force to protect its allies. General Philip Breedlove, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, has called Moscow’s conquest of Crimea a ‘paradigm shift’ that requires a fundamental rethinking of where American forces are located. In February 2016, Secretary of State John Kerry announced that the US will significantly upgrade its commitment to the security of Europe’s eastern flank, with a planned four-fold increase in spending on the European Reassurance Initiative, from $790 million to $3.4 billion.

To maintain NATO as an effective deterrent, Washington needs to adopt a more forward presence on the ‘eastern front’. NATO must also update its security posture to deal with new threats. For example, the Washington Treaty should be updated, especially Article 5 and the definition of an attack on a NATO member. This must reflect the challenges associated with contemporary warfare, including externally generated insurgencies, cyber-attacks, information warfare, and other forms of subversion aimed at undermining state independence or truncating its territory.

The Alliance needs to prepare for a wide assortment of unconventional threats and ensure that its capabilities match its commitments, including stronger national capabilities that increase the costs of a Russian attack (Grygiel and Mitchell 2014). Local forces must possess the ability to protect their own borders and increase the cost of aggression even if they cannot win a conflict unaided. In particular, NATO needs to place greater emphasis on ensuring the ability of front-line states to defend themselves during the critical, early phases of a limited war.

Each NATO state bordering Russia requires three fundamental elements: adequate infrastructure and pre-positioned equipment to allow for the speedy deployment of other NATO forces, early warning of a Russian covert attack and capable forces that can respond quickly to an assault on its territorial integrity. Each country also needs US and Western European forces positioned in them on a permanent basis to act as a tripwire against a potential Russian attack. Front-line states also require an offensive component that can threaten Russia’s aggressive operations by targeting its staging areas, airports, radar installations, sea and river ports, and logistical nodes (Grygiel 2015). Defensive capabilities alone are unlikely to be sufficient to deter a military assault.
Conclusion

For the US an unstable and insecure Europe that is fractured internally and whose borders are challenged by a belligerent Russia would constitute the greatest foreign policy disaster since the Second World War. To prevent such developments, NATO must revive its core mandate of defending the European homeland and focus less on out-of-area operations. By shifting bases and equipment eastward to confront the newest threats, NATO can help ensure that it has sufficient manpower and firepower to dissuade a Russian offensive against the most exposed Alliance members. An effective NATO remains the key institution for protecting Europe’s security. It may also become the sole multinational organisation that can provide the continent with a measure of policy coherence and maintain the transatlantic link with Washington.

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Permanent NATO deployment is not the answer to European security

Roderich Kiesewetter · Ingmar Zielke

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Abstract Calls for the permanent deployment of substantial combat forces in Eastern European NATO states, primarily in the Baltics and Poland, have been part of the debates on strategy among the member states for years. In the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, the defence capabilities of the Eastern European allies must undoubtedly be strengthened. However, in light of the yet-to-be-implemented measures that the allies decided upon at the Wales Summit, a more general shift of international security challenges towards ‘hybrid’ warfare scenarios, Russia’s centrality in the Middle East peace process and the long-term viability of the Alliance, permanently deploying substantial combat forces in Eastern Europe would not strengthen the security of Europe and the coherence of NATO.

Keywords Hybrid warfare · NATO · Ukraine · Resilience · Deterrence · Rapid reaction forces

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Published online: 20 April 2016
Challenges to NATO’s security

In the wake of Russia's aggression in connection with the territorial integrity of Ukraine, calls for a permanent NATO deployment of substantial combat units in Eastern European member states have been widespread. Richard Shirreff has argued that a permanent presence in the Baltics would ‘deter any Russian encroachment’ and that a permanent land presence is ‘required to prevent any Russian coup de main operation that could achieve its aims before any NATO reserves are able to react’ (Benitez et al. 2016, 7). Polish President Andrzej Duda has argued that NATO would be treating Poland like a ‘buffer zone’ between the West and Russia if it did not agree to the deployment of permanent bases on its eastern flanks (Foy 2015).

The Polish and Baltic calls for a permanent deployment of substantial combat forces derive from various considerations. First, Poland and the Baltics have had a long and troublesome history with their eastern neighbour. Russian aggression towards these states has extended into the post–Cold War era, mostly consisting of attempts to pressure the countries into a friendlier attitude towards Moscow’s interests. A second reason for the scepticism of these states relates to the content of the NATO–Russia Founding Act of 1997. Under this agreement both sides pledged to seek long-term stability in the Euro-Atlantic security space through cooperation and confidence-building measures. However, Poland, the Baltic states and other Eastern European NATO members have had little influence on this NATO–Russian settlement, which was initially based on the desire to slowly integrate Russia into Alliance structures.

In the past, divergent threat perceptions have led to frictions within the Alliance. Noetzel and Schreer (2009) observed that the Alliance has developed into a three-tiered organisation, with the Eastern European states (mainly Poland, the Baltic states and the Czech Republic) urging for a tougher line towards Russia; the status quo powers (Germany and France) pushing for a more nuanced position; and the ‘reformers’ (Great Britain and the US) supporting a more global role for NATO, beyond the immediate task of defending Eastern Europe. Since 2014, this division has been marginalised. In particular, Germany’s stance towards Russia has become significantly more sceptical and confrontational (Forsberg 2016). Given the potential ramifications of Russia’s destabilising efforts, the urge to strengthen European and NATO defences against a potential replication of Russia’s hybrid warfare strategy is undoubtedly essential for the reassurance of the Alliance and the protection of the most vulnerable allies in the East. Europe’s defence efforts must continue to stress the liberal character of the post–Cold War order without outside interference.

However, effective military deterrence and appropriate defence infrastructures do not necessarily translate into an abrogation of the NATO–Russia Founding Act of 1997 (even though Russia has violated the prerogatives of its commitments). The case against substantial permanent deployments of NATO troops in Eastern Europe is not derived from the lack of a need to prepare against Russian aggression, but from the sufficiency of current military measures (if thoroughly implemented), the changing nature of the threat in the post–Cold War environment, and the fundamental challenges
posed by revolutions and wars in the Middle East, as well as the need to balance the security requirements of all 28 NATO member states. Unless a broader political and economic modus vivendi between NATO and Russia can be reached, Europe remains vulnerable to Russian aggression irrespective of the forces that the Alliance deploys on its soil. As Mölling and Major (2015) have argued, ‘Hectic activism risks a two-pronged security policy miscalculation: first, overemphasising the military dimension, both in the analysis of threats and the choice of instruments; and, second, planning to fight the last war all over again.’

**Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and NATO response force: a viable deterrent**

Whilst most measures that NATO has agreed upon are currently being implemented, some of the measures have already substantially increased the operational readiness of the Alliance. The Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) will be capable of reacting within a couple of days to external acts of aggression. For NATO’s land-based VJTF units, three parallel forces (Stand-up, Stand-by and Stand-down) are currently being set up. Yet-to-be-defined sea-based, air-based and special forces will accompany the land-based component of the rapid reaction force. One of the greatest advantages of the VJTF is its flexibility with regard to potential battle areas. As General Philip Breedlove, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, has argued, the VJTF is ‘a clear indication that our Alliance has the capability and will to respond to emerging security challenges on our southern and eastern flanks’ (NATO 2015).

In June 2015, NATO’s defence ministers also agreed to increase the NATO Response Force from 19,000 to 40,000 soldiers. Additionally, the Multi-National Corps Northeast is undergoing an upgrade to the status of a regional headquarters, which will bring oversight of the regional NATO Force Integration Units as well as land-based VJTF forces into its purview. These measures are being accompanied by extended air policing by NATO in the Baltics to deter Russian aggression in the short term. Adaptation measures for the NATO Response Force also include the implementation of NATO Force Integration Units in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Romania and Bulgaria. Germany and the US have also initiated the Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training Initiative, seeking to foster the military resilience of Poland and the Baltic states.¹

The US has implemented the European Reassurance Initiative, enabling the US both to maintain a continual rotational unit presence in the Baltics and Poland and to increase the number of bilateral exercises it carries out (Glatz and Zapfe 2016, 2–3). In June 2015, US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced the pre-positioning of approximately 250 armoured vehicles in Central and Eastern Europe. Some of this

¹ To appropriately frame current measures, NATO is operating under a formula of ‘persistent presence’, implying the continual presence of NATO units for joint and combined exercises and training on a rotational basis.
military equipment is deployed in the territory of the new member states. The equipment of the so-called European Activity Set will serve to supply a Heavy Brigade Combat Team of up to 5,000 soldiers, both for exercises in the context of the rotating presence and for deployments in the region.

The above measures serve to significantly augment the security of the Eastern European allies, even though Glatz and Zapfe (2015) have rightly pointed out that the Baltic states remain under the threat of potential Russian aggression. In fact, at its core, NATO’s policy has sought to refrain from openly breaking the NATO–Russia Council commitment to not station substantial military combat forces on a permanent basis in Eastern Europe. The steps taken to ensure a substantial strengthening of NATO’s military capabilities whilst preserving the ‘Western’ commitment of the 1990s has led some observers to conclude that NATO’s policies are contradictory (Glatz and Zapfe 2015).

However, such observation disregards the close connection between military preparedness and the need to pursue political solutions. Without a broad modus vivendi with Russia on conventional arms control and military codes of conduct, the Baltics would remain vulnerable to Russian aggression irrespective of the deployment of substantial NATO combat forces. Whilst the potential risks for the Baltic states continue to exist and should not be treated lightly, a more promising approach would link deployments in the Baltics and Poland with enhanced Euro-Atlantic arms control efforts. A report by the European Leadership Network (Kulesa 2016) has argued that a more stable security framework with Russia is most likely if both sides participate in confidence-building measures. Such measures could include the enhanced predictability of military exercises, dialogues on military doctrines and the restraining of forward conventional military deployments, as well as the downscaling of the importance of nuclear weapons and establishing a shared understanding of the new mutually binding rules (Kulesa 2016). As Richter (2014) has argued, the Euro-Atlantic security space would also benefit from the revival of an ambitious conventional arms control regime that could potentially eliminate the blurry characterisation of ‘substantial combat forces’ in the framework of the NATO–Russia Council. In the past decade, Russia has signalled its willingness to enter into mutual arms control agreements, primarily because they would guarantee Moscow an equal status in its relationship with the West and facilitate defence planning in Moscow in light of the substantial economic challenges it faces in the years to come.

Rather than unilaterally abrogating the pledges of the Founding Act in the field of combat force deployments, these could be utilised as a bargaining chip should Moscow prove unwilling to enter into a mutually acceptable conventional arms control regime. However, this option should only be used at the end of the process, not at the beginning. In the current absence of NATO–Russian negotiations, a transitional compromise could be found by establishing an adequate infrastructure for the substantial pre-positioning of military equipment without the deployment of actual forces. Irrespective of the permanent deployment of NATO combat forces in Eastern Europe, NATO’s deterrence posture would significantly increase if European NATO states qualitatively improved the components of national armed forces (Glatz and Zapfe 2015, 7).
The changing nature of the threat

At the same time, purely military measures against potential Russian aggression will not suffice to account for the evolving threat to NATO’s security. In fact, focusing on hard military factors might undermine necessary adaptation to the more likely conflict scenarios of the future. Today, Russia’s foreign policy behaviour is mainly derived from its weakness. Deyermond (2014) has argued that Russia, ‘with a narrow economic base, a declining population and continuing security troubles inside its borders . . . doesn’t look either as secure as other established, powerful states or as economically dynamic as the rising powers.’ From the Russian perspective, Deyermond argues, all great power prerogatives have come under threat in the past two decades. The current Russian approach thus originates in a predominantly defensive mindset that interprets the self-determination of the states on Russia’s periphery, as well as Western support of civil society movements in those states, as part of an ‘encroachment strategy’. Moscow translates this mindset into aggressive efforts to undermine state sovereignty, as well as attempts to sow disagreement among Western audiences.

Based on Russia’s persistent economic and relative military weakness, the central element of Russia’s current strategy is an attempt to force the US and the EU onto Russia’s playing field. In contrast to the Cold War, the development of Russia’s current foreign policy suggests that ‘hybrid warfare’ will be central to possible conflicts with Europe. Through a combination of military, political and economic tools—including cyber-attacks and enhanced intelligence measures—Russia is pursuing an asymmetric strategy that antagonises the West without provoking a full-scale confrontation with NATO (Kiesewetter and Zielke 2015). As Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov has argued, ‘The role of non-military means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of weapons in their effectiveness’ (Coalson 2014).

Mölling and Major (2015) have therefore argued that ‘The objective of using irregular tools is to exploit the weaknesses of the target community in order to destabilize a state and polarize its society. It expands the gray area between peace and conflict—force can still play a part, but is not directly attributable to any party to the conflict, nor does it have a clear military character.’ Russia’s attempt to utilise regional and global institutions (the Eurasian Union and the UN) to foster its security agenda can be interpreted as part of a broader development away from military conflicts towards escalation scenarios in which the global hyper-connectivity shifts confrontations towards areas such as economic warfare, the weaponisation of institutions, and physical and virtual infrastructure competition (Leonard 2016). In fact, according to Monaghan (2013), Russia’s greatest foreign policy achievements prior to the annexation of Crimea were the creation of a customs union and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Given these broader trends and Russia’s strategy to asymmetrically respond to Western weaknesses, the societal, economic and democratic resilience of European states and populations will be as important as military preparations for Russian aggression. Ukraine would arguably have been less exposed to destabilising efforts from
within if the elites had fostered an economically successful free market economy and an inclusive societal approach in the post–Cold War decades. In this regard, the economic vulnerability of Ukraine is as alarming as its lack of military capability to counter Russian aggression (Petro and Speedie 2016). Likewise, from a broader perspective, media freedom, the independence of constitutional courts, the functioning of multicultural societies and economic reforms in indebted European states are key to closing potential vulnerabilities to Russian hybrid warfare strategies.

Cohesiveness of the Alliance

Lastly, rather than deepening the cohesiveness of NATO, a permanent stationing of NATO’s military equipment and troops in Eastern Europe might cause a rift within the Alliance. Whereas Poland and the Baltic states have voiced their desire to permanently deploy substantial combat forces in Eastern Europe, other Eastern European member states have been more cautious in echoing such plans.

From Germany’s perspective, an abrogation of the NATO–Russia Founding Act would also raise doubts and questions about Berlin’s diplomatic resolve, which has so far been quite successful at navigating between imposing significant economic sanctions on the one hand, and serving as a mediator in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict on the other (Forsberg 2016). Andrew Monaghan (2013, 200) has argued that Europe’s sanctions on Moscow have undermined Russia’s actions, which he characterises as counterproductive as they ‘left Ukraine severely injured but alive, and even more alienated from its former protector. The policy brought Moscow a whole set of new economic problems: in particular, it prompted the EU to reinvigorate the slow and indecisive process of diversifying hydrocarbon suppliers away from Russia.’

In the run-up to the Warsaw Summit at the beginning of July, multiple allies have called for a more ambitious strengthening of NATO engagement on its southern frontiers. In contrast to a permanent stationing of military equipment in Eastern Europe, the existence of the VJTF sends a more balanced message to the whole of NATO as it avoids focusing on one single region of concern. Member states such as Italy and France are seeking to place a greater focus on stability in Central and North African states such as Tunisia. Again, this is not to say that NATO members should not be reassured. However, in contrast to permanent deployments, rapid reaction forces would not tilt the balance towards one single threat, but would keep more options open. The concept takes into account the justified security demands in Eastern Europe and Southern Europe, helps to balance the divergent security preferences within the Alliance, and strengthens efforts to foster economic and military deterrence towards Russia.
Challenges in the Middle East and cooperation with Russia

In addition to setting the wrong priorities, the abrogation of the NATO–Russia Council pledges could undermine stabilisation efforts in the Middle East. Whilst it would be wrong to neglect the fate of Ukraine, in the face of the severe challenges to NATO’s coherence in the Turkish–Russian conflict over Syria and the migration crisis, solutions to the Syrian and Iraqi civil wars are only possible if the West pursues cooperation with Russia. As Anatol Lieven (2015) has recognised, an increasing number of US intelligence and policymakers has realised that Washington and NATO would benefit from cooperation with Moscow and other states in order to restructure Iraq and Syria by implementing autonomous Sunni regions in Eastern Syria and Northern Iraq, as well as a Kurdish area in Northern Iraq. Russian participation in Europe’s Middle East strategy is essential for two reasons: first, because Russia has a highly effective air force based in Syria, no political solution can be reached without Moscow’s agreement. Second, because Iran’s agreement to any settlement in Syria will also be essential, Russia’s influence in Tehran will be necessary to its achievement (Lieven 2015).

Preventing a further deterioration in the bilateral relationship will only be possible if Germany and the EU as a whole preserve diplomatic and economic ties with both the long-standing NATO ally Turkey, as well as Russia. Whilst a NATO–Russian rapprochement on Syria might play to Russia’s desire to make up for its failures in Ukraine (Lukyanov 2016), a confrontation with Russia over the permanent deployment of NATO infrastructure in Eastern Europe would unnecessarily undermine diplomatic opportunities that could emerge when dealing with the Turkish–Russian conflict.

Conclusion

As argued in this article, NATO’s responses in the wake of Russia’s aggression have demonstrated the cohesiveness and willingness of its member states to defend themselves against Moscow’s aggression. However, NATO cannot provide economic and societal resilience. It is the EU that must take the lead in this, by fostering political developments at the member-state level. As Mölling and Major (2015) have stressed, ‘Most opportunities to take action on hybrid security are at the national and regional levels, putting particular responsibility for such policies on states.’

In the short term, a permanent NATO deployment could undermine US–Russian efforts to find common solutions in Syria without significantly enhancing the safety of the Baltic states. In contrast, a rapprochement between the US and Russia on the internal peace process in Syria might spill over into a more stable bilateral relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia, thereby making the broader region more peaceful. The decision to permanently deploy significant military infrastructure in the Baltics and Poland would unnecessarily jeopardise the Syrian peace process and the medium-term cohesiveness
of the transatlantic alliance, without adding much to the security of NATO’s Eastern European allies.

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The added value of EU defence research

Michael Gahler

Abstract  This article examines why the EU should finance defence research. The answers are found in the role the EU increasingly plays in guaranteeing its own security and providing security in Europe’s neighbourhood. Against this backdrop, and to compensate for the steady decline in defence research and technology investment, in 2013 the European Commission suggested undertaking preparatory action in this field. This initiative has received support from the European Council and the European Parliament on several occasions. The Parliament put itself in the driving seat for establishing a pilot project in the fiscal year 2015. All the ongoing efforts serve the purpose of establishing a fully fledged European Defence Research Programme starting in 2021. This programme could have the added value of catalysing future cooperative defence programmes, thus delivering urgently needed capabilities for European armed forces.
Keywords  EU defence | Defence research | Research and technology | Common security and defence policy | Added value | Horizon 2020 | Preparatory action

Introduction

Regarding the growing tasks that are to be dealt with at the European level, this article tries to shed light on the following question: why is it relevant to finance defence research at the EU level? While some politicians and experts are against such an EU funding scheme, this article makes the case that there are good reasons to launch such a common endeavour. This article highlights the untapped potential of a European contribution in this area, and the need for innovative defence equipment that would enable the EU to be a guarantor of its own security and act as a security provider. I also outline why critics of this scheme are wrong. This will be achieved by assessing the relevance of four statements:

1. Future EU research will focus on the military assets provided by the defence industries that serve our troops.
2. There is consistent political support for EU financing of defence research.
3. The European Parliament (EP) is the driving force behind defence research.
4. EU defence research is in line with the legal and ethical aspects of the Union.

Towards a European defence research programme

Against the backdrop of increasing risks and threats in Europe’s neighbourhood, the EU institutions are trying to secure Europe and establish a European defence research programme (EDRP). For the funding period from 2021 to 2027, the intention is to spend 3.5 billion euros on such a programme. This money would be dedicated to funding research to support capabilities that serve Europe’s strategic autonomy. The new capacity could fill the well-known shortfalls in ‘C4 (command, control, computers and communications)’ and in ‘coordination among different services and national contingents’ (EU Institute for Security Studies 2013, 10). Some of the points outlined in this article reflect the results of the report on European defence research by the Group of Personalities (GoP), which outlined the way towards an EDRP (EU Institute for Security Studies 2016). In the GoP, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, Elżbieta Bieniakowska, gathered representatives from politics, research institutes and industry to shape the plans for defence research and to give advice on long-term ambitions. In addition, this article also reflects the insights of a study which the European People’s Party Group initiated in the EP, which was conducted by Frédéric Mauro, a Parisian lawyer, and Professor Klaus Thoma, retired director of the Fraunhofer Institute’s Ernst-Mach-Institut.
As a first step towards this programme, the EP initiated a pilot project on defence research under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), allocating it 1.5 million euros from the EU budget for 2015–16. The European Commission must now recommend a preparatory action, establishing the intended EDRP with between 75 and 100 million euros in the budgets for 2017–19. The main objective of a pilot project and preparatory action is simply to explore new policy ground on an ad hoc basis, prior to the area being taken up formally during one of the EU’s subsequent multiannual operating frameworks.

The GoP report identified two objectives for the EDRP: improving Europe’s military capabilities and increasing its strategic autonomy. The term military capability covers different dimensions, including personnel, capacity, doctrine and training, and can be defined as ‘the ability to apply organized military force against an external military threat’ (UN 2005, 17). The concept of strategic autonomy has two dimensions: the political freedom of decision-making and the political–industrial freedom of action, covering ‘the capacity to produce, operate, deploy, maintain, modify and eventually sell one’s own weapons’ (Mauro and Thoma 2016, 38). Both concepts are two sides of the same coin, namely the CSDP, which forms an integral part of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The intended EU activity will concentrate on defence research and technology (R&T), which covers ‘basic research, applied research and technology demonstration for defence purposes’ (European Defence Agency 2016). R&T is a subset of research and development (R&D), which ‘encompasses programmes up to the point where expenditure for production of equipment starts to be incurred’ (European Defence Agency 2016). As a consequence, it will be up to the member states to take the results of EU-funded R&T activities and turn them into national R&D defence efforts leading to military capability. Future EU funding will only be possible in the area of R&T, because R&D refers to capabilities which remain in the hands of member states (art. 42 Treaty on European Union). The envisaged EU defence research budget would complement and supplement national activities. Indeed, the EU can bring added value by creating incentives for starting defence cooperation and forming collaborative armaments programmes. The European ‘collateral benefits’ would be increased levels of interoperability among our armed forces and lower prices per unit for military equipment.

Defence and research deserve to be high on the EU agenda

Looking at recent newspaper headlines, someone could argue that there are more important issues on the EU agenda than financing defence and defence research, such as the sovereign debt crisis or the refugee crisis. Indeed, in this context, it may not seem very wise to start calling for defence research to be financed from the EU budget. First and foremost, the member states are the primary guarantors of security and defence against external threats. Therefore, it should be up to them to finance defence research.
However, statistics not only show a continuous decline in defence investments, but an even more significant decrease in investment into defence R&T. A recent study used this alarming sentence when talking about this unsustainable situation: ‘European defence research comes to an end’ (Mauro and Thoma 2016, 42). The uncoordinated cuts in national defence research outlined above appear to be even more dramatic when they are compared to the projected huge increases in the defence and defence research budgets of non-democratic countries such as Russia or China.

In parallel with these external processes, the current challenges and future types of warfare underline the limited impact national actions might have on external powers and threats. The most recent operations in Afghanistan, Libya and Mali have shown that member states engage in military operations through multilateral frameworks or ad hoc coalitions of the willing. They have to do so because member states are no longer in a position to sustain the full spectrum of military capabilities for high-intensity warfare. This was recently illustrated with France’s invocation of the mutual EU defence clause (art. 42.7 TEU) following the terrible terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015. At the core of this clause is the general understanding that Europeans have to stick together in order to guarantee their common survival. All other achievements, such as our welfare states, are worth nothing if the Union is not able to deal with existential threats. The violent and illegal actions of Russia in our eastern neighbourhood have sadly proven that Europe has reached the point of facing real existential threats.

**The EU as a security provider needs to have innovative equipment**

In recent years one may have observed that the EU, a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, has taken on a more prominent role as a security provider outside its borders. This observation is supported by the positive impact of the EU’s sanctions on Iran and the EU’s role in finding a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear crisis. In addition, both the 17 civilian and/or military CSDP missions that have already taken place and the 19 missions that are currently ongoing have proven that the EU can act as a security provider in hostile environments, such as Afghanistan or Somalia.

In the twenty-first century the EU must be in a position to deploy military power to uphold and enforce its interests and values, preferably only if such action is provided for under international law and within a UN framework. This general understanding was established in the 2003 European Security Strategy, and will certainly be re-emphasised in the European Global Strategy to be published in June this year.

Against this backdrop, the successful deployment of military power will depend on the decisive operational advantage of the forces (Mauro and Thoma 2016, 33). This intended operational advantage is only possible if, among other factors, our forces are equipped with innovative defence products that preserve a technological advantage. Ensuring that this is the case is the role of R&T organisations and the research efforts...
of the defence industry. Future EU funding will enable them to provide disruptive technologies for European armed forces, thus achieving a decisive operational advantage over potential enemies. Finally, innovative defence products can improve the protection and survival of our troops in future operations. If we are ready as a Union to engage our servicemen and -women in operations abroad, we have to provide the necessary reliable equipment for the successful implementation of their operations and to guarantee their protection. Anything else would be grossly negligent.

A focus on the military assets provided by the defence industries that serve European troops

Ever since the Commission presented its initial idea of setting up a preparatory action on defence research, there have been sceptical voices out there. One main criticism is that the whole endeavour merely serves to finance the European defence industry. According to this view, EU R&T investments would simply be a form of subsidy for armaments companies.

It appears that these critics misunderstand the issue of the industry as the legitimate supplier of the military equipment ordered by politicians. The obvious link between cause and effect remains, as has been correctly described by Nick Witney: ‘The defence industry is there to support European defence ministries and their armed forces and not, as perhaps some others have tended to think, the other way round’ (UK House of Lords 2003).

Just recently one journalist even went so far as to ‘reveal’ that the published GoP report on European defence research had been written by the industry for the industry (Otto 2016). This is complete nonsense. When someone looks at the comprehensive list of GoP members (European Commission 2015), out of the 16 personalities only 6 represented the defence industry. The majority were representatives from the EU or national institutions, or were politicians or defence research experts.

The primary goal is to have an operational CSDP that enables the use of the EU’s toolbox to respond to external risks and threats. The European Defence Technological and Industrial Base and its integrated defence research are enablers for protecting European citizens. Parliamentarians put the protection of citizens first. Supporting our industry as ‘a major source of growth and innovation’ (European Parliament 2013) is a collateral profit which serves the primary objective of supplying defence equipment.
Continuous political support for EU financing of defence research

The main EU institutions have welcomed the journey towards an EDRP. Indeed, while some critics might say that ‘the EDRP is a still-born baby because of the lack of political will’, this statement can be proven to be wrong.

The recent history of EU defence research started with a Commission communication prior to the European Council meeting on defence in 2013. In this document the Commission proposed the idea of ‘launching a preparatory action for CSDP-related research focusing on those areas where EU defence capabilities are most needed’ (European Commission 2013, 5). In the follow-up to the communication this initiative was supported by the EU’s two budgetary authorities, the Council and the EP.

In my defence report, the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) welcomed the Commission’s initiative for a preparatory action. During the European Council meetings of December 2013 and June 2015, the highest political level of the EU, the heads of state and government, twice expressed its willingness to embark on EU defence research. The conclusions of the European Council (2015, 6) highlighted a key element: ‘. . . recalls the need for: the EU budget to ensure appropriate funding for the preparatory action on CSDP related research, paving the way for a possible future defence research and technology programme’.

Three elements characterised these conclusions. First the heads of state and government placed the intended financing of defence in the context of the EU budget. Second, the European Council specified for the first time that it wanted to have a focus on defence. Thus defence research, rather than civilian—military research, is the primary goal. Third, against the backdrop of the European Council’s call for ‘appropriate funding for the preparatory action’ (European Council 2015, 6), it makes sense to be ambitious and ask for a budget of 75–100 million euros over 3 years, as suggested by the GoP. This amount is ambitious because the average preparatory action in recent years has received two million euros per year. However, taking into account the following reasoning, this figure is not over-ambitious: ‘The Preparatory Action (PA) for CSDP-related research needs a sufficient budget to effectively test the governance scheme and the specific modalities to be employed as well as different categories of research activities (capability-driven and innovation-driven), notably including demonstrator development actions’ (EU Institute for Security Studies 2016, 26). According to the UK government’s definition, the main objectives of demonstrator activities are to: ‘Reduce technological or industrial risks in subsequent development; demonstrate novel system capability; provide pull-through link between research and projects’ (TTCP 2014).
The EP is the driving force behind defence research

In preparation for the 2015 budget, I led a group of MEPs from the European People’s Party Group and the Socialists and Democrats Group that turned words into deeds and launched a pilot project on CSDP-related research. It was the first time in the history of the EU that a budget line for defence had been created. Since then, the project has twice found support in the 2015 and 2016 budgets, receiving approval from both the Parliament and the Council. This pilot project was necessary because of delaying tactics within the Commission in early 2014 (Gahler 2014).

The pilot project allowed MEPs to emphasise their commitment to defence research. The project also allowed MEPs to express their strong interest in setting up a specific European governance structure to see how a relationship between the Commission and the European Defence Agency could work. Finally, the Parliamentarians clarified that the focus would necessarily have to be on defence and not on civilian–military (dual-use or bridging) applications. The current framework for security research within Horizon 2020 already provides initial support for these bridging technologies thanks to the EP. Member states and stakeholders should make full use of the possibilities already provided within the Security Research Programme of Horizon 2020. Member states should also further support the research mission that supports the Union’s external policies, including technological development in the area of bridging (or dual-use) technologies to enhance interoperability between civil protection and military forces (as stated in the specific programme establishing Horizon 2020).

EU defence research is in line with the legal and ethical aspects of the Union

In the past, critics have claimed that defence research and defence in general could not be funded from the EU budget. Although some restrictions in the Lisbon Treaty might lead to this conclusion, it has to be made clear that it is legal for the EU to begin funding of defence research. It would be excellent if the European Commission could finally clarify the legality of this based on the political will as expressed by the European Council and the EP.

Critics quote Article 41.2 of the Treaty on European Union as pointing to a ban on EU funding in the defence area. But this broad interpretation neglects an important point in the specific restriction provided in this article. The financial restriction only refers to financing an actual military operation outside of the EU. Accordingly, EU funding for the military before and after operations can be considered legal.

Some critics reference the provisions in Horizon 2020 when claiming that EU-funded defence research would be illegal. Article 19(2) of Regulation 1291/2013 establishing
Horizon 2020 stipulates: ‘Research and innovation activities carried out under Horizon 2020 shall have an exclusive focus on civil applications’ (European Commission 2014, 1).

Indeed, Horizon 2020 activities are limited to civilian–military research for civilian requirements. This means that it is not possible to consider specific military demands or requirements when defining a research project. However, this restriction is based on a political compromise rather than a legal restriction derived from EU primary law. Despite this, the current legal basis for the EU on R&T is clear as it covers ‘all Union activities’ (art. 179 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). Consequently, EU funding of research in support of CSDP activities is legal and can be ‘implemented in the field of research policy in the framework of Title XIX TFEU’ (Mauro and Thoma 2016, 47).

Another criticism relates to the allegation that EU defence research would not be in line with ethical concerns. All EU policies enumerated in its treaties have to be considered ethical. The idea behind this is simple: the governments and parliaments of the member states have accepted all EU policies mentioned in the Treaty of Lisbon through their ratification processes.

In conclusion, as in Horizon 2020, all activities carried out under a future EU defence research programme must comply with ethical principles and relevant national, EU and international legislation. Indeed, moral standards are an essential requirement and a guideline in the development of new (defence) technologies in our society.

**Conclusion**

For several reasons 2016 seems to be a pivotal year on the way towards an EDRP. In April the European Defence Agency made its first call for proposals, which is based on the pilot project and a delegation agreement between the Commission and the Agency.

The budget line concerning the preparatory action itself needs to be included by the Commission in the proposal for the general budget, at the latest in June 2016. Hopefully, at around the same time the Commission will present its communication accompanying the preparatory action. Also in 2016, MEPs will use the mid-term review of the multiannual financial framework to express their commitment to establishing an EDRP in the next multiannual financial framework, starting in 2021. Towards the end of the year, the Council and the EP will need to reach an agreement on launching the preparatory action in the 2017 budget year.

There are good reasons to continue on the path towards the EDRP. The stakes are high. But if potential risks can be addressed with vision and foresight, the EDRP could become a real game-changer for our armed forces.

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Michael Gahler Member of the European Parliament is the spokesperson on security and defence for the European People’s Party Group and a member of the Commission’s high-level group of personalities on defence research. He was the rapporteur of the EP report on the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base in 2013.
Intelligence sharing and the fight against terrorism in the EU: lessons learned from Europol

Oldřich Bureš

Abstract Ex-post investigations of major terrorist attacks in Europe have highlighted the contradiction between the seemingly free movement of terrorists across Europe and the lack of EU-wide intelligence sharing. In response, EU policymakers have repeatedly promised to improve intelligence sharing across Europe, and some have even floated the idea that Europol should be turned into a centralised EU criminal intelligence hub, akin to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. In this article, I argue that despite the clear need for borderless intelligence sharing as a response to borderless terrorism, Europol is highly unlikely to become a genuine intelligence agency in the foreseeable future. Experience to date with Europol suggests that it is one thing for Europe’s policymakers to make public promises to improve the fight against terrorism via better intelligence sharing across Europe, and quite another thing for them to persuade the relevant national agencies to comply.


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Keywords  Terrorism | Counterterrorism | EU | Intelligence sharing | Europol

Introduction

The recent terrorist attacks in Belgium and France have once again highlighted the contradiction between the seemingly free movement of terrorists across Europe and the lack of EU-wide intelligence sharing. Due to their earlier criminal activities, most perpetrators of the attacks in both Paris and Brussels were known to the various security agencies in several EU member states. For instance, the Abdeslam brothers had run a café in Brussels that was notorious for drug peddling. In early 2015, Belgian police questioned them about a failed attempt to travel to Syria, but they were not detained. Soon after, Dutch police stopped them during a routine traffic check, fined them €70 for carrying a small quantity of hashish and then released them because they were not listed in their national information system. Allegedly neither the French security agencies nor the EU coordinating agency, Europol, were informed of either of these incidents prior to the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015 (La Baume and Paravicini 2015). Similar stories of information non-sharing have emerged in the aftermath of other major terrorist attacks in Europe since the Madrid bombings in 2004. In response, EU policymakers have repeatedly promised to improve intelligence sharing across Europe, and some have even floated the idea that Europol should be turned into a centralised EU criminal intelligence hub, akin to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (Zimmermann 2006, 135).

In this article, I argue that despite the clear need for borderless intelligence sharing as a response to borderless terrorism, Europol is highly unlikely to become a genuine intelligence agency in the foreseeable future. My research on Europol suggests that it is one thing for Europe’s politicians to make public promises to improve the fight against terrorism via better intelligence sharing across Europe, and quite another thing for them to persuade the relevant national agencies, over which politicians usually exercise less than perfect control, to comply.

The structure of this article is as follows. Brief accounts of Europol’s original mandate and its post-9/11 counterterrorism role are offered in the first section. Sections two and three review the key obstacles to Europol’s counterterrorism coordination efforts and counterterrorism intelligence sharing, respectively. The concluding section offers a discussion of the possible ways for Europol to add tangible value in the area of counterterrorism and a summary of the key reasons why none of these are likely to materialise in the foreseeable future.

Europol’s counterterrorism mandate

Europol started limited operations on 3 January 1994 in the form of the Europol Drugs Unit. Progressively, other areas of criminality were added to Europol’s mandate, including countering terrorism. In the aftermath of 9/11, Europol’s counterterrorism mandate
was further expanded. A December 2002 Council Decision (Council of the European Union 2003) specifically stipulated that each member state must ensure that at least the following intelligence information is communicated to Europol:

- data which identify the person, group or entity;
- acts under investigation and their specific circumstances;
- links with other relevant cases of terrorist offences;
- the use of communications technologies; and
- the threat posed by the possession of weapons of mass destruction.

The Decision also provided for the appointment of specialised services or magistrates within the police services and judicial authorities, urgent priority treatment of requests for mutual assistance concerning persons and groups included in the EU terrorist list, and maximum access by the authorities of other member states to information on target persons and groups. In the last area, Europol's role is unique as it offers 'the only EU-wide platform for multilateral exchange and analysis of personal data in relation to organized crime and terrorism via a secure network which is subject to strict regulations on handling of data based on specific handling codes’ (Ratzel 2007, 113). The emphasis on the exchange of data on terrorism was further reinforced in Council Decision 2005/671/JHA, which stipulated that there must be one point of contact within each member state that collates 'all relevant information concerning and resulting from criminal investigation conducted by its law enforcement authorities’ and passes it on to Europol (Council of the European Union 2005).

Europol also gained the authority to ask the police forces of EU member states to launch investigations and to share information with the US FBI and other third parties, including Interpol, as well as with police forces in non-EU states. Information sharing and other forms of cooperation have also been progressively developed with other relevant EU agencies, including the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Police Chiefs Task Force and, perhaps most notably, Eurojust. Europol was also assigned to open and expand the terrorist ‘analysis work files’, created from information and intelligence provided by the police forces and intelligence services of the EU member states. A 24-hour counterterrorism alert unit has also been established within Europol, comprised of national liaison officers from police and intelligence services. In January 2015, a new European Counter Terrorism Centre was established within Europol. It is supposed to function as the central information hub in the fight against terrorism in the EU, providing analysis for ongoing investigations and contributing to a coordinated reaction in the event of a major terrorist attack.

It is important to stress, however, that as with other international police organisations such as Interpol, Europol is not an executive police force with the autonomous supranational authority to conduct its own investigations, undertake searches or arrest suspects. Instead, the objectives of Europol are to improve the effectiveness of and cooperation among national police authorities in the EU member states, primarily via facilitation of the exchange of information. Unlike all other international police organisations, however,
Europol was not formed from the bottom up by police professionals, but is the result of a top-down decision by the political and legislative bodies of the EU. This has had two important repercussions on Europol's counterterrorism role. On the one hand, Europol is ‘characterized by a degree of autonomy to determine specific means and objectives of its policing and counterterrorist programs’ (Deflem 2006, 340). On the other hand, and most importantly for this article, the top-down political decision to establish Europol may at least partly explain the lack of will shown by some relevant national law enforcement and intelligence agencies to work with and through this EU agency.

**Obstacles to Europol’s counterterrorism coordination efforts**

The impact of Europol’s counterterrorism measures is difficult to assess because there is relatively little information available publicly. Everything in this article is based on open, publicly accessible sources of information, complemented by interviews with relevant Europol experts (who preferred to remain anonymous). Moreover, the standard of comparison clearly matters when it comes to evaluating the added value of any type of policy. The problem is that despite the billions spent annually on counterterrorism, we still lack an adequate performance evaluation baseline from which to figure out what works and why. To some extent, this is due to the methodological difficulties of finding the right proxy indicators to complement the readily available, yet inherently limited quantitative criteria (such as the number of arrests or requests for assistance). Such criteria shed little light on the actual effects of counterterrorism measures on specific cultures, groups and individuals, and the most efficient counterterrorism measures in terms of increasing overall security may be problematic due to their impact on other important values such as liberty and justice (Guild and Geyer 2008).

Nevertheless, based on Europol’s annual reports, which contain at least some systematic data, some observers have argued that Europol has begun to play an increasingly important role in the fight against terrorism since 9/11. In the area of information sharing, however, even coordination has proven to be a difficult task. In part, this is because the political, administrative and judicial framework varies from one member state to another, which adds further impediments to effective information sharing and coordination. Moreover, according to a report by the European Commission (2004, 3), the free circulation of information is hindered by two additional obstacles:

The first is that the information tends to be compartmentalized at both organizational and legal levels. For example, it is divided between different ministries and services and is intended for use in different procedures, thereby affecting the nature and sensitivity of the information that can be handled by the services. The second obstacle is the lack of a clear policy on information channels, resulting in disagreement on the choice of channel and on how to handle sensitive and confidential information.
Another obstacle Europol faces with respect to counterterrorism is the fact that in some EU member states, terrorism is dealt with by police agencies, while in others intelligence agencies are responsible for counterterrorism. Cooperation across intelligence and police agencies can be difficult because they tend to be interested in different types of information: ‘police institutions tend to be interested in specific information about suspects in order to make an arrest, whereas intelligence agencies are very broadly interested in general information without prosecutorial purposes’ (Deflem 2006, 351). Moreover, some experts have also argued that given their different esprit de corps, ‘security services as a group do not think highly of police agencies and vice versa’ (Müller-Wille 2008, 57). Within the EU, difficulties with both police and intelligence cooperation are further compounded by the cultural and linguistic diversity that exists across the 28 EU member states.

More importantly, however, it seems that some do not necessarily welcome coordination from Brussels. Because of its top-down origins, the police forces and intelligence services of EU member states have often viewed Europol with a great deal of suspicion, believing that it infringes on their authority and autonomy. As Europol’s former director Jürgen Storbeck (Archick 2002, 9) explains: ‘For a policeman, information about his own case is like property. He is even reluctant to give it to his chief or to another department, let alone giving it to the regional or national services. For an international body like Europol, it is very difficult.’ However, as discussed in greater detail below, representatives of EU member states’ police and security agencies ‘do achieve cooperation in practical matters’ at meetings separate from those of the EU ministers and Europol (Deflem 2006, 348).

Counterterrorism intelligence sharing: Europol as an optional bonus only?

Intelligence sharing has arguably been one of the most problematic areas of the EU’s counterterrorism efforts. While there appear to have been gradual improvements over time, Europol has certainly struggled to transcend the traditional obstacles to intelligence sharing, and national security and law enforcement agencies are still too often reluctant to share ‘high-grade’, real-time intelligence on terrorism that can be acted on immediately. This is primarily due to the persistence of nationality in international policing and intelligence. Although numerous Council decisions and Commission proposals include an obligation for EU member states to share information, in practical terms, this duty has had little impact because it cannot force member states’ authorities to share more information, that is, intelligence that has not previously been disseminated. This is also confirmed by Europol officials: ‘We know that [national] intelligence services cannot share personal-related and operational-related data with us because of their very strict data protection regimes and there is no use talking it over’ (interview with a Europol official, September 2009).
In either case, information exchange with Europol headquarters is de facto voluntary, and the level of involvement from the various national units varies greatly from one EU member state to another. Consequently, although the intelligence and analysis capacities at Europol headquarters have improved considerably since 9/11, the volume of data that officially reaches Europol remains relatively low. There are several reasons for this, including the defence of sovereignty in matters of ‘national security’, which is further buttressed by a culture of secrecy and the independence of national services, which fear that confidential sources and methods of work could be compromised if intelligence is widely shared. In the case of Europol, these fears are further exacerbated by the fact that prior to 9/11, this EU agency was considered to be a law enforcement support unit only, while after 9/11, it was decided at the political level that Europol would support ‘all competent authorities, including the intelligence services, which were not necessarily ready for this change’ (interview with a Europol official, September 2009). As an alternative explanation, some analysts have suggested that intelligence is also ‘a “currency” to obtain other valuable information or political favors [and therefore] it is not appealing to share it on the basis of general rules with all EU member states’ (Bossong 2008, 19). Others have even argued that national security services may undermine community regimes by submitting low-quality information (Argomaniz 2011, 227).

Furthermore, even when they formally participate in international agencies such as Europol, European police agencies may be reluctant to share information in the absence of several prerequisites, most importantly a sense of mutual trust and a shared expectation of positive outcomes. These, however, cannot simply be created by EU legislation. Moreover, in practice there is a clear preference for bilateral cooperation, which many national agencies consider as ‘the most workable instrument’ from an intelligence perspective (Council of the European Union 2004, 19). As a consequence, ‘Europol represents but an optional bonus, of which the member states can avail themselves at free will’ (Müller-Wille 2004, 26).

An independent study ordered by the European Commission in 2007 provides another explanation for Europol’s shortcomings (John Howell & Co. 2007). The study suggests that the weakness of EU intelligence exchange is due to the presence of an ‘elephant in the room’. The authors recognise that counterterrorism intelligence sharing among member states takes place along two axes. The first axis consists of institutional actors, namely law enforcement, internal security, foreign intelligence agencies and policymakers. The second axis is geographical: global, regional and bilateral (including small-scale multilateral). The authors of the report claim that ‘one of the bilateral players, the USA, is so significant as to represent a separate class of interaction’ (John Howell & Co. 2007, 36). This is because the US (a) has an outreach policy in counterterrorism, (b) actively engages EU member states on policy formulation and implementation, (c) provides technical assistance in the form of training and equipment, and (d) exchanges data. As such, the US ‘is a de facto intelligence hub to which most MS [member states] are in some way connected’, and the ‘EU arrangements risk being crowded out by these relationships’ (John Howell & Co. 2007, 37).
Finally, while formally supporting political initiatives at the EU level, many EU member states simultaneously participate in numerous informal, practitioner-led multilateral networks (e.g. Club de Berne or the Police Working Group on Terrorism), often at the expense of supporting Europol (Bureš 2012). Because of their flexibility, relative independence from national governments and ability to include a broad range of participants on an equal footing, it is generally assumed that these informal networks ‘are more suitable for tackling governance problems or achieving common goals than more hierarchical and formal strategies’ (Den Boer et al. 2008, 103). Especially among professionals, informal horizontal cooperation arrangements are regarded as highly successful, pragmatic and flexible. In this light, it is hardly surprising that a number of studies concerning intelligence sharing consider the preference of EU member states for bilateral and informal multilateral arrangements to be natural and warn against hasty attempts to build supranational intelligence institutions (Benjamin 2005, 15; Müller-Wille 2004, 35–6).

Concluding remarks: towards a European FBI?

According to Müller-Wille (2004, 33), a supranational EU agency adds value if

- it produces something that is not, will not or cannot be produced at the national level; and
- the responsibility for a certain form of intelligence product is transferred to the European level, that is, if the European unit can relieve national authorities.

At the moment, Europol fails to meet either of these two preconditions. In contrast to some other EU agencies (e.g. the EU Satellite Centre or the Intelligence Division of the European Military Staff), the providers of intelligence to Europol are identical to its main customers—the national intelligence agencies of the member states. Currently, there is also ‘no EU function that requires, let alone depends on, intelligence support from Europol’ (Müller-Wille 2004, 31). This, in combination with the fact that no other unique responsibilities have been transferred from the national level to Europol, leads to a duplication that sets the limit for Europol’s intelligence role: ‘Simply put, whatever Europol does has to be produced at the national level as well’ (Müller-Wille 2004). Müller-Wille therefore argues that the incentive for EU member states’ national agencies to feed Europol with intelligence is rather limited because they still carry full responsibility for producing the intelligence support required for national security and, as such, cannot be dependent on Europol:

No national service can argue that it failed to foil a terrorist plot because Europol did not do its job accurately. Neither the government nor the public would accept such an explanation. Therefore, national services maintain the task of producing and providing national law enforcement authorities with accurate and complete intelligence. Hence, they cannot and will not rely on Europol’s contribution. (Müller-Wille 2004, 56)
Since Europol’s work parallels the work of national agencies when it comes to information analysis, and merely complements the bi- and multi-lateral cooperation arrangements that predate it, it is understandable that many national agencies perceive information sharing via Europol as an extra burden rather than as adding value.

It is also worth remembering that it was primarily for political reasons that terrorism was not originally included in Europol’s agenda when it was created in 1994. Moreover, full consensus has not yet emerged on the role and future of Europol. While some EU member states, including Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands, would indeed have liked to see Europol evolve into an organisation with an independent investigative role like the US FBI, others, including Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the UK, have opposed such an evolution, preferring instead to keep investigative authority at the national level with Europol acting as a coordinating body (Zimmermann 2006, 135). Disputes like this indicate that at least for some member states, it may still be too early to allow the EU to have an influential role in traditionally state-specific areas such as policing, criminal justice and intelligence gathering. This was recently acknowledged by Europol’s director Rob Wainwright (Le Baume and Paravicini 2015), who stated that while there is pressure on his agency to take on more of a ‘front-line’ role, it would be politically difficult to extend his organisation’s mandate beyond the role ascribed to it in the Lisbon Treaty, which is to support national law enforcement services by collecting, analysing and exchanging information.

Finally, it is important to note that in some cases, there may be good reasons for caution in sharing sensitive information with an EU agency—in particular, for the intelligence services the protection of sources is paramount; the originators of intelligence must be confident that the organisation with which it is shared is secure and that it will not be passed on to a third party without their permission. As aptly summarised in a report for the British House of Lords in the aftermath of the London terrorist attacks in 2005:

Ensuring that agencies exchange information effectively cannot be achieved solely by agreeing general principles such as the principles of equivalent access and availability. Such principles can place a general obligation on agencies to share information but they cannot ensure that that happens without a build-up of knowledge and mutual trust between the agencies (UK House of Lords, EU Committee 2005).

There is of course a possibility that over time Europol will succeed in convincing both the national policymakers and the relevant national security agencies that it can be trusted, even in the highly sensitive area of counterterrorism. However, the process of trust-building is likely to be rather long. After all, even in the US, it took 132 years before the FBI was formally established in 1908.

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One year after Minsk II: consequences and progress

Robert Golanski

Abstract  Ukraine is currently undergoing one of the most decisive phases since its independence. It has to both contain the Russian aggression in Donbas and deal with the consequences of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula. This requires substantial effort and resources, which Ukraine is lacking. At the same time, it is also undergoing a deep and comprehensive transformation process in order to have a chance of firmly standing on its own feet. The struggle for security (survival) and the future (development) is continuing in parallel. The article argues that the Minsk II agreements are unlikely to be implemented in the foreseeable future due to the political calculations of Russia, which is playing the blame game with Ukraine. The article also reasons that Ukraine has a unique window of opportunity to focus on reforms, thus building the pillars of its future strength, as it has been able to avoid the deterioration of the security situation in the east.
**Introduction**

President Jimmy Carter’s National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote that: ‘The loss of Ukraine was geopolitically pivotal, for it drastically limited the Russia’s geopolitical options’. He went on to say, ‘However, if Moscow regains control over Ukraine, with its 52 million people and major resources as well as its access to the Black Sea, Russia automatically regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state, spanning Europe and Asia’ (Brzezinski 1997).

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian political leaders have had a difficult time accepting the notion of an independent Ukraine. What tipped the balance for Russia was the planned signing of the EU–Ukraine Association Agreement/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November 2013. The conclusion was that Russia was losing Ukraine.

The Kremlin had begun applying pressure on Ukraine in summer 2013, when it imposed restrictive measures on Ukrainian exports to Russia. However, Russia crossed the Rubicon when it illegally annexed Crimea and launched a military attack in Donbas in early spring 2014. These actions were attempts by Russia to keep Ukraine in its sphere of influence by force. The former was the first case of a forcible change of a border of one European country by another since the end of the Second World War, and it violated one of the most important principles of the current international order. By doing so Russia violated the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and contravened international law and its own commitments thereto.¹ Both Crimea and Donbas are practical realisations of ‘hybrid war’.² In Donbas military hostilities have been ongoing since spring 2014. Russian proxy pseudo-states have been created in the occupied territories of Donbas—the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic and the Luhansk People’s Republic—which are formally controlled by Russia. Both so-called states are instruments in the hands of the Russian Federation.

The agreement reached in Minsk in February 2015 during the Normandy Format talks³ is an important point of reference for any political attempts to resolve the situation.

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¹ This action contravened the UN Charter, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances.

² The term ‘non-linear war’, as referred to by Galeotti (2014), a Russia specialist from New York University, could also be applied here. The tactics of the Russian state have been very well described by General Gerasimov (2013), chief of staff of the Russian Armed Forces. The aggressor in a hybrid war is hard to pin down (there is no formal declaration of war, its involvement is concealed), and the intensity of the conflict varies, thus the aggressor is not a direct threat to the lives of the majority of the population. However, such an attack seriously strains the resources of the country experiencing it, in a comparable way to a war situation. It includes a wide variety of military and non-military measures, both overt and covert, used to destabilise the political, social and economic situation of the country under attack by creating confusion and chaos.

³ The ‘Normandy Format’ is the name given to government-level meetings between Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine. The first meeting took place on 6 June 2014 on the margins of the ceremony to commemorate the 1944 Allied landings in Normandy.
in Donbas. All the parties that contributed to the agreement becoming a reality have underlined that there is no alternative and have publicly stated their strong support for it. The devil, however, is in the detail. The role of Ukraine in the agreement can only form part of the success of Minsk II. The stronger part—Russia and its proxies—has been proven to be genuinely uninterested in delivering on its commitments, as this would weaken its current position in Ukraine. This is rational behaviour from Russia’s point of view.

Ukraine’s situation within the Normandy Format is therefore very complicated. Russia, the aggressor, which claims that the situation in Donbas is a ‘civil war’ (Ukraine Today 2014), sits at the negotiating table and appears to be trying to look for a diplomatic solution. Russia is like a wolf in sheep’s clothing. In his 2016 posture statement, the departing Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, US Air Force General Breedlove (2016) said:

Russia modulates these conflicts by manipulating its support to the participants, while engaging in diplomatic efforts in order to preserve its influence in the affected regions. Just as the Soviet Union dominated the nations of the Warsaw Pact, Russia coerces, manipulates, and aggresses against its immediate neighbours in a manner that violates the sovereignty of individual nations, previous agreements of the Russian government, and international norms.

At the moment, Ukraine and its Western allies do not have the necessary leverage to force Russia to fulfil its commitments, despite the sanctions regime and Russia’s deteriorating economic situation. Yet the security situation in Donbas, however fragile due to constant violations of the ceasefire, is not deteriorating in strategic terms. This is due to the increased resilience of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, which have become an agile fighting force over the last two years. In the foreseeable future we should not expect any significant change of balance in this respect. Therefore, Ukraine should focus its efforts on where it can substantially change the reality on its own. That is, on the transformation of the state, and on reforms and efforts to build a genuinely democratic system. Times of national crisis can be transformational (Lough and Solonenko 2016). Only a strong and healthy Ukraine, with effective institutions, transparent procedures, a robust economy and functioning rule of law, will become resilient to Russian pressure and be able to be a more equal partner to the West. From that position of relative strength, it will be able to more effectively advance its interests and will have the means to try to overcome the aggression in Donbas, as well the occupation of Crimea, which is too often omitted in the public discourse.

**Minsk II**

Since the beginning of the Russian aggression, the capital of Belarus has been the focus of international diplomatic efforts. The first Minsk Protocol was agreed on 5 September 2014 after six months of fighting. The Protocol aimed to establish an immediate

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4 Followed by the adoption of the Minsk Memorandum on the 19 September 2014.
ceasefire in Donbas. The ceasefire was, however, short-lived and did not lead to the expected permanent cessation of hostilities. The security situation in Donbas in the second half of 2014 continued to deteriorate.

Early 2015 brought an intensification of fighting in the region. Heavy fighting in and around the airport in Donetsk and at the transit hub in Debaltseve, and the death of a dozen people on a bus hit by a mortar in Volnovakha (BBC News 2015), as well as the constant shelling of residential areas in the city of Mariupol (Kononczuk and Wilk 2015), are just some examples of the results of this escalation.

Against this backdrop, the leaders of the Normandy Format met in the Belarusian capital of Minsk on 11 February 2015 to try to de-escalate the spiking conflict, agree to a ceasefire and work out a political solution to the conflict. Following a 16-hour marathon of negotiations, a new ceasefire was agreed upon and was translated into the 13-point ‘Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements', known as Minsk II. In the joint statement issued, the leaders reaffirmed their full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, underlined that there is no alternative to an exclusively peaceful settlement and noted their intention to use their influence on the relevant parties to facilitate the implementation of the agreement (Germany, Federal Foreign Office 2015).

Minsk II constitutes a comprehensive catalogue of undertakings, ranging from security and political to economic and constitutional changes. Its full implementation, conducted in good faith, would allow a de-escalation of tensions and would end the fighting. It would give Ukraine the desperately needed control over its own border, but at the same time would ‘regularise’ the pro-Russian proxies in the Ukrainian political and legal landscape.

**Minsk II, one year on: the state of implementation**

The Minsk II Agreement deadline of 31 December 2015 was not kept and thus has been further extended into 2016. This is the best indication that it is far from being implemented. It is therefore questionable whether the aim of a serious de-escalation has been achieved. A complete ceasefire has not been achieved. Violations occur on virtually a daily basis. The withdrawal of heavy weapons is hard to fully verify because of the difficulty that the international monitors from the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (SMM OSCE) (OSCE 2015) have had in getting permanent access to the pro-Moscow separatist-held territories.

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5 This was agreed by the Normandy Format during a conference call on 30 December 2015.
6 The SMM OSCE was set up in Ukraine on 21 March 2014 following a decision of the Permanent Council of the OSCE. Its current mandate was extended in February 2016 to 31 March 2017, with the option of a further extension if necessary.
The periodic intensification of ceasefire violations suggests that heavy weapons continue to be used. This has also made it impossible for the SMM OSCE to set up an effective monitoring regime.

Elections in the self-proclaimed People’s Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk have been postponed until 2016. However, since this decision was made there has been no serious progress on the modalities of the elections in Donbas as agreed in Minsk. These elections should be held under Ukrainian law and in accordance with recognised international standards, monitored by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. A security environment that is conducive to stability during the campaigning and polling will also be needed.

The issue of amnesty has not yet been resolved. The new law has been adopted, but it has not yet been sent to the president for promulgation. The Ukrainian authorities consider it only reasonable to expect that an amnesty law can only be put into force once the conflict it concerns has come to a definite end (Beznosiuk 2016).

The release of all hostages and illegally detained persons has not yet been fully carried out. The sentencing of Servicewoman Nadiya Savchenko to 22 years in prison, which has become a symbolic case, best illustrates the lack of progress.

International humanitarian organisations are not enjoying unimpeded access to the rebel-held territories, where the so-called authorities require them to be ‘accredited’. On the other hand, Russian ‘white convoys’ regularly access these areas. The humanitarian situation in the conflict-affected territories continues to be dire.

Fulfilment of the ‘restoration of full social and economic links with affected areas’ is being realised via the delivery of gas and electricity, as well as the payment of pensions and other benefits by the Ukrainian state. In the latter case this involves ordinary people crossing from the Ukrainian-controlled territory to separatist-held territories. Additionally, infrastructure is being repaired (gas, water and electricity lines) when destroyed, as the security situation permits.

Ukraine has not regained full control over the nearly 500-km-long strip of border with Russia in Donbas, hence the withdrawal of Russian troops and mercenaries has not materialised, and the supply of weapons and manpower from Russia to the separatists continues.

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7 In Donetsk from 18 October 2015 and in Luhansk from 1 November 2015, as agreed by the Normandy Format meeting in Paris on 2 October 2015.
8 The law, ‘On the prohibition of persecution and punishment of individual participants in events in the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts’, was adopted in September 2014.
9 On 21 April the 51st Russian humanitarian convoy entered Donbas (Gorshenin Weekly 2016, 6).
10 As the Ukrainian banking system does not function in the rebel territory.
Constitutional reform, particularly focusing on decentralisation, has already started in Ukraine. On 31 August 2015, a draft law on amending the constitution in the area of decentralisation was adopted at first reading. The law includes clauses on the special status of certain regions of Donbas (the occupied territories). However, the vote following the second reading has thus far not taken place. A qualified majority (300 votes) is required for the adoption at second reading, and this has not yet been secured. Moreover, a law granting special status to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions was adopted in September 2014. It can only take effect once the security situation in Donbas has been permanently resolved.

At the security conference in Munich this year, Russia’s Prime Minister Medvedev accused Ukraine of being responsible for stalling the implementation of the Minsk Agreement as, according to him, the country is not showing sufficient ‘will and a desire’, in contrast to Russia’s ‘reasonable flexibility’ (Medvedev 2016). However, the Russian side bears overwhelming responsibility, together with its proxies, for sustaining the current unstable security situation. Stabilisation of the security situation can be achieved both once Ukraine regains control over its border and consequently stops the influx of weapons and mercenaries, and once the SMM OSCE is able to effectively monitor the ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons by having full access to all rebel-held territories. The Russian blame game as witnessed in Munich is an old technique from the Soviet tool-box, aimed at diverting interest from where the real problem lays, creating more confusion and diluting one’s own responsibility. The progress in fulfilling Minsk II is poor at best. This is because the Russian side, together with its proxies, does not see any practical gain from its fulfilment. It is therefore a desirable instrument in sustaining the beneficial status quo of a grey zone.

Beyond Minsk II: the way forward in Ukraine

What is the Russian nightmare scenario in Ukraine? It is Ukraine becoming a normally functioning country; having successfully transitioned from a post-Soviet to a European democratic state; and having managed to overcome the heritage of corruption, cronyism, incompetence, patronage and privileged access, and pursuit of personal interests at the expense of the whole. This permanent change of mentality is probably a much more dangerous threat to Putin and his system of power than a colour revolution or a Maidan on Red Square in Moscow.

In order to become resilient to any Russian threats and destabilisation, Ukraine must become a normally functioning democracy, with respect for the rule of law and a free market economy. It needs an independent, effective and fair judicial system; a prosecutorial service which represents the interests of the people and not of the privileged; a civil

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11 A controversial ruling of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine from 15 March 2016 reviewed the process of amending the constitution, which now no longer has to take place within two consecutive sessions of the parliament.
service based on meritocracy; good governance; macro-economic stability; and the ability to unlock the potential of the economy by cutting red-tape (through the deregulation of various sectors, de-monopolisation, the elimination of the unnecessary burden of vast licences and permissions, and a reduction in the influence of often-corrupt bureaucrats on the economy, public procurement and taxation reform). Last but not least, Ukraine needs to eradicate corruption. It needs strong and independent institutions and transparent procedures.

Transparency in public and economic life needs to become the new norm. The reform task that the Ukrainian authorities have been facing since early 2014 is unprecedented and can probably only be compared, taking all the differences into account, with the challenges faced by the reform-oriented governments in the Visegrád and Baltic states in the early 1990s.

Many new laws reforming the state and creating new institutions have been adopted during the last two years. The zeal for reform is unprecedented in Ukrainian history. However, whether the reforms are a success will depend on the implementation of those laws and the operational activities of those new institutions. After two years it is still not possible to state without a doubt whether the reforms have reached a critical mass and have become irreversible. Moreover, there is frustration among Ukraine’s Western partners that reforms are becoming the victims of traditional power struggles among the Kyiv elite. This was best expressed recently by Christine Lagarde (2016), managing director of the International Monetary Fund, who had sobering words to offer: ‘Ukraine risks a return to the pattern of failed economic policies that had plagued its recent history. It is vital that Ukraine’s leadership acts now to put the country back on a promising path of reform’. Therefore, Ukraine needs to remain under permanent strong pressure from the EU and the international community to deliver and avoid reform fatigue.12

The failed vote of no-confidence in the Yatsenyuk government on 15 February has shown that the position of oligarchs in Ukrainian politics remains strong. De-oligarchisation was one of the central demands of the Revolution of Dignity (Kościński 2016). It is probably second in importance to eradicating corruption. The influence of the oligarchs is still overwhelming. They are not interested in promoting reforms that strengthen transparency and the rule of law, or in eradicating corruption. This will continue to be a big challenge for any reform-minded Ukrainian authorities.

The single most important challenge is the eradication of corruption. This is possibly the source of all problems in Ukraine. One of the first steps to overcoming the culture of corruption is to decrease the incentives behind it, first by increasing the salaries in the administration, but also by harshly naming, shaming and prosecuting all acts of corruption. The newly established anti-corruption institutions13 will have a big role to play. A zero-tolerance policy must function on all levels of society and government. Determination, courage and political will are necessary to combat corruption.

12 Otherwise the currently temporary suspension of the payment of the next tranche of $1.7 billion in financial support from the IMF, and the €600 million of macro-financial assistance from the EU tied to it, will become permanent.
13 The National Anti-Corruption Bureau, the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption and the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office.
On 1 January, the provisional implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the EU, which had been postponed by 18 months, came into force. This agreement is a bone of contention between Russia and Ukraine. It provides a detailed roadmap for the comprehensive reforms that Ukraine is required to undertake. Once implemented, it will allow Ukraine to accept the majority of the EU acquis, approximating its standards, increasing the competitiveness of its economy and improving the investment climate. It will create a free trade area between the EU and Ukraine, leading to increasing trade between the two and thus opening up the 500-million-consumer-strong single market to Ukrainian business. It offers a very serious incentive to boost the economy and will provide something more than just trade benefits. It will serve as a kind of Copernican revolution, forcing Ukraine to cut off its Soviet heritage of kleptocracy and move in the direction of Western standards and norms. This will provide a strong transformative push in the long run, the positive impact of which should not be underestimated.

The success of the Ukrainian reforms will depend on the government’s determination, political will, and continuous communication with society to explain the costs and benefits of them. The role of civil society as a bottom-up driver and an effective watchdog of reform will be particularly crucial to its success. Not fulfilling the comprehensive reform agenda will have a more far-reaching and negative strategic effect on Ukraine in the long run than the failure of Minsk. On the other hand, the success of the Ukrainian reforms will ensure that Ukraine is not a low-hanging fruit for Russia to pick.

Conclusions

For Russia the Minsk II Agreement is a convenient political and diplomatic tool for sustaining the current state of ‘not an entirely frozen conflict’ (Wilk et al. 2016) in Donbas. It is a bargaining chip. Russia will operate flexibly by fulfilling one requirement, stalling on another and at the same time accusing the Ukrainian side of having no desire whatsoever to deliver on anything. This should come as no surprise. After all, coercion, manipulation and deception are basic Russian foreign policy tools. Minsk simply provides tactical leverage to keep Ukraine and the West busy focusing their attention and political capital on looking for ways to ensure that its implementation occurs. As long as that is the case, Ukraine will continue to be a hostage of the agreement. We have to see beyond Minsk. That is why reforms should be the focus for Ukraine. Reforms will not supplement security, but at the moment—and in the foreseeable future, assuming that the security situation does not deteriorate—there is a window of opportunity for Ukraine to strengthen its resolve and try to stand firmly on its own feet.

The world-views of the West and Russia conflict—indeed, they are irreconcilable. The situation of Ukraine has shown this very clearly. Freedom, democracy and international rule-based order are being defied by spheres of influence, revisionism and coercion. Russia considers the international order as developed after the fall of Communism to be unjust and to not sufficiently take its interests into consideration. Therefore, it is challenging this world order with the goal of changing it. That is why Ukraine today is the setting for a geopolitical struggle. The outcomes of this struggle will determine the future of those world-views.
When analysing Russian actions in Ukraine, the words of Winston Churchill (2014) from his famous Iron Curtain speech delivered in Fulton in 1946, come to mind: ‘From what I have seen of our Russian friends and allies during the war, I am convinced that there is nothing they admire so much as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than for weakness, especially military weakness.’ Weakness is no longer an option for Ukraine.

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**References**


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Obstacles to a Syrian peace: the interference of interests

Ingrid Habets

Abstract  Syria’s peaceful revolution for dignity and democracy turned into a brutal civil war when the regime of Bashir al-Assad continued to commit atrocities against its people. Since then the war has become complicated, involving jihadist groups, regional actors and the international community. This article outlines the difficulties of creating a peace process for Syria, given not only the opposing interests of the groups at war, but also those of the international community. Two models for peace negotiations, those of Palestine and Sudan, are then analysed as possible paths for the Syrian negotiations. While it should be remembered that the war is a result of a call for dignity, an outcome that does not appease Iran, Turkey, Russia, the West and Saudi Arabia will simply be impossible to achieve.

Keywords  Syria | Peace agreement | Russia | Iran | The West | Turkey | Local level

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Introduction

The fifth anniversary of the Syrian revolution last March did not have much to celebrate—nothing at all really. The peaceful protests, once filled with hope, have been replaced by a brutal civil war with a much-hated dictator still in his seat and a country in ruins. Millions of people have been internally displaced or have fled the country, and thousands have been murdered or tortured, including children. Syria’s infrastructure is in tatters and a whole generation has been lost.

Syria’s war has not remained an in-country war, but has had an impact on the region, as well as on Europe and the world. The flow of millions of refugees risks destabilising the already-prone-to-conflict region and feeds the rhetoric of far-right parties in Europe, creating a hostile environment for the refugees arriving there. Furthermore, Islamic State (IS) has seized the opportunity to conquer patches of territory and spread fear and terror in the region and further afield. Old conflicts have reappeared, with Turkey being distrustful of the Kurdish involvement in fighting IS, and Iran and Saudi Arabia fighting a proxy war over religious hegemony.

The involvement of superpowers such as the US and Russia, and also the EU, supporting one or another faction in the civil war may complicate the process of ending the war and make it even more difficult to find a peaceful solution. This article looks into how the Syrian war has developed, the involvement of the international community and regional powers, and what efforts could be made to build peace.

From peace to war: towards a global conflict

Two months after Syrian President Bashar al-Assad declared that ‘he considered Syria immune to the revolutions’ (Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies and Syrian Expert House 2013, 41), peaceful protests broke out in the streets of Deraa. Fed up with the humiliation of the state’s repression and encouraged by the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, the citizens of Syria called for dignity, liberty and democracy. The regime struck back violently against the peaceful protests, using heavy weapons and tanks against civilians, and has continued to commit atrocities since. Many army officials refused to take part in the crack-downs and deserted to form the Western-backed Free Syrian Army. When Assad refused to step down and start the process of political transition, they explicitly pledged to free Syria from the Assad regime. Consequently, Syrian society was polarised between pro- and anti-Assad groups ready to fight each other; the Syrian revolution had reached a point of no return, after which the conflict could only be solved militarily (Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies and Syrian Expert House 2013, 42).

Since then, many armed groups, such as the secular Syrian Democratic Forces and the Kurdish People’s Defence Units (YPG), have appeared to fight against the Assad regime. So too have Islamist groups, such as the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Jabhat Al Nusra, the Turkey- and Saudi-backed Jaysh al-Islam and Ahrar al-Sham (both considered...
terrorist organisations by Russia and Iran) (Wood 2016), and IS. Furthermore, the secular factions have also fought against IS, but when Russian air strikes targeted their troops, the Free Syrian Army had no choice but to cooperate with the Islamist factions in order to withstand the increased governmental attacks.

The war in Syria cannot be seen as black and white. It is no longer merely a war between a dictator and its citizens, but has also become a war between Sunni and Shia, and between moderates and radicals. Many of the violent actors are also seen as saviours. For example, IS has provided security for some of the families of deserters—the Assad regime has been known to torture or even kill members of the families of those who desert from the Syrian army. Some of these groups are backed by Iran or Saudi Arabia, and others by Western powers such as the US.

The ambivalent reaction from the international community has contributed to the humanitarian crisis. Millions of people have fled the country or have been internally displaced. Thousands have been tortured or killed, or are missing. The massive flow of refugees has spilled into neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey—and also into Europe, where it has caused turmoil among the member states and is affecting the highly cherished concepts of freedom of movement and open borders.

This crisis will not disappear without international involvement—it is more likely to fester and create more problems. Due to its strong security apparatus, the Assad regime has been able to hold on to power for much longer than its counterparts in the region. The opposition is fractured into many factions. Some are armed; some are not. Some receive support from the West, Russia and/or Turkey, as the case may be. Others have been rejected by one or more of these same three entities. Radical Islamist groups have arisen, and Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda have also contributed to the destabilisation. Finally, the chaos in the region has allowed IS to rise up and create fear, while conquering large swathes of territory.

The insistence by all factions that Assad should step down will not solve the political crisis that is part of the war. The toppling of a dictator does not per se create a democracy, as has been seen in Libya, as state institutions need to be built in order to sustain a democratic system. The demand for removal is a legitimate one, but it needs to be accompanied by much more action aimed at securing peace.

Why is peace so hard to achieve?

Currently, both sides are convinced that they can win. With Russia’s support Assad has been able to win back important pieces of territory, but the moderate rebels have not given up. However, a stalemate would not automatically lead to peace. What is more likely is that the conflict would be left unresolved, increasing the probability of hot spots flaring up. Why is it so difficult for the fighting parties to negotiate a peace deal?
A year after the start of the conflict, the UN tried to mediate between the parties to reach an agreement to stop the violence and make peace. The current UN and Arab League Envoy to Syria, Staffan De Mistura held various rounds of negotiations in Geneva, inviting the fighting parties as well as a whole array of other actors. However, there were many problems that arose both prior to and during the negotiations that De Mistura was not able to overcome. First, prior to the start of the round, the parties to the conflict and the international community could not agree on who should sit at the negotiating table. Second, the moderate opposition refused to meet with Assad, as it insisted on a solution which would remove Assad from office. Third, preconditions were demanded, such as a ceasefire and the delivery of humanitarian aid, which De Mistura refused to agree to. Fourth, the parties did not wish to talk to each other, so De Mistura had to settle for shuttle diplomacy back and forth between each room that contained a delegation. As alliances shifted or deals were made, some groups were allowed into the next round of negotiations while others’ invitations were suddenly withdrawn. In the meantime, the presence of various international actors complicated the scene (Rozen 2016).

A Russian curve ball

At the point when the Syrian regime was losing more territory to either IS or the moderate armed opposition, Assad invited Russia to join its fight against IS. The proclaimed intention of this invitation turned out to be false, as Russia equally bombed territory controlled by the moderate opposition, and even civilian targets, such as hospitals. Russia saved Assad from defeat and handed the lead in the conflict back to him (Birnbaum and Naylor 2016). However, to everyone’s surprise, on 14 March 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin pulled back the majority of his troops, stating that ‘Moscow had succeeded in enabling Syrian government forces and their allies to turn the tide of the conflict in favor of the regime’ (Salih 2016). This withdrawal also put Assad in his place, showing him that Putin holds all the cards. Just prior to this, in February, the US and Russia had brokered a cessation of hostilities which has enabled the parties to work towards a viable negotiation round. While the cessation is not a ceasefire (which would require monitoring and should aim to avoid a frozen conflict), the violence in the country has fallen by 90 % (CBS News 2016). However, the cessation is not based on a fundamental agreement to work towards peace, but is a deal between two external powers, and is therefore unsustainable. It has also ensured a strong position for Russia at the negotiating table, and has secured a place for Assad too. For Putin it seems important that the negotiations succeed, otherwise he may have to send his troops back in (Gulf Times 2016). As always, it is difficult to foresee, or even to understand, what Putin’s strategy is, as he has many curve balls up his sleeve. Putin’s zero-sum games seem to suit him much better than they suit the West, which is not willing to play such high-stakes games.
Everyone wants a piece

Unlike Russia and Iran, the West has from the beginning called for the removal of Assad, in addition to calling for a moderate opposition. This changed after US Secretary of State John Kerry met with Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov in December 2015. In a subsequent statement, Kerry said that ‘Assad can stay’, but three days later US President Barack Obama reversed that announcement, saying ‘Assad must go’ (McAdams 2015). This painfully highlights Putin’s influence and mastery of diplomacy. But so far the West has not undertaken any military action against Assad’s troops. Without a mandate this would be difficult to do, but the US has provided military assistance to moderate opposition groups, and has ordered air strikes against IS in Syria as part of an international coalition. The aim of these air strikes was primarily to destroy IS, but they also brought relief to the moderate opposition, which was taking fire from Assad’s army and IS, and later from Russia as well. Meanwhile, the EU has abstained from military involvement and has focused on providing humanitarian assistance instead. However, individual member states such as the UK and France have carried out air strikes against IS.

The Turkish government has a lot to gain and a lot to lose in the Syrian conflict. The millions of refugees that have come from Syria have caused problems in Southern Turkey, but have simultaneously put Turkey in a position of power, especially vis-à-vis the EU. However, the rise of armed Kurdish groups that are supporting the West’s fight against IS—and quite successfully so—has worried President Erdoğan. He fears that the Kurds will use the opportunity to claim autonomy from Turkey. As a result he has started an offensive against the YPG, which has brought Southern Turkey to the verge of civil war. This fear has also been seen through Erdoğan’s rejection of a place at the negotiating table for the Democratic Union Party, the political branch of the YPG, which is supported by Russia and the US. And let us not forget the row between Turkey and Russia over the violation of Turkish airspace by Russian strike fighters. All in all, alliances are under a lot of pressure and events are changing relationships quickly.

The big question is why Assad, instead of turning to Russia, did not turn to Iran for military support. Iran has been a close and long-term strategic ally of Assad, and sees the survival of Assad as vital for its own regional interests. It has covertly supported the regime via Hezbollah, and has also openly supported it with logistical, technical and financial support (Lake 2015). Iran’s involvement adds fuel to the Sunni–Shia conflict.

While it could be interpreted that the engagement of so many actors highlights the real concern for Syria’s people and for reaching a peace agreement, realpolitik remains everyone’s main policy, and all these strong international and regional powers are merely aiming to ensure their own interests are protected.
Building peace: where to start?

The war has destroyed Syria in all ways possible: its elite has left, its institutional and transport infrastructures are ruined; the economy is in tatters; large parts of its population are internally displaced or have fled the country, with thousands of citizens dead; and a generation has grown up in war and resentment. The Syrian situation remains extremely dangerous and volatile, and has had an enormous impact on many people and governments, both in the region and in Europe too. If nothing is done, Syria may become a frozen conflict, or, worse, remain a hot war. Proponents of military intervention by the West do not want to ‘wait and see’ any longer, but, as in Iraq, this could result in a long-dreaded military presence without a clear security guarantee—especially since the international community is so divided regarding not only intervention but also Syria’s future. With all this in mind, a political solution should be preferred in order to prevent more bloodshed in this war-torn land. What could Syria look like after a peace settlement, and how can such a peace be arranged?

A political solution also requires peace, but building peace in Syria is thwarted by several factors. First, it should not be forgotten that the war originated as a peaceful call for freedom by the people against their dictator, and that everything since has been a seized opportunity or an escalation of events. Second, reaching a peace agreement is an extremely difficult exercise as there are no longer just two opposing parties involved that need to agree, but a myriad of groups. Figuring out who should sit at the negotiating table and under which conditions is a problem in itself. Third, the road to peace in Syria is filled with those who would wish to spoil it. Their impact needs to be mitigated. These spoilers, which include factions that are not included in the peace talks or that have a counter-productive agenda, could damage the slow and long-term process that will characterise any peace process of this scope. Fourth, the conflicting agendas within the international community and the regional powers fuel divisions rather than bring the negotiating parties together. Furthermore, before any peace talks can start, two preconditions need to have been set in place: the violence needs to be reduced and humanitarian aid should be allowed to reach all those in need of it. The preconditions for an end game, however, may need to remain flexible, as there are too many potential spoilers both within and outside the country.

What kind of peace for Syria?

In such a complicated environment, where both sides have blood on their hands, it is worth examining a few models of peace negotiations. The Oslo Process, which aimed to agree a deal between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization in the 1990s could offer an example for settling the Syrian conflict. The Oslo Process aspired to negotiate a peace agreement between just the immediate parties that were at war with each other, excluding those with regional interests; to create mutual recognition of the (two) parties as the legal entities representing each side; to set an interim period to create a space for further negotiations in order to deal with the more complicated issues
later; and lastly, to negotiate in a secret setting. What the Oslo Process failed to do, but which in Syria’s case is paramount—and incredibly hard to find—is to negotiate under the leadership of an impartial mediator.

The UN has taken the lead in negotiating peace. Considering the many interests of third parties in the war, the UN could be the only neutral mediator. However, the negotiations so far have been too public. When negotiations are public, especially after the number of deaths involved in this case, it is difficult for the parties to compromise in order to reach an optimal deal. De Mistura’s shuttle diplomacy may be useful in one way, but it does not allow the parties to talk to each other and come to terms with each other. This is also complicated by the fact that there are just too many parties at the table, but a deal with fewer groups may undermine the acceptance of a possible peace agreement. Furthermore, the involvement of regional powers and Islamist factions, especially IS, adds fuel to the fire of both the conflict and any peace agreement. The Oslo Process offers a minimum starting point, but needs to be adapted to this specific case.

Another peace model that could serve as an example to draw upon is the negotiations in Sudan, which reached a final agreement in 2005. The situation there featured the following familiar characteristics: parts of the Sudanese army deserted and formed the Sudan People’s Liberation Army, the political wing of which later became the ruling party of South Sudan. Furthermore, armed groups both within and outside the country destabilised the region. The peace deal which ended the conflict and split the country into two was made via a set of agreements, tackling one issue, such as power sharing, wealth sharing or security arrangements, at a time. The idea of separating Syria into smaller territories is not new, as it is unlikely that Assad will be able to regain power across all of Syria’s territory. However, it remains unclear on which criteria any division should be based. The population, and even more so since the major internal displacement of people has taken place, cannot be easily divided along sectarian lines, which could have offered a natural division, as was the case in Sudan. While a federation could be a viable solution to Syria’s conflict, it also poses the threat that territories could be controlled by IS or war lords holding their peace in exchange for their own pieces of territory, restricting the freedom of movement necessary for economic prosperity. The far-reaching influences of Iran and Saudi Arabia, armed or otherwise, are a destabilising factor that also needs to be taken into account, as does the presence of IS. As there are many issues to solve in Syria too, a partitioned peace agreement could be helpful in moving towards a final peace settlement.

**Including the Syrian people**

Mapping all the key players with their interests and issues and bringing all of them together in various groupings to find a solution may be the first thing to do to prepare the ground for a peace agreement. It is imperative that all key interests are addressed in the process, because otherwise further conflicts may flare up immediately after the settlement.
While the first layer—a deal between Assad and the armed opposition—and the second layer—appeasing the regional actors—are very important, a peace settlement will only work if the population is also on board. When discussing peace deals, not enough is heard about the third layer: the Syrian population. In the end, it is these people that need to live next to their neighbours, who may have been supportive of the ‘other’ side. Subnational tensions may be more influential than has been given consideration. Since national authority has been weakened, and local and tribal structures have always been strong in Syria, brokering an agreement on the national level alone could turn out to have less of an impact on stability than if the other levels are included too.

A Syrian–Syrian dialogue with all civil society organisations included is essential, as these organisations work on the local level, and can negotiate on behalf of the citizens. The international peace talks give visibility to the resolution of the Syrian conflict and offer important leverage, but the real work is always done behind the scenes. So far, the international community has placed too little importance on such a dialogue.

Conclusion

It should not be forgotten that the war started as a call for liberty, dignity and democracy, and that a peace deal should also include mention of a political transition (leaving aside whether Assad should or should not be part of this). Now is also the time to look beyond the moment of peace—even at times when peace seems impossible. Initially, it is the Syrians that need to come to terms with each other. The international community can only play the role of shepherds or guarantors of peace. However, due to the complexity of the war, appeasing the many actors involved has become important too. The negotiations, therefore, should be all-inclusive so that they can address the second-order problems, such as IS, and regional issues, such as minorities. Too much trust may have been placed in those in the leading roles, the US and Russia.

The international community has not yet done all it can. It should continue to provide much-needed humanitarian assistance, but it may also have to consider acting more forcefully. If it does nothing, the state of Syria will be pulverised and terrorist groups will rule as war lords. It all comes down to answering these questions: what kind of future does the international community see for Syria? How badly does the international community want to see peace in Syria? And what is it willing to pay for it?

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Religion, power and chaos in the Middle East

Rafael L. Bardají

Abstract The relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran have been conditioned by many factors, from the religious divide between Shia and Sunni interpretations of Islam to the regional role played by external forces, such as the US. We are currently witnessing the collapse of the traditional Middle East order, most dramatically in Syria. This breakdown has been accompanied by a rapprochement between the US and Iran. But far from producing a more stable situation, it is nurturing a reaction by Sunni states, led by Saudi Arabia, that may lead to more regional rivalries and confrontation. There are two camps—the Shia led by Iran and the Sunni led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—that are colliding in several places, from Syria to Yemen. It is a clash of divergent religious branches but above all of power and strategic interests. Thus far the tensions have, to some extent, been kept under control. But they may well escalate in the near future.
Keywords  Saudi Arabia | Iran | Shia | Sunni Islam | Syria | Yemen | Oil | Obama | US | Nuclear agreement

Introduction

Since the inception of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, bilateral relations with Iran have moved from attempts to cooperate to open mistrust, particularly since the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. Since the birth of the Islamist, revolutionary and Persian-rooted Islamic Republic of Iran, the default relationship has been one of regional rivalry. More recent factors have and will continue to accentuate the confrontational aspects of the Saudi–Iranian relationship. These include the ripple effects of the Arab Spring, the rapprochement between the US under President Obama’s administration and Iran, the ongoing killings in Syria, the civil war in Yemen and fluctuating oil prices.

The year 2016 started with a renewed clash between Saudi Arabia and Iran that threatened to spiral out of control. On 2 January, Saudi Arabia announced the execution of 47 convicted prisoners, one of them the Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr. Nimr, an outspoken critic of the royal family, had been arrested in 2012 and convicted on charges of sectarian strife and sedition. Immediately after his execution, Spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry Hossein Jaberí declared that ‘the execution of a personality such as Sheikh Nimr who had no other means than speech to pursue his political and religious objectives only shows the depth of imprudence and irresponsibility’ (Basil et al. 2016).

Needless to say, the Iranian statement prompted a Saudi reaction: the Iranian ambassador to the Kingdom was summoned to the Foreign Ministry and presented with an official protest and rejection of what the Saudi authorities considered to be an aggressive Iranian intervention in Saudi internal affairs. Demonstrators in Tehran congregated in front of the Saudi embassy, and some of them assaulted the building and set fire to it. Six countries from the Persian Gulf condemned the passivity of the Iranian security services in protecting the embassy, and on 4 January the Kingdom severed diplomatic ties with Iran (Brumfield et al. 2016).

Despite the many reasons for keeping the crisis under control, such as the uncertain outcome given the current balance of forces and the political and strategic support on each side (Omidi 2016), many fear an irrational escalation that could ultimately trigger an overt military confrontation between the two countries (see Stafford 2016; Fisher 2016). As a matter of fact, the Kingdom and Iran are already occupied in indirect military clashes all over the region, from Lebanon to Yemen, in an accelerated struggle for power and influence at a time when the old Middle Eastern order seems to be in meltdown.

The entire region is undergoing a deep and dramatic transformation that today is producing more chaos than stability, more violence than peace, more sectarianism than integration and more fears than assurances. Because of this, even if the cold war between Saudi Arabia and Iran is kept within reasonable limits in terms of
confrontation, it will continue to exist for years to come as a product of purely geopolitical factors.

**Religion as geopolitics**

It is obvious that the most apparent divide between Saudi Arabia and Iran is a religious one, the millennial split between the two contrasting Islamic faiths, Sunnis and Shi’ites. Rooted in an unsolvable dispute over who was the legitimate heir of Muhammad, the two branches of Islam today also have a clear geographical representation: after the Islamic revolution of 1979, Iran, led by the Shia cleric Khomeini, transformed itself into an Islamic Republic based on Shi’ite principles. Furthermore, the revolutionary vision of Ayatollah Khomeini put Iran on a footing to inspire and mobilise other Shi’ite communities beyond Iran’s borders. In response, Saudi Arabia, with 90% of its population being Sunni, defended the puritanical interpretation of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism, and set itself up as the guardian of the holy places. After the call by the leaders of Iran for the elimination of the Saudi royal family, the Kingdom accelerated the global propagation of Wahhabism as the true interpretation of Islam (Council on Foreign Relations n.d.).

However, the religious divide has not been the determining factor in the relationship between the two countries for many years (Keynoush 2016), despite the fact that in the last 10–15 years the Sunni–Shia divide has become more acute, more divisive and more openly violent. In fact, there is no single open conflict in the Middle East today that does not include an aspect of this religious split, from Syria to Yemen.

From the Saudi perspective, Shia groups controlled or supported directly by Iran have won important advances and victories within the Arab world. For instance, the overthrow in 2003 of Saddam Hussein, a traditional enemy of Iran, gave way to a Shia government in Baghdad, and to the alarming and growing influence of Tehran in Iraq. Also with the help of Iran, Hezbollah, the militant arm of Tehran in Lebanon, has become the most important player in that divided country, in political as well as military terms. Furthermore, without direct Iranian interventions, Bashar al-Assad, the leader of the Alawite minority, could not have survived the rebellion that erupted in 2011 in Syria, a country with a clear Sunni majority. And finally, in March 2015, the Houthis—a group of Yemeni Shias linked to and used by Iran—launched an offensive to overthrow the government of President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi in favour of the deposed Ali Abdullah Saleh, reversing the political transition that had been painfully crafted by Riyadh since 2013.

The ‘Shia revival’, as described by analyst Vali Nasr, is not the only factor to have nurtured the perception among Saudi Arabian leaders that there has been a tilting of the balance of power in the region detrimental to the Kingdom’s interests (Nasr 2006). After years of imposing international sanctions on Iran over its illegal nuclear programme, in November 2013 the P5 + 1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany), representing the international community, signed an interim agreement,
the so-called Joint Plan of Action, as the first phase and framework for a final and comprehensive agreement over the nuclear situation with Iran. The comprehensive deal was reached in July 2015, and despite all the controversies surrounding its contents and implications, the agreement was adopted by the parties and entered the implementation phase on 16 January 2016.

For the Saudis the deal means two things. On the one hand, from their perspective, the agreement does not solve the problem of Iran becoming a military nuclear power, it only postpones it for a few years, while in the short term, once the sanctions are lifted, the leaders in Tehran will start receiving billions of dollars, enabling them to more vigorously pursue their regional ambitions (see Berman 2015). On the other hand, regardless of the content of the agreement, the open-arms policy of the US administration towards Iran, plus the trade interest from European countries, will accelerate the diplomatic and trade normalisation of Shia Iran, shifting the regional balance of power away from Riyadh in favour of Tehran.

The more President Obama showed willing to make concessions to Iran in order to finalise the agreement, the more vocal the leaders of Saudi Arabia became against the deal, to the point that in May 2015 King Salman even missed a summit organised by the White House for the Gulf countries on this issue. While during an official visit to the US, King Salman declared his satisfaction concerning the deal given the security reassurances offered by President Obama to the Kingdom, the actual policies carried out by the King since then show that this was more diplomatic rhetoric than a real strategic convergence with Washington.

Finally, there is another issue unrelated to religion that is and will continue to negatively affect the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran: oil pricing. The Iranian oil minister has expressed Iran’s support for the intention of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and Russia to freeze oil production at current levels in order to help the oil price recovery (Watts 2016). For their part, the Saudi authorities remain firmly committed to maintaining their current national production levels or even increasing them, as they did during 2015, rejecting a collective common position and a potential reduction of their output. Despite the diminishing oil revenues per barrel, Riyadh seems more preoccupied with market shares. Some analysts also think that the cheap oil policy is oriented towards two parallel goals: hurting the shale industry in the US and economically penalising Russia at a time when it is intervening decisively in favour of Bashar al-Assad in Syria (McEndree 2016).

**Geopolitics and strategy**

There is no doubt that at the beginning of 2016, Saudi Arabia is a country that feels threatened. Actually, as a former British ambassador to the Kingdom has put it:
Saudi Arabia feels with good reason more threatened than at any time in its modern history, at least since the subversive Kulturkampf of the 1950s and 1960s from Nasser’s Egypt. This stems from five sources: first, the challenge of Sunni and largely Salafi jihadism; second, the sustained ideological and material challenge of the Islamic Republic of Iran; third, the collapse of large parts of the Middle East state system following the Arab spring; fourth, a sharp fall in global energy prices; and fifth, a sense that historical alliances—notably but not only with the United States—are fraying. (Jenkins 2016)

In all probability, the views in Riyadh are even more extreme, when one hears, for example, Hassan Hassan, an Abu Dhabi analyst, making comments such as: ‘The idea of a Shiite crescent in the region has become obsolete. Today, it is a full moon and the Gulf is surrounded’ (The Economist 2015).

It would not come as a surprise if the Kingdom, which has traditionally been under the security umbrella of the US, was to embark on a process of flexing its muscles while embracing a new doctrine of ‘do-it-yourself’ security as necessary. This was basically the message sent by the Saudi ambassador to the UK in an op-ed published in The New York Times at the end of 2013. Among other things, he wrote (Bin Nawwaf bin Abdulaziz 2013):

- ‘We believe that many of the West’s policies on both Iran and Syria risk the stability and security of the Middle East. This is a dangerous gamble, about which we cannot remain silent, and will not stand idly by.’
- ‘The foreign policy choices being made in some Western capitals risk the stability of the region and, potentially, the security of the whole Arab world. This means the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has no choice but to become more assertive in international affairs: more determined than ever to stand up for the genuine stability our region so desperately needs.’
- ‘Saudi Arabia has enormous responsibilities within the region. . . . We will act to fulfil these responsibilities, with or without the support of our Western Partners.’

Since the publication of this striking column, Riyadh seems to have developed a strategic vision that will allow the Kingdom to face internal and external threats without politically depending on the US or any Western support. The culmination of this new policy, which moves away from its traditional over-reliance on the US, has been the creation of an Islamic Alliance, announced on 15 December 2015. Thirty-four states will join forces under a military alliance in order to fight terrorism, and as Deputy Crown Prince and Defence Minister Mohammed bin Salman said during the presentation press conference, the new coalition aims to coordinate efforts in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Afghanistan (Browning and Irish 2015). It is not a home front exercise; the alliance has a clear appetite for bringing Sunnis together against Iran and its proxies.

The most recent expression of Riyadh’s new policy is the Northern Thunder military exercise. This was the largest ever multi-country war game to take place in the Middle East. It began on 27 February in Hafr al-Batin, near the Iraqi border, and continued until
10 March, involving over 150,000 troops from 20 Sunni Muslim countries, including Gulf Cooperation Council states, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Jordan, Sudan and Senegal. Northern Thunder was intended to demonstrate that Saudi Arabia has the military capacity, the political will and the alliances necessary to defend itself and promote its strategic interests, even without the close backing of the US.

Saudi Arabia today seems to have clearly decided to be prepared for the scenario of a nuclear Iran, despite the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; to put in place a roll-back strategy to thwart Iran’s regional ambitions; to play the role of a more assertive regional leader to compensate for the US’s lack of resoluteness and presence; to avoid a solution that will keep al-Assad in power in Syria; and to advance practical steps to fight terror groups that may destabilise the Kingdom and its Arab allies.

Present and future chaos

The Middle East today is not in a state of flux, it is in a state of chaos. The task of bringing back some order, or creating a new one, is a daunting one. Whether Saudi Arabia and the Gulf allies are willing and capable of doing this is, for the time being, an open question as well as a race against the clock. To deal with and manage Iran’s nuclear and non-nuclear ambitions and its Shia proxies, the disintegrated nation-states, the Salafi terrorist threat, the passivity of the US, the new Russian presence in the region, the economic crisis and popular discontent will require political and strategic skills not seen before in the region, particularly as the Kingdom is also going through an unfinished power transition at the moment.

On the international front it is not clear how Saudi Arabia will respond to the spectre of a nuclear Iran. There have been signs that Riyadh will flirt ambiguously with some military dimensions of its own civilian nuclear programme. Some analysts have discussed the potential for a Saudi nuclear path that would not violate its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty: that is, allowing Pakistan to deploy strategic nuclear forces on the Kingdom’s soil as part of a retaliatory capability vis-à-vis India. Such an option would create a nuclear ambiguity towards Iran, increasing Saudi Arabia’s deterring posture. This is only a theoretical possibility for the time being in any case.

In terms of creating ‘no-go zones’ for Iranian forces (which one Israeli analyst has dubbed a ‘Saudi Monroe doctrine’; S. Bar, pers. comm.), there are two fronts that will require the full attention of the Saudi authorities: Yemen and Syria. In Yemen, intervention has avoided a swift victory being claimed by the Houthis, but has not yet produced a stable solution. The level of destruction keeps growing, and the chaos and lack of clear authority have given impetus to terrorist groups like Islamic State and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

On Syria, the Kingdom has made it clear that saving al-Assad is a red line that will not be crossed. It is doubtful that the Islamic Alliance will send ground troops to fight
al-Assad and his allies, including Iranian and Russian forces, at any time soon, but it may well step up its direct military help for opposition groups. The restrictions on handing over portable man-pads\(^1\) to rebels may be lifted, creating a new security scenario for Russian planes, as happened in Afghanistan in the mid-to-late 1980s.

On the home front, Riyadh must address the implications of a more assertive regional policy and the ongoing confrontation with Iran. The security apparatus will have to be reinforced as the military is strengthened. Saudi Arabia is not yet short of money, but money has often been the preferred soft power tool to ensure complicity and legitimacy both domestically and abroad—thus a fiscal squeeze due to a lack of oil revenue may make things more complicated for the royal family in the years to come (see Gause 2011). Equally, as we well know in the West, foreign military interventions are not cheap. Depleting Saudi’s $600 billion reserves may prove to be easier than it currently seems today.

The significant difficulties faced by one single country in dealing with such a diverse threat scenario have led to the conclusion in some quarters that the only way for Saudi Arabia to square the circle is to enter into a closer relationship, almost a strategic alliance, with the only country in the region that may be capable of solving some of the problems the Gulf is facing: Israel (Susser 2015). But this is a long shot that may require a lot of changes and a lot of time before it materialises.

**Conclusion**

In the fast-moving situation we are currently witnessing in the Middle East, the risks of mistakes and unwanted frictions, or even undesired escalation, are high. Moreover, they are likely to grow if time passes without any of the existing crises being resolved. If there is a lesson to be learned from the many decades of Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union, it is how delicately—and at what financial cost—the balance of forces was maintained. With no de-escalation mechanism in place in today’s Middle East, no scenario can be ignored, from cooperation to open warfare.

The victorious tone of Tehran at present will exacerbate Saudi fears and thus create more opportunities for confrontation than for peace. Unless Iran transforms into a peace-loving normal country—and there are no signs yet of that—it is very difficult to see stable and long-term collaboration arising between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The alternative to a future confrontation is the collapse of the Saudi regime, and that would be even worse.

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\(^1\) A man-portable air-defence system.
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The fallacy of ‘compartmentalisation’: the West and Russia from Ukraine to Syria

Svante E. Cornell

Abstract In the post-Soviet space as well as the Middle East, Western leaders have largely failed to heed ample evidence that the goals of the Russian leadership are fundamentally opposed to those of the EU and the US. Whereas Moscow seeks to counter Western influence and roll back the US’s role in the world, the West has proposed a win–win approach, seeking to convince Moscow that its ‘true’ interests should lead it to cooperate with the West. When this has not worked, Western leaders have ‘compartmentalised’, isolating areas of agreement from areas of disagreement. This approach has come to the end of the road because the assumptions that undergird it are false. So long as Western powers fail to understand the fundamental incompatibility of their interests with the deeply anti-Western interests of the current power brokers in the Kremlin, they are unlikely to develop policies that achieve success.
Keywords Russia | Putin | Hybrid war | Compartmentalisation | Frozen conflicts | Syria | Ukraine | Georgia

Introduction

Western relations with Russia have come to be dominated by a serious contradiction. While Russia repeatedly engages in behaviour that opposes Western interests and undermines the post–Cold War world order, the Western response has been ambivalent. The US and Europe have taken rhetorical and practical steps to counter Russian behaviour or impose a cost for it on Moscow, including sanctions. But in parallel, Western leaders have emphasised the interests they share with Russia. Indeed, they have talked up the notion that ‘we need Russia’ for the management or solution of various international problems. In the recent past, the most obvious example has been the West’s confrontation with Russia over Ukraine, which can be contrasted with the effort to achieve cooperation over Syria. This squaring of the circle is based on the logic of ‘compartmentalisation’: the separating of areas of agreement from areas of disagreement.

While this sounds good, is it in practice a realistic policy? The case of Syria suggests otherwise. Indeed, it is now clear that Russia intervened in Syria with the stated aim of combating Islamist radicals, particularly the terrorist organisation calling itself the Islamic State (IS). Yet few, if any, of the bombs dropped by Russia targeted IS: instead, they were almost exclusively targeted on those Syrian opposition formations that have been trained and supported by the West and Turkey (The Guardian 2015; Nissenbaum et al. 2015; Miller and Fitzpatrick 2015).

The Syrian case, therefore, raises serious issues. Can matters so crucial to both parties truly be separated from each other? If the West believes in compartmentalisation, does Russia also share this approach? If not, what are the implications? This article contends that Russian foreign policy operates on a fundamentally different logic than that of the West; that Russia and the West systematically talk past each other and infer different things from their mutual agreements; and that Moscow as a matter of course seeks to exploit the Western efforts to compartmentalise as a way to undermine Western interests.

The Western approach to Russia: appealing to common interests

While a full overview of the US’s and Europe’s relations with Russia is beyond the scope of this paper, it should be noted that Western policies rest on a recognition of Russia as a global player of crucial importance whose cooperation is crucial to managing key international issues. Beyond Russia’s veto power in the UN Security Council, Russia has had a stake in many of the issues at the centre of international relations in
the past two decades. For example, Russia was considered a key partner in the war on terrorism and in transit operations for the war in Afghanistan. Similarly, it was seen as a key partner whose cooperation was required to roll back the Iranian nuclear programme. Russia’s cooperation has also been sought to manage the unresolved conflicts in the post-Soviet space—an approach that somehow survived Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008. The US, Russia and France continue to co-chair the negotiation process to resolve the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict. And, of course, Russia’s influence over the Assad regime in Syria was thought to make its cooperation central to Western goals in that conflict.

Across these areas of interaction with Russia, Western policy has been built on the following approach. First, Western leaders have depicted relations in terms of a win–win situation, in which the West and Russia share common interests. Second, where Russian behaviour has suggested otherwise, Western diplomats have focused on explaining to Russia, and to the wider public, why Russia’s ‘true’ interests should lead it to cooperate with the West. And third, in the many cases where these urges have proven futile, Western leaders have decided to compartmentalise: to seek to isolate areas of agreement from areas of disagreement. Needless to say, Western leaders, for the most part, have seen their own intentions as noble, and have assumed that the Russian leaders, too, have honourable intentions. When even this approach has failed, as it invariably has, Western leaders have tended to seek explanations as much in their own behaviour as in Russia’s. If Moscow will not work with us, the reasoning goes, we must be doing something wrong. If Moscow does not trust us, we must seek ways to rebuild confidence—certainly, this was the assumption of the US ‘Reset’ with Russia launched in 2009. Only as a last resort, and as a result of great frustration, have Western leaders concluded that their efforts have failed because Moscow’s interests diverge fundamentally from those of the West. They have yet to draw out the implications of that conclusion.

The Russian approach: a zero-sum game

During the 1990s, a real partnership with Russia based on common values—or at least a common approach—appeared possible. But since Vladimir Putin came to power, Moscow’s approach has in fact been based on an entirely different logic from that of the Western approach. Fundamentally, the Russian leadership has been focused on the task of rebuilding Russia’s power and influence on the global scene—and in particular, in reasserting an exclusive sphere of influence over the former Soviet space ‘—but not only’, to use former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev’s phrase following the invasion of Georgia in 2008 (Kramer 2008). In the process, Russian officials have aimed to reduce what they view as the Western, and particularly American, ‘hegemony’ in world affairs. Indeed, to a considerable extent, Russian leaders are informed by a world-view that sees the West, and particularly the US, as an aggressive and arrogant force that seeks world domination at the expense of the marginalisation of others (Rolofs 2007). While US actions in the Middle East have contributed to this perception, it is by no
means reserved for the US: when the EU launched the Eastern Partnership, Russia saw this as a threat to its historical sphere of influence.

Furthermore, the character of the Russian government has important implications. It is by now well-documented that Russia’s is not only a strictly authoritarian regime, but a strongly kleptocratic one (Dawisha 2014). As Sherr (2013) has explained, the regime’s overarching aim is ‘the creation of an international environment conducive to the maintenance of its system of governance at home… “national interest” means regime interest first and foremost’.

This, in turn, informs Russia’s approach towards the West: Moscow views the West—and particularly the EU and NATO as institutions—not just as a threat to its interests, but to the survival of its regime, given the power of attraction of the normative principles underlying these institutions. Indeed, ‘the more the EU’s norms and practices gain adherents and traction, the more incongruous Russia’s model of governance appears’ (Sherr 2013). As a result, Russian policies actively seek to divide and undermine Europe, in particular through information warfare and through direct support for both far-right and far-left political forces in Europe that oppose NATO and EU integration, and support Russian policy goals (Foster and Holehouse 2016; Krekó and Gyori 2016).

Where Western leaders have tended to give Russian leaders the benefit of the doubt, the Russian approach has been the opposite: a fundamental distrust of the intentions of the West. Since Russian leaders seek to maximise their power and influence at the expense of the West, they have shown an inclination to assume that the West is doing exactly the same. On the creation of the Eastern Partnership, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov asked ‘what is the Eastern Partnership, if not an attempt to extend the EU’s sphere of influence?’ (Pop 2009). This divergence in political mentality is derived, no doubt, from the divergent political culture of Soviet Russia. It is this culture that has framed the world-view of the current leadership crop—which itself is disproportionately formed of those with a past in the security services (Dawisha 2014). Indeed, the approach of the Russian leadership is derived from the Leninist conception of politics as a zero-sum game, defined in terms of who will prevail over whom—summarised in the Russian phrase ‘Kto-kogo’. As American writer and diplomat Raymond Garthoff has put it, the phrase encapsulates a situation where ‘the gains of one side were automatically losses to the other, ruling out genuine compromise, reconciliation, shared interests, and conflict resolution by any other means than prevailing over the other’ (Garthoff 2001, 393–4).

In sum, the West has sought relations with Russia on a win–win basis, seeking common interests, but it has tended to misjudge what the Russian leadership’s interests are—in part because of a tendency to extrapolate what Russia’s interests should be if Russia operated as a Western country. By contrast, Russia has increasingly seen relations with the West as a zero-sum game, in which it has been Russia’s aim to undermine the Western-led international order, as well as sow division within Western institutions themselves.
This does not mean that the West has not made its share of mistakes. The US invasion of Iraq, the recognition of Kosovo’s independence and the Libyan intervention that led to the killing of Muammar Qaddafi can all fairly be criticised for failing to abide by international standards, and for being examples of Western unilateralism. The point, however, is that in none of these situations was the West’s aim, let alone its primary objective, to undermine Russian interests. By contrast, Moscow has continuously seized on every Western mistake, ascribed the worst of intentions to it, and used it as a precedent to achieve its own unilateral goals at the expense of Western interests.

**Russia’s build-up to Ukraine: hybrid war in the Caucasus and Central Asia**

Events in the former Soviet space provide the clearest example of the Russian subversion of Western interests and international norms, as it is an area where Russia has overt claims to geopolitical domination. Following Vladimir Putin’s ascent to power, there was an initial improvement in Russia–West relations. Deep frustration with the Yeltsin regime had set in, in the West, and many welcomed the election of a younger, more effective leader who seemed able to put Russia back together. And following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the US, Russia immediately seized the opportunity to portray itself as an ally in the fight against terrorism. Yet significant differences between the West and Russia continued to mount in parallel, and were centred on the post-Soviet space, which formed the focus of Putin’s policies.

Putin quickly benefited from his support for the anti-terror coalition: the West, collectively, responded by dropping most of its vocal criticism of Russia’s warfare in Chechnya (Cornell 2003; Headley 2005). Moscow then followed up by gradually increasing pressure on Georgia. The timing of this was no accident. In September 2002, the US movement towards military action in Iraq was well under way. On the first anniversary of 9/11, Putin threatened military action against Georgia, trying to link Georgia with international terrorism. As Devdariani (2002) put it, Putin tried to ‘set up terms for a trade with the United States’. No trade was forthcoming, and instead a US Train and Equip program for the Georgian military enabled it to reassert control over the Pankisi Gorge, and thus remove the rationale behind Moscow’s threats (Cornell and Yalowitz 2004, 112). Nevertheless, Moscow gradually stepped up its pressure on Georgia, using economic warfare (including a full embargo in 2006), diplomatic pressure and subversion, as well as the manipulation of unresolved conflicts. In 2007, Russia twice used force against Georgian territory (Cornell et al. 2007). This was not met with a concrete Western response, and thus directly led to Russia’s premeditated invasion of the country in 2008 (Asmus 2010). Following this invasion, the Russian leadership took a leaf out of the American book, and demanded a regime change in Georgia—betraying the true aims of the military campaign (Rice 2011). The operation in Georgia, of course, was a precursor to Russia’s military actions in Ukraine six years later.
The decline of Russo-Georgian relations is often blamed on the government of Mikheil Saakashvili, who came to power in the Rose Revolution of 2003. But it is important to recall that the deterioration of relations followed Putin’s coming to power in 1999, not Saakashvili’s in 2003. The Rose Revolution, however, did affect the geopolitics of the region, because it injected a normative aspect into the realpolitik of the post-Soviet space. The Bush administration’s Freedom Agenda led it to increase support for Georgia and subsequently Ukraine, while the US’s commitment to less democratic countries that had aligned with Washington waned. Moscow seized on this opportunity to back up authoritarian governments across the region, and to instil in them the fear that Washington was out to overthrow them (Ambrosio 2009). This policy produced results on several occasions. Most notably, in 2005, Moscow lobbied strongly to have the American military base expelled from Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan, and in subsequent years worked to ensure the removal of the remaining US base in Kyrgyzstan. In fact, Bishkek’s refusal to follow Moscow’s line on this issue led Moscow to deploy a new tactic—supporting a coup d’état of its own, which brought down the government of Kurmanbek Bakiyev in 2010 (Stratfor.com 2010). The US base was closed in 2014.

Furthermore, since 2010 Moscow has aggressively stepped up its efforts to forcibly reintegrate the former Soviet Union, strong-arming countries into joining first the Eurasian Customs Union and subsequently the Eurasian Economic Union (Starr and Cornell 2014). In sum, Moscow’s policy in the former Soviet space in the past 15 years has been fairly straightforward: a growing pressure on post-Soviet countries to desist from integration or alignment with the West, and a readiness to deploy ever-harsher instruments of power to advance its goals.

The Western failure to respond

The Western approach to Russia has generally failed to recognise this fundamental divergence of interests, and has sought cooperation and common interests. Up until the Russian invasion of Georgia, the US, France and Great Britain were continuing to draft UN Security Council resolutions praising the Russian peacekeeping mission in Abkhazia, in spite of Russia’s increasingly interventionist policies in that territory. Further, Western leaders tried to explain to Moscow that stable, democratic states on its periphery would be in Russia’s interest. Even after the war, the West imposed only a few short months of sanctions on Russia, which were promptly lifted after symbolic Russian concessions. Indeed, the incoming Obama administration responded with its Reset diplomacy with Russia—essentially rewarding Russia with newfound attention and an effort to improve ties. A full review of this initiative is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is notable how Moscow interpreted the Reset: on the one hand, as an admission that the Bush administration, not Russian policies, had been at fault for the poor state of bilateral relations; and on the other, as an implicit acceptance of the Russian ‘sphere of privileged interests’ in the former Soviet space. As Shevtsova (2014) has noted, ‘the Russian elite interpreted the reset as weakness on the part of the Obama Administration and as an invitation to be more assertive in the post-Soviet space and beyond’. As Blank (forthcoming) has observed, Obama administration officials ‘admit
that the objective of the reset policy was to restore some formula for integrating Russia with the West. However, they never seemed to grasp that Russia, even during Dmitry Medvedev’s presidency, was not interested in any such integration’.

This led the Reset diplomacy to fail by 2012. Yet it was not replaced by any other clear initiative, and there were no concrete steps taken when, in September 2013, Moscow coerced Armenia’s president, Serzh Sargsyan, into abandoning a fully negotiated Association Agreement with the EU in favour of accession to the Eurasian Union—without any prior communication with his cabinet or parliament (Grigoryan 2014). Again, this was a precursor to the much more substantial pressure that Ukraine was exposed to, which eventually led to the Euromaidan and subsequently to Russia’s war on Ukraine.

European leaders did not fare better. In 2010 the German government took the initiative to explore the idea of closer security cooperation between Europe and Russia. At a summit in Meseberg in June 2010, Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Medvedev signed a memorandum to ‘explore the establishment of an EU–Russia Political and Security Committee’—if implemented, a considerable step towards changing the architecture of European security. But Merkel explicitly raised the resolution of the conflict in Moldova’s Transnistria as a test case for EU–Russia security cooperation, and the memorandum promised joint efforts in that direction (Socor 2010). Moscow failed to respond, in spite of the considerable policy gains it stood to reap if it had cooperated on this conflict.

A case of compartmentalisation par excellence is the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, for which the US and France are co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe process tasked with resolving the conflict. Russia’s role in fomenting the conflict in the early 1990s is well-documented, and many observers consider it self-evident that Russia has no interest in its resolution—because the conflict essentially guarantees Moscow’s control over Armenian foreign and defence policy. The conflict thus provided Russia with a foothold in a region that Russian leaders have considered of great strategic importance for over two hundred years. Despite this, Western leaders did not object when, following the Russian invasion of Georgia, President Medvedev very publicly took the lead in the peace process. Far from pointing out the hypocrisy of this initiative, Western leaders willingly went along with it up until its failure. This approach did not end with the war in Ukraine. Even after Russia fomented a new unresolved conflict in the Donbas practically out of thin air, the US co-chair in the negotiations, Ambassador James Warlick, continued to argue that the US and Russia ‘see eye to eye’ on Nagorno-Karabakh (Tamrazian 2013). That statement wilfully ignores the now obvious fact that Moscow uses ‘frozen conflicts’ as a key instrument in subverting and undermining the sovereignty of post-Soviet states.

The conflict in Ukraine is, in a way, the consequence and culmination of Western policy towards Russia in the former Soviet space. Having seen little resistance to its steps to perfect tactics of hybrid warfare against smaller post-Soviet states, there was little to restrain Moscow from taking the plunge in Ukraine in 2014. In fairness, while far from ideal, the Western response to the Ukraine crisis has, so far, been substantial. Western leaders have imposed tough sanctions and maintained the unity of the transatlantic alliance for over two years—a considerable achievement compared to 2008. Yet while this
has no doubt come as a surprise to the Russian leadership, it has not undone Russia’s effective truncation of the Ukrainian state.

**Syria: incompatible interests**

The most recent example of compartmentalisation is Syria, where the US has gone to great lengths to solicit Russian cooperation—so much so that the US secretary of state was prepared to wait for three hours for a meeting with Vladimir Putin (Walker 2013). And yet again, American and Russian interests remain opposed. While the US seeks the removal of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Russia is the strongest supporter of the Assad regime on the international scene. In support of this, Russia found a perfect opportunity to intervene in autumn 2013, when President Obama appeared to be on the path to begin military action in Syria. Obama’s delineation of a ‘red line’ regarding the regime’s use of chemical weapons appeared to have forced a reluctant US president into a new conflict in the Middle East. His reluctance was deep-seated, and exacerbated by America’s previous underestimation of the threat posed by IS. As a result, Obama’s own urge that ‘Assad must go’ (Wall Street Journal 2013) was tempered by apprehension about what would follow a collapse of the Syrian regime. Sensing this reluctance, Putin launched his own plan, centred on the removal of the Syrian regime’s chemical weapons. Obama rapidly embraced this exit strategy, and urged Congress to indefinitely postpone a vote on military action (Boyer 2013). However, the development sent out shockwaves across the wider region—with a serious loss of credibility for the US president, and the marked return of Russia as a power player in the Middle East.

Indeed, it is against this backdrop that Russia’s military deployment in Syria should be evaluated. The Russian leadership had clearly concluded that the US did not have a Syria strategy, and that Turkey, which wanted to intervene to topple Assad, would not move without the US in lockstep. As George Friedman (2016) has argued, Russia’s intervention in ‘Syria was not about Syria’. It was motivated in part by saving the Assad regime, but equally by ‘showing that it could’ (Friedman 2016) to the US and to a domestic audience, following being bogged down in Ukraine:

> It demonstrated to the United States that it had the ability and will to intrude into areas that the United States regarded as its own area of operations. It changed the perception of Russia as a declining power unable to control Ukraine, to a significant global force. Whether this was true was less important—it needed to appear to be true. (Friedman 2016)

In so doing, Moscow in fact applied a number of the lessons learned from its warfare in Chechnya. Indeed, during the second Chechen war Moscow applied most, if not all, of its resources to defeating the nationalist, moderate elements of the Chechen resistance—rather than targeting the radical Islamist, indeed jihadi, elements of the resistance. While counter-intuitive, the reason was straightforward: removing the moderate forces essentially removed any opponent to Moscow with international legitimacy, thereby essentially forcing the West, reluctantly, to accept that the choice in Chechnya
was between Russia’s brutal appointee, Ramzan Kadyrov, and Al Qaeda–type jihadis (Foxall 2015).

Similarly in Syria, the Russian intention all along was to leave a choice between the Assad regime and IS, a situation in which Western leaders would grudgingly accept the Syrian regime as the lesser evil. It is for precisely this reason that Russian bombing overwhelmingly targeted not IS, but Syrian opposition groups aligned with the US, Turkey or other Arab allies. In other words, whereas the US and Europe ideally want to defeat IS and ease Assad out of power in a negotiated settlement, Russia wants to eliminate any military force on the ground that could help to achieve that objective. The goals of the West and Russia are simply incompatible. Yet in spite of this, the US and Europe continue to seek ways to convince Moscow to cooperate to resolve the Syrian conflict.

The way forward

From the above, it is abundantly clear that the Western approach to Russia has come to the end of the road. The cause of this failure lies not primarily in problems with the implementation of policy but in the very assumptions that undergird it. Russia’s interests diverge fundamentally from those of the West. Indeed, they are deeply anti-Western. As long as the Western powers fail to understand this, they are unlikely to develop policies that achieve success.

What, then, is the alternative? It rests, foremost, on reversing the Western, and particularly American, disengagement from affairs in the post-Soviet space and the Middle East that has been manifest for nearly a decade. The Obama administration’s ambition to extricate the US from military morasses in the Middle East was understandable. It is now equally apparent that neither the world nor the US is better off for leaving the security affairs of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus or the Middle East to others. Indeed, there is a widespread belief that ‘any foreign intervention essentially, if not exclusively, entails large-scale military operations as distinct from diplomatic or indirect approaches like providing weapons or using forces to display resolve and deter conflicts . . . such interventions are also believed to be inherently futile’ (Blank 2014, 167).

This will also mean ensuring that vacuums do not arise that can be filled by Russian adventurism. In Eastern Europe, the lack of Western vigilance, and particularly the absence of American engagement in security affairs, was key to creating an environment in which the Russian war in Ukraine became possible, just as the same neglect had created permissive conditions for the invasion of Georgia in 2008. In Syria, the Obama administration’s hesitation and indecision did exactly the same—allowing a situation to emerge which provided fertile ground for Russian action against Western interests. In both cases, the disagreements within the US administration, almost public in their character, allowed Moscow ample time to draw conclusions and act on them. Even more recently, the Western failure to react substantively to renewed fighting
between Armenia and Azerbaijan in April 2016 has once again allowed Moscow the privilege of taking the lead, to the detriment of both countries.

With regard to Russia, the solution begins by understanding that Moscow sees all areas of conflict through the prism of its zero-sum foreign policy. Thus, all conflicts or crises are interlinked and constitute opportunities to undermine Western cohesion and Western interests. If this reality is recognised, it will become possible to adopt policies that advance Western interests both in each of these conflicts and in general, and will prevent Moscow from taking advantage of Western weakness or incoherence.

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Regional security in Asia: Japan’s strategy for stability and the role of Europe

Masafumi Ishii

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Abstract In Asia the rise of both China and India is becoming a reality. Their growth is of an unprecedented scale. While the US continues to be the only superpower, it needs the help of like-minded countries to deal with international challenges. Beyond 2030, the G3—the US, China and India as the pillars of a tri-polar world—may become a reality. In order to cope with changes of this magnitude, increased cooperation between the US, Europe and democracies in Asia is essential. To be successful in adopting this new strategic landscape, it is necessary to strengthen the ties between Europe and democracies in Asia. In this regard, rule-making is the key area for success. Japan is contributing to these efforts by applying a comprehensive engagement policy towards China while strengthening its alliance with the US. Establishing strategic ties with India is also important. Japan and Europe can do much to help achieve stability. After all, Japan needs a strong and engaging Europe, just as Europe needs a strong and active Japan.

The views expressed in this article are strictly those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Japan.

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Published online: 12 April 2016
Keywords  Japan | Asia | Europe | Security | Cooperation | Rule-making | Regional stability

Introduction

This article describes the basic framework for a survival strategy for Japan for the coming 15–20 years. I will first show how Japan analyses major regional and global trends. Then I will outline a description of a basic global framework that is capable of coping with these major trends. Following this, I will clarify Japan's fundamental choices in response to these trends. Finally, I will argue that Europe is relevant to our common endeavour to deal with these major changes. I will approach this by exploring the potential areas of cooperation between Japan and Europe.

What is happening?

What is predicted for the future basically dictates how one formulates what should be done to prepare for it. There are many factors that should be taken into consideration in predicting the future, but they are too numerous to be described in full in this paper. Thus, I will focus on the most crucial ones.

The unprecedented magnitude of the rising powers

In the past, we have seen the impact of rising powers on international affairs. But what we are witnessing currently is quite different from the past in terms of scale. In short, both China and India are rising powers. This means that 2.5 billion people, or one-third of the world's population, live in countries that are growing in power. This inevitably needs to be reflected by adjustments to the world order. In order for long-term peaceful and prosperous coexistence with these huge rising powers, the so-called status quo powers should adjust the existing global frameworks or rules by taking into consideration their perspectives.

However, at the same time, there should be some basic rules which should not be changed. For example, a state should not unilaterally change the status quo by force or coercion. It sounds obvious, but sometimes this rule is ignored. The above-mentioned 'adjustment' act should be coupled with efforts to establish a consensus on what the fundamental rules for all are.

Bipolar, multipolar or not polar at all?

I belong to the school of thought that believes that the US will remain the only superpower, if it is one today, until at least 2030 (see below). This is not only because the
GDP of the US is still almost twice as large as China’s and its defence spending about three times larger, but also because the US is one of the few developed countries where the population is projected to continue to grow. The present population of the US, about 300 million, is predicted to become 400 million around 2040, and this will keep the American frontier spirit going. However, the relative supremacy of the US is destined to decline. At the same time, there are a variety of challenges which the US, even at its mightiest, cannot solve by itself. These include terrorism, climate change, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and so on. The US is still a necessary part of the solution but it is no longer a sufficient part of it. This means that the US needs support, particularly from its allies and like-minded countries.

Does beyond 2030 mean the G3?

Last but not least, let me extend the range of projection to cover possible developments beyond 2030. The year 2030 will be an interesting one. It is foreseen that around that year, several symbolic events are likely to happen. First, China’s GDP may become larger than that of the US. This does not mean that the Chinese people will become as wealthy as Americans, but it will have a huge symbolic impact. Second, the defence budget of China may reach similar levels to that of the US. Again, this does not mean that the Chinese military will be as capable as that of the US, but it will be seen as another symbolic factor. Third, in 2030, India is projected to have the world’s largest population, about 1.5 billion, surpassing that of China, while the decline of the Chinese population will slowly begin. The concept of the G2, consisting of the US and China, has often been discussed. But if the above projection is correct, by the time China becomes strong enough to squarely face the US, India will have joined the superpower club. In other words, there may not be a G2 but there will certainly be a G3 (the US, China and India), and our long-term planning should take this probability into consideration.

Dealing with a new world order

These trends will inevitably bring about dramatic changes in the global power balance in due course. So, the next question is how can we cope with these trends without causing dramatic disorder?

The reality is that if you look around, there are only three poles in the world which are both capable of working to achieve global stability and willing to do so. They are the US, Europe and the democracies in Asia, including Japan, Australia and the Republic of Korea, among others. The key to stability is to establish the closest possible coordination and cooperation among these three poles.

In this regard, the US and Europe have created NATO, while the US and Asian democracies have created a series of bilateral alliances. This means that the weakest link in this cooperation is between Europe and the democracies in Asia. If we succeed
in realising closer coordination and cooperation between the two, it will represent a net plus in terms of the capability to create a more stable world.

In more concrete terms, the most important and indispensable issue is rule-making. Even though interests and political systems differ from one country to another, it is essential to have common rules in order to establish a peaceful and mutually beneficial coexistence. Rules equal more predictability and transparency. We should be able to adjust the existing rules by taking into consideration the perspectives of the rising powers. If this is not done, it may result in there being constant tension between us and them. However, at the same time, there are a few key factors that need to be borne in mind.

First, we need to distinguish what should not be changed from what can be adjusted. In this regard, why do Crimea and Ukraine matter to Japan? Why is Japan party to the international sanctions regime? It is because this incident touches on one of the fundamental rules that should be globally respected: that the status quo should not be changed unilaterally by force or coercion. This should not only be the case in Europe but in Asia too. Another fundamental rule is *pacta sunt servanda*, meaning that states must abide by what is agreed. If a state agrees and ratifies international agreements, it must honour them. A state cannot just ignore treaties and the procedures therein that have been agreed to. If rules as fundamental as the above examples are not secured, we cannot effectively assure stability.

Second, when adjusting the existing rules or creating new ones, like-minded countries should reach a consensus on minimum standards. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is one of the latest examples of rule-making. The competition of new ideas is in itself a good and healthy thing. What is important is whether the rules applied to the new ideas meet basic global standards. In the case of the AIIB, the rules relate to environmental protection, the avoidance of corruption and so on. The problem was that there was no coordination of consensus building over these standards among the status quo powers before some of the European countries announced their participation. It is not yet clear, even now that a basic agreement has been reached among the founding members, whether global standards will be secured in practice. The AIIB is only the beginning; there will certainly be more new ideas to come. We have learned a lot of lessons this time, and we are determined to do a better job in the future.

Lastly, in rule-making, who takes the lead and in what kind of international framework is of crucial importance. There can be many different approaches depending on the situation but, when it comes to regional rule-making, the East Asia Summit (EAS) seems to be the best platform among the existing regional institutions. This is simply because it involves almost all the important regional players: the 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Japan, China, the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand and India, plus the US and Russia. Japan is open to discussing any issues, whether they be security-related or economic, within the EAS. For example, in relation to the ongoing challenges in the South China Sea, including territorial disputes, unlawful reclamation and unilateral militarisation, the EAS is a good platform
to talk about not only confidence-building measures but also practical arrangements to ensure mishaps are avoided, such as fishery agreements and crisis management mechanisms. Because the US, India and China—the potential parties of the G3—are all members of the EAS, it is the perfect platform for future regional economic integration. Japan will continue to make every effort to make the EAS more relevant and useful.

What should Japan do?

What should Japan’s basic policy choice be? And what should Japan do to achieve its policy goals? In this section I argue that, based upon the above assessment, the fundamental choices that Japan has made will remain valid until around 2030.

Basic strategic choices

There are only a few things that cannot be changed and a country’s geographical position is one of them. Japan is destined to live as a neighbour of China. Historically, China has been much bigger, more advanced and more prosperous than Japan. Our basic task has been and will continue to be to establish a peaceful and mutually beneficial coexistence with China while maintaining our independence and, to put it casually, without being told what to do.

In the post–Second World War environment, Japan made two fundamental choices: to form an alliance with the US and to coexist peacefully and prosperously with China through the application of a comprehensive engagement policy. As assumed above, if the US continues to remain the only superpower until around 2030, Japan’s two fundamental choices will remain valid until around 2030 as well.

However, it is also true, as pointed out above, that the relative supremacy of the US is in decline and there are also many challenges that the US cannot solve by itself. Therefore, it makes sense for the allies of the US to do more to maintain the effectiveness of their alliances. One of the major elements in that regard is to establish closer strategic ties with India, which is predicted to become one of the G3 at some point after 2030.

Comprehensive engagement with China

Japan’s clear policy objective is a peaceful and prosperous coexistence with China. It is inevitable that there will be some issues and challenges between big neighbours, but these can be managed with wisdom from both sides, as has been the case for the past few thousand years. It is always wise to have a crisis management mechanism in place as well, and there are plenty of efforts being made to that end between the two.
In fact, Japan and China have many interests in common, including economic exchange. China has been Japan's number one trading partner since 2007. The environment is another interest shared by China and Japan. Whatever happens in China’s environment will have impact on Japan, and Japan has every incentive to cooperate with China in tackling regional environmental challenges.

On matters of energy security and the safety and freedom of navigation we also share common interests. Japan and China are both major energy consumers and definitely favour value for money. We share the same sea lines of communication (SLOC) from the Persian Gulf through the Indian Ocean and the Strait of Malacca into the South and East China Sea. Nobody appreciates heightened tension in these SLOC. This is true not only for Japan but also for others using the same SLOC, including European countries and China.

It also makes sense that whenever China is ready to become part of the solution to challenges of a global scale, we should welcome it. The latest good example is China’s increasing involvement in peacekeeping operations in Africa. In South Sudan, 350 peacekeepers from the Japanese Self Defence Force are working side by side with 700 peacekeepers from the Chinese infantry division. Europeans know very well that there is an increasing number of ‘fragile states’ in Africa and unless something is done to change their fate, they will become an even more significant source of refugees and extremism. The earlier the engagement, the better, and Europe should be prepared to use whatever help exists and is useful.

**Alliance with the US**

Beyond all that has been said thus far, it is always wise to be prepared for the worst case scenario. A comprehensive engagement policy should include policies for protecting Japan under the worst possible circumstances. Here the alliance with the US is essential. History shows that the better you are prepared for crises, the less chance there is of crises happening. Obviously, the Japan–US alliance is not only in place for the defence of Japan but also to ensure the stability of the entire region and to face such challenges as those that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea poses. It makes sense to strengthen the capability of the alliance with the US.

Japan and the US have continuously improved the interoperability and the level of readiness of their alliance. Supporting the smooth forward deployment of US forces is another priority. Since US forward deployment is increasingly rotational in nature, not only in Asia but also throughout the Indian Ocean, Europe and Africa, this involves making the effort to network among like-minded countries en route.

It is symbolic that the notion of ‘hub and spokes’ which used to be used to describe the security framework in Asia is no longer relevant and that ‘networking’ is the latest concept. Rather than having the US–Japan and the US–Australia alliance operating side by side, we should establish a network (or trilateral security cooperation) between the US, Japan and Australia, by promoting security cooperation between the allies of
the US. Such cooperation used to be non-existent, but the growing level and scale of interoperability was demonstrated after the Great East Japan Earthquake, when not only the US but also the Australian armed forces played a major role in supporting disaster-hit areas. We would very much like to further strengthen the Japan–US–Republic of Korea network as well.

Last but not least, Japan has made a reasonable effort to improve its capabilities. The establishment of a National Security Council together with a National Security Strategy has made it possible for not only faster and more effective but also more transparent and predictable decisions to be made. The recent enactment of the new legislation for peace and security is another example of the efforts being made.

Establish strategic ties with India

For Japan, it makes sense, in more than one way, to establish strategic ties with India. India shares the same values as Japan. India is situated very strategically in the middle of the SLOC which Japan uses and it plays a key role in maintaining the security and freedom of navigation throughout the Indian Ocean. India is a growing market where there are a lot of opportunities for mutually beneficial economic interaction.

Many efforts have been made to promote bilateral relations. To strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries through frequent coordination at the top, Prime Minister Abe travelled to India in January 2014. This was followed by a visit from Prime Minister Modi to Japan in August 2014. Abe visited India again in December 2015. They also meet at multilateral meetings such as the EAS or G20. They are very close.

There is also another win–win example of networking here. The Japan–US–India trilateral mechanism is well-established. Through it, issues of mutual interest are discussed, including maritime security, terrorism and the global economy. The navies of the three countries have already carried out joint exercises twice. This trilateral mechanism will increasingly continue to promote the strategic partnership.

What can Japan and Europe do together?

Finally, what can Japan and Europe do together? As mentioned above, Japan and Europe are two of the three poles which are both capable of and willing to work for global stability, and the closer our coordination and cooperation are, the better the chances of success. Below, I will touch upon some examples of ways in which we can interact.
Share visions for common security challenges

Sometimes, a flat map can be deceptive. Asia is closer than it feels to Europe, even in a geographic sense. In fact, all major European capitals are closer to Asia than Washington, DC or New York. North Korean missiles that can reach the continental US can also reach Europe. Needless to say, Russia not only has a European border but also an Asian one. Europeans use the same SLOC for trade as their Asian counterparts. In short, our destinies are intertwined.

Therefore, we need to have a more enhanced exchange of views about incidents that happen not only in Europe or the Middle East but also in Asia. We would also like to hear more from Europe about its views on critical issues in Asia, such as what is happening in the South China Sea. It would be great to clearly hear European perspectives, for example when the outcome of the arbitration case between the Philippines and China is released. After all, this relates to the rule of law, which has global implications.

Act jointly to promote common security interests

Our cooperation can make a difference in many areas where common security interests are involved. These include the fight against terrorism, anti-piracy operations, coordinating endeavours to protect and promote the use of cyberspace, and so on. One of the areas of particular importance currently is maritime security. To keep our common SLOC safe and free, there may be a rationale for joint exercises at a mid-point between Asia and Europe, such as in the Indian Ocean, to prepare for potential future joint operations. A practical way to move forward would be for some European countries to join the Japan–US–India naval exercises mentioned above.

Realise the indirect links between our interests and help each other

The example I have in mind here is to help improve the situation in the fragile states in Africa mentioned above. Japan is ready to help where we can make a difference. Our participation in South Sudan is an example of this. Because this issue has the potential to become more critical in the near future, Europe should enhance its engagement and be willing to use all available help, including any offered by China.

Conclusion

In short, my conclusion is that Japan needs a strong and engaged Europe; I believe that Europe needs a strong and active Japan as well. There are many areas where we can
cooperate to make sure that this will continue to be the case—such cooperation is desper-ately needed at this time.

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The cyberspace war: propaganda and trolling as warfare tools

Jessikka Aro

Abstract   Russian President Vladimir Putin’s regime has taken control of the traditional media in Russia: TV, radio and newspapers. As Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has stated, the Kremlin sees the mass media as a ‘weapon’. Now Russia’s leadership is trying to take control of social media too, and for this massive operation a new information warfare tool has been mobilised—an army of fake social media Putin-fans, known as ‘trolls’. My investigation has discovered that coordinated social media propaganda writers are twisting and manipulating the public debate in Finland, too. Trolls and bots distribute vast amounts of false information in various languages, and target individual citizens for aggressive operations. Aggressive trolls have created a feeling of fear among some of my interviewees, causing them to stop making Russia-related comments online. Trolling has had a serious impact on freedom of speech, even outside Russia. Thus, it should be viewed as a national security threat that needs to be addressed accordingly. The question is: how should the Kremlin’s trolls and disinformation be countered?
Keywords  Russia | Disinformation | Information warfare | Social media | Trolls

Introduction

Aggressive pro-Russia troll campaigns have manipulated the public debate and silenced citizens. As trolling, hacking and other oppression techniques will only get worse in the future, governments need to find ways to defend individuals from information attacks.

It was in September 2014 that I first began to investigate what was then the latest trend in Russia’s information warfare: paid anonymous and aggressive social media commentators and their impact on Finnish public debate. Information warfare has various definitions, and in this article I use the most common one: a state-conducted, strategic series of information and psychological operations that influences the target’s opinions, attitudes and actions in order to support the political goals of the state’s leaders. In 2000, the Russian Foreign Ministry defined ‘information security’ as the ‘protection of [Russia’s] national interests in the information sphere’ (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2000). In recent years the Russian state’s information warfare capabilities have developed rapidly to match its intentions (Giles 2016).

‘Trolls’ are part of the Kremlin’s propaganda system and technique of information warfare: these recruited commentators distribute the messages of Russia’s political leaders online. The Russian investigative journalist (Garmazhapova 2013) who went undercover in a pro-Putin social media commenting office in St Petersburg in 2013 dubbed the commentators ‘trolls’ and their office a ‘troll factory’. Prior to this discovery, the Kremlin had already taken the traditional media under its control to serve its interests, with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu calling the media a ‘weapon’ (Interfax 2015). These recruited online bloggers are being used to take social media under the Kremlin’s control, too. The Kremlin has denied any connection to the troll factories.

As soon as I opened my investigation, I became the target of an info-war. The Finnish pro-Kremlin propagandists’ activities against me—disinformation campaigns and open-source surveillance—are a text-book example of a Russian information—psychological operation. The goal is to discredit me, make my work seem unreliable and ultimately stop me from disclosing facts about social media propagandists. Similar operations are used in Russia to oppress political dissidents, journalists and others publishing facts that show Russia’s authoritarian regime in an unfavourable light. Over the past 18 months, my character and my journalism have been smeared in ways that no journalist in Finland has ever experienced before. The systematic attacks on my work continue today.

In this article, I comment on the results of my investigations into the Kremlin trolls’ tactics and their impact. Additionally, I provide an example of a new pro-Kremlin disinformation site. At the end of the article I suggest solutions that should be applied by the international community, governments, journalists and Internet companies to counter aggressive online disinformation.
The troll campaign begins with a falsified narrative

The Finnish Public Broadcasting Company Yle’s online news site published my crowdsourcing article on 15 September 2014. In it I asked readers to provide me with information and their experiences of anonymous and aggressive pro-Russia propaganda trolls on Internet sites used by Finns. I wanted answers to specific questions: which tactics and forums do the trolls use, and how do Finns react to troll disinformation attacks? I specifically asked the readers not to name individual trolls (Aro 2014).

Pro-Kremlin propagandists operating in the international information sphere immediately mobilised against my work. They created their own falsified narrative of me and my article, and spread lies on fake news sites about me ‘persecuting Russians living in Finland and putting together an illegal database of Putin’s supporters’ (Antropova 2014). I was named as a ‘famous assistant of foreign security services’ and said to ‘cooperate with NATO’ (Russkaja Narodnaja Linya 2014). In the Kremlin’s narrative the US Central Intelligence Agency as well as other foreign security services and NATO are portrayed as hostile enemies of Russia.

Facebook and Twitter trolls (and actual people following their example) questioned my investigations and mental health, and started conducting their own ‘investigations’ into my social media postings and other information about me. As my contact information was disclosed alongside the disinformation about me, my phone’s messaging and email inboxes were filled with messages from people angry at me for ‘persecuting Russians’. I received a phone call in which someone fired a gun. Later someone texted me, claiming to be my dead father, and told me he was ‘observing me’ (Aro 2015a).

Associates of propagandists are now publishing smear songs which support the narrative of me being a ‘NATO troll’ waging an info-war against Russia. In one YouTube music video, an actress plays me: a lady wearing a blonde wig is waving NATO and US flags in President Putin’s face in a space resembling the Yle newsroom.

Info-attacks are spiced up with ‘intel’ about my personal history. In February 2016, my privacy was brutally violated: over 12 years ago I was given a 300 euro fine for drug use. The details of this fine were dug up from court archives, and propagandists started to publish ‘scandal’ stories containing libellous fantasies about me selling drugs, having written my articles under the influence of illegal substances, being a ‘NATO information expert drug dealer’ and suffering from mental illness. The stories were published on fake sites that incite racism and on several anonymous far-right and conspiracy-theory sites. Twitter trolls link these filth articles to Russian media.
The trolls’ impact: people silenced, people confused

Despite the spread of disinformation about my work, I continued to investigate the troll phenomenon. I published new details and footage from the secretive St Petersburg–based troll factory where workers, pretending to be opinionated citizens, write about given ‘political themes’, including in English. The employees did not want to disclose information about their work, and the ‘news agency’ boss working at the factory claimed that ‘troll accusations are propaganda war’ (Aro and Mäkeläinen 2015).

I studied the data my Finnish audience was sending me and investigated online sites and troll groups. I listed online forums that were systematically visited by pro-Russia trolls or were spreading disinformation (Aro 2015c). Now, well over a year since the results of my crowdsourcing article were published, that list is even longer, even though Sputnik, a ‘news agency’ owned by the Russian government, has stopped publishing in Finnish.

My results proved that aggressive pro-Russia propaganda trolls had had an impact on many Finns, on their attitudes and even their actions: some had stopped discussing Russian politics online; others had lost touch with what was true or false, for example, about the war in Ukraine.

More concerningly some Finns had started to spread aggressive pro-Kremlin disinformation without checking their facts after being exposed to the propaganda (Aro 2015b). In addition, one of the goals of info-war is to create chaos not only in the information sphere but also within society itself. In line with this aim, some people had protested outside Yle headquarters in Finland after being agitated by disinformation on social media.

Disinformation is targeted at a variety of audiences

As with all professional media systems, pro-Russia online disinformation is designed to meet the needs of as many different target audiences as possible. The primary target group for the St Petersburg troll factory seems to be ordinary citizens, but politicians and other public figures are targeted as well. Spreading disinformation online is cheap compared to television or print methods. It can also be multiplied and spread across borders very efficiently, as Putin’s former adviser, now a US-based researcher, Andrei Illarionov has stated (Illarionov 2014).

Pro-Kremlin disinformation material is first published on unreliable and non-journalistic media, including Russian state media websites, Vkontakte, YouTube, Twitter,
Facebook, blogs and special websites. Comments without links are also posted straight to forums, and each troll has to produce hundreds of comments during a 12-hour shift.

Disinformation is designed to manipulate the receiver’s feelings. Younger and more visually oriented people are lured in with memes, caricatures and videos. The messages conveyed by trolls’ memes are simple: Western political leaders are often depicted as ‘Nazis’ or ‘fascists’. Images of corpses and alleged war crimes committed by Ukrainian soldiers are distributed, as well as photos of Ukrainian teenage girls wearing t-shirts with Nazi symbols on them—in reality these have been edited in Photoshop.

Social media attacks can be seemingly small, for example a 140-character tweet. My investigations have shown that this can be enough: some Finns told me that they had stopped commenting on Russia-related matters online because aggressive trolls had called them names (e.g. ‘Russophobe’, ‘Nazi’ etc.) and used threatening language. The influence of a small message can grow when it is repeated, and some trolls have called tweeters the same nasty names hundreds of times.

More sophisticated psychological tactics are used to brainwash people. On Facebook, people’s need to belong to a community is taken advantage of. Troll group administrators manipulate group members to accept their agenda by bullying or blocking all who oppose the leaders. Members’ comments that support the leaders’ agenda are encouraged by positive feedback from the administrators (‘likes’ and similar-minded comments). The only option for a troll group member is to accept administrators’ views or face being left out. Members are tricked into believing that the offensive language used is a ‘normal use of free speech’.

An allegedly citizen-sourced project that looks more like a suspicious information operation

Tailor-made disinformation is also provided for people who prefer in-depth ‘analyses’. The needs of this target audience are met with lengthy blog articles containing seemingly accurate lists of sources underlining the credibility of the text. The references, however, usually lead to other disinformation sites.

Many fake news sites, such as Sputnik, describe their content as ‘alternative’. In reality this usually means ‘pro-Russian’, ‘conspiracy theoretical’ and ‘anti-Western’. Articles critical of Putin’s regime are not published.

In January 2016, while Russia’s warplanes were bombing civilian targets such as hospitals in Syria, Twitter activists founded a new pro-Kremlin domain, Southfront.org, titled ‘South Front, Analysis and Intelligence’. This site promises its readers that it ‘digs out the truth in issues which are barely covered by the states concerned and mainstream media’ (South Front 2015). South Front seems to have a special target group: conflict news enthusiasts attracted to conspiracy theories and action films.
The content of the South Front website is a fascinating hybrid of revealingly detailed military intelligence and totally bogus stories. The site has published a series of articles titled ‘Russia Defence Reports’, which visualise the actions in Syria of the insurgents and the armies of Russia and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in a ‘text analysis’ format, as well as through Hollywood-style ‘video reports’ with exciting action film music. The content focuses on the success of Russia’s armed forces, and showing off Russia’s weapons. The videos have titles such as ‘Russian Airspace Defence Forces’, ‘(Russian) Anti-Missile Shield’, and ‘Russia Develops Military Infrastructure and Facilities in Latakia’. Versions of the South Front website are available in other languages too. Nothing about Russia attacking civilians is published (see South Front 2016).

South Front uses Facebook to share its contents (Facebook 2016). It has over 17,500 fans and troll profiles liking, commenting on and sharing its posts. These include articles, photos (for example, of Russian military equipment in action in Syria) and other items, such as caricatures of US President Barack Obama promoting gay marriage. As on most pro-Kremlin and disinformation Facebook sites, the quality of the comments made by South Front readers is low. It reveals the commenters’ lack of knowledge of both military issues and international politics. This lack of understanding is often taken advantage of by the pro-Kremlin propagandists. South Front portrays itself as being a crowdsourced project, but it looks more like a professional info-war project run or backed by the Russian military.

The scariest propaganda trap: subtle disinformation

The good news of my investigation was that some Finns had experienced or witnessed trolling activities but had not been influenced by them. Aggressive pro-Russia propagandists often use such ridiculous Soviet-style argumentation that the majority of the audience is not interested in what they have to say at all.

Subtle and intelligent content is the most problematic to counter: not everyone recognises it as the product of an aggressive foreign influencer. Thus many people let it affect them cognitively or psychologically. For example, the high-level parliamentary official Peter Saramo has been found to frequent a pro-Russia troll Facebook group and to spread false allegations. In addition, some Finnish MPs have accepted ‘bikini trolls’ as friends on Facebook and have thus exposed themselves to influence through social media.

My investigation has established that foreign political propaganda influences parts of the Finnish population. This is worrying because Finland has a good school system and Finns are highly educated. This leads to the conclusion that even worse damage could

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1 NATO has categorised the owners of fake profiles that post trolling comments and use a photo of a beautiful woman as their profile picture as ‘bikini trolls’.

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be caused in societies with a less well-educated population. Currently in Finland, there are education projects underway that aim to provide people with improved media literacy skills and a better understanding of disinformation and cyber-threats.

The Russian-style impunity of trolls is not an option: legal measures and support are needed

Journalists covering conflicts are often the first targets for info-war campaigns and propagandists, as journalism undermines the effects of propaganda, and propagandists want to use reporters to spread disinformation among a larger audience. Both in Finland and internationally there have been various cases in which pro-Kremlin influencers have intimidated citizens, journalists and researchers who have attempted to uncover Russian info-war tactics or espionage.

In Finland strong legislation forbids mass media crimes, such as libel, making threats (death fantasies, for example, are considered threats by the courts), stalking and publishing private information with the aim of defaming an individual. Legally, social media is considered mass media.

The persecution of me by propagandists is being investigated by the police, and it is important that other disinformation targets report harassment to the police too. If politically motivated intimidation is not stopped at an early stage, it may have serious consequences—not only professionally but personally, too.

In Russia, independent investigative journalists, citizen activists and opposition politicians often face harassment, threats and physical violence, and in the most tragic cases have been murdered. The intimidators of journalists and citizen activists can act with almost complete impunity in Russia. As Western countries have better justice systems and legislation, it is advisable to counter the illegal threats, libel and harassment of pro-Russia propagandists—as well as other hate speech agitators—with legal action. In Britain new legislation was passed in 2014 that means that online trolls there can face up to two years in jail.

If current national legislation is powerless to act on disinformation, with enough political will it can be changed to protect the targets of hate speech. The rules of public debate cannot be placed in the hands of disinformation agitators, as they will use them to further their own political goals and not society’s best interests.

Most civilians are not psychologically prepared to operate in an info-war climate. In the workplaces of the targets of disinformation and hate speech, it is crucial that employers and workers’ unions take protective measures. Fear of being attacked is a natural reaction, but without proper support it could cause self-censorship. Some journalists and researchers have told me that they are too scared to publish their findings.
because they fear the hate speech that will follow, and some citizens have already been silenced by the trolls.

Aggressive trolling is a threat to the organisation and its functions, not just individual journalists or researchers. In this regard, Finland has seen a positive development: in February 2016 the chief editors of the Finnish media put out a joint statement saying that they will protect their reporters from threats.

Suing online propagandists is the ‘easiest’ legal way of tackling disinformation. A much trickier question is what should be done about the international blogs and fake news sites run by the anonymous middlemen who abuse the Western freedom of speech and mask pro-Kremlin hate speech as ‘alternative opinions’.

From the perspective of journalism and freedom of speech, the best solution is to investigate suspicious sites and other info-war activities and to publish detailed articles about them. That is the way to raise awareness and to ensure that fewer people are in danger of falling into the propaganda trap. Many journalists and projects, including the Ukrainian ‘Stop Fake’ project and the @EUvsDisinfo Twitter account, do this by regularly exposing propaganda as such.

If propaganda sites break the law, the police need to find the people running the sites. Latvia recently blocked the Latvian Sputnik site because it spreads Russian propaganda. Foreseeably, Russia opposed the move as ‘censorship’, which is an absurd and ‘trolling’ statement coming from Russia.

Finland has also taken action to counter disinformation: the Prime Minister’s office has set up a group that exchanges knowledge about disinformation targeted at Finland and has started to train government officials on the subject of information war.

**Social media giants should take a strict approach to hate speech**

The key enablers and thus the potential solvers of the troll problem are the international social media companies Facebook and Twitter. Both provide harassers and propagandists with a platform on which to publish death fantasies, libel and lies, but leave crimes for the victims and local police to tackle. Making user reports about hate speech trolls does not currently help much, as Facebook replies to many such reports with the automatic reply ‘user/content is not breaking the community standards’. At the same time, we have seen real people’s profiles temporarily shut down after false waves of reports. For Facebook, Finnish language trolling seems to be a new business opportunity: Facebook has even sold ads to an anonymous disinformation site. However, there are positive developments too: in spring 2016 Facebook did close down the page of one pro-Russia disinformation agency, DONi News (Donbass International News Agency), which is run by the Donetsk-based information warrior Janus Putkonen.
Twitter is almost as passive as Facebook: it lets pro-Kremlin bots and fake profiles operate quite freely—even though fake identities and the use of Twitter for illegal activities are forbidden.

Both Facebook and Twitter need to start ‘cleaning up’ the fake profiles that are coordinating nasty operations against citizens. Both companies are US-based and probably find it difficult to check the authenticity of suspected trolls, but this effort has to be made for the sake of freedom of speech and information peace. At the moment, an individual user is quite helpless against an orchestrated hate campaign. The same applies to YouTube, which provides a platform for propaganda videos and hate speech.

The normal news media should also take a stricter approach. Media news comment sections are filled with trolls questioning the news reports. Some international media have even closed the comment sections because of trolls. In this situation a very simple solution is to ensure that comment sections are properly moderated.

Another Internet giant, Google, also needs to address the issue of trolling. As things currently stand, Google searches for ‘Russia’ or ‘Ukraine’ bring up many results for disinformation websites. This is another goal accomplished for the propagandists: search engines are becoming filled with nonsense and being used to build a digital footprint, for example, for the imaginary state of the People’s Republic of Donetsk. If Google does not organise and check the relevance of the search results it offers, who will?

**Information defence is needed—and soon**

In 2015, Finnish cybersecurity expert Jarno Limnéll stated that the phenomenon of pro-Russia information influencing will continue to grow (Aro 2015b). From the results of my investigations and experiences, I agree. Russia is increasing its control of the Internet and pouring money into info-war operations—as long as its failing economy remains manageable, the Kremlin will continue to ‘protect its interests’ in the infosphere.

Brutal privacy breaches and personal ‘black PR’ campaigns combining elements of social media stalking are not restricted to journalists or researchers, but also target private citizens. An indicative example of this is the experience of a private Finnish Twitter activist, who commented on and criticised Russia’s actions in Ukraine (Twitter activist, who wants to stay anonymous, pers. comm.). Details of this activist’s profession and workplace, as well as clear hints about his employer, were later published in an anonymous English-language Sputnik online ‘report’.

Currently, many citizens face and counter organised trolling and disinformation campaigns without assistance from security officials. I am not aware of any cases in which the Finnish social media police have actively protected pro-Russia abuse targets on troll sites.
Among the countermeasures needed is a proper information defence mechanism that protects people and societies from troll attacks and disinformation. Finnish researcher and author Saara Jantunen, who has a Ph.D. in military science, is currently researching modern information defence methods. Jantunen became a target for pro-Russia propagandists in September 2014, after she publicly stated that the St Petersburg troll factory might be conducting an Internet war and described the factory operations. Last year Jantunen published a book on modern information warfare titled *Infosota* (Infowar), and she has stated that the Finnish public debate concerning Russia is the result of decades of targeted psychological operations (Jantunen 2016). If an information defence mechanism is not developed, the propagandists will gain new victories with their operations: they will oppress and confuse even more people, and gain the ability to mobilise people to commit serious actions outside the information sphere.

It is important to bear in mind that information operations against citizens might only be one phase in this form of warfare—cyber-espionage and cyber-attacks against citizens may follow. Today, Russian cyber-espionage is conducted by hacker groups that are seemingly unconnected to the Kremlin and target high-level government agencies. As the St Petersburg troll factory is suspected of having connections with the Russian security services, will we see citizens becoming the targets of cyber-espionage or hacking too? If the pro-Russia activists and their associates are willing to face criminal charges for their actions in Finland, what else are they capable of? If Western governments do not already have their best cyber-experts on the case then they should ensure that they soon do.

President of Finland Sauli Niinistö has made the interesting point that countering disinformation is the duty of every citizen in the furtherance of national defence (Hallamaa 2015). In contrast, I want to emphasise—as a journalist and the target of an info-war campaign—that Western countries should defend their citizens when they are in need of defence. Information defence cannot be outsourced to the public—if it is, there is a high risk that there will be new victims, as every free citizen silenced, confused or manipulated by a Kremlin troll can be seen as a casualty of info-war. The St Petersburg troll factory (and possibly similar factories elsewhere), alongside the Russian state media, is up and running, creating an ‘alternative’ pro-Kremlin online reality and producing fake comments and news 24/7—at full speed.

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**References**


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Digital foreign policy: how digital tools can further Europe’s foreign policy goals

Łukasz Antoni Król

Abstract The security threats Europe is now facing, such as hybrid warfare, propaganda campaigns and information warfare, frequently include a digital dimension. At the same time, digital tools offer an immense potential for change in the European neighbourhood, not least in their ability to equip and inspire pro-democracy protesters, particularly those facing a repressive security apparatus. Digital policy cannot therefore become an afterthought but needs to be deeply integrated into Europe’s foreign policy and diplomatic efforts. Furthermore, the US’s long-held Internet hegemony is beginning to fade, placing the EU in a good position to lead global Internet governance initiatives and ensure that they develop along open and liberal lines.

Keywords EU neighbourhood policy | Cybersecurity | Hybrid warfare | Internet | Governance | Democratisation | Internet freedom
Introduction

The battle for an open Internet is not merely a matter of political principle. It is also a means of achieving certain EU foreign policy goals, such as supporting democracy or combating hybrid war. Increased engagement in Internet policy would also allow the EU to boost its visibility in global foreign policy, humanitarian and democracy promotion programmes. This article will look into digital and foreign policy issues in the current geopolitical atmosphere, in which hybrid threats present new strategic difficulties. The first section describes the impact of the Internet on human rights defenders and civil society activists, including those who are pressing for greater transparency in Russia. The second section deals with cybersecurity. It covers cyber-attacks, which are becoming an important tool in hybrid warfare, and investigates ways of responding to them. The third section looks at current debates over the Internet’s governance structures and analyses how the EU should engage in such discussions. The final section of the article explains how the EU could become a leading global player in digital foreign policy.

Digital diplomacy, or the way in which politicians and foreign ministries alike are increasingly turning to tools such as Twitter to manage aspects of their public communication, is quickly rising in importance. Yet an EU-wide digital diplomacy strategy could cause more harm than good by hampering the spread of the individual tones, attitudes and personalities that have enabled political Tweets to become such an important communication tool. While digital diplomacy could become an important tool in democratisation efforts and the fight against Russian propaganda, a deeper analysis therein lies in the realm of digital communications and marketing studies rather than foreign policy analysis, and is outside the scope of this paper.

The Internet, communications and human rights

Online connections play an overwhelmingly influential role during protests such as the Arab Spring. Protesters and activists themselves acknowledge the importance of social networks, while authoritarian governments’ rapid reactions and threats to shut down Internet connections also suggest that they feel threatened by large-scale online mobilisation (Tkacheva et al. 2013). In a world in which authoritarian states frequently attempt to curtail free speech and control the media, the Internet can become a crucial sphere of resistance. In the Middle East, political and economic grievances certainly provided the backdrop for the Arab Spring demonstrations, but countless citizens also used online tools to organise their efforts, mobilise protests and hold authorities to account. Similarly, in Russia, a civil society created online helps to monitor elections, communicate with citizens and counter certain government narratives (Howard and Hussain 2013). Platforms such as blogs and social media are often able to present a contrarian message and have become a space for alternative opinions, something that is crucial in states that lack a free and independent media environment. An influential civil society vanguard can often organise itself online (Tkacheva et al. 2013) and create
an atmosphere of opposition that can spread to other social sectors, even in states with low Internet penetration.

The Internet’s political impact in the EU’s southern neighbourhood has been extensively studied by scholars, somewhat to the detriment of its impact among Europe’s eastern neighbours. Yet Europe’s eastern neighbours, as well as some of its member states, are feeling the impact of a hybrid warfare campaign that also has an informational dimension, necessitating an effective digital foreign policy response. In the past, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty effectively tackled the Soviet message because they not only broadcast Western views, but also interviewed civil society leaders in the Soviet sphere (Howard and Hussain 2013). Similarly, promoting active discussions online and aiding political activists in Russia would contribute towards an organic alternative public sphere that could weaken the Kremlin’s propaganda grip and information monopoly within Russia and the surrounding regions. At the same time, media environments are not always fully mature, especially in authoritarian, developing or post-Soviet states, and many major publishers are often reluctant to disseminate politically sensitive content. The EU should therefore consider supporting independent publishers, news outlets or online platforms on which activists could post freely.¹ Such support could come in the form of technological help, since many activists do not have sufficient technical knowledge, or simply in the shape of funding for independent and investigative journalism.

With the notable exception of China,² most states find it difficult to eliminate politically troublesome content online. They prefer cracking down on those who author this content over pre-emptively preventing its spread.³ Governments nonetheless have the upper hand in terms of digital resources and can wield control over the Internet’s physical infrastructure, while civil society representatives often require outside assistance, such as media or cybersecurity training. While the Internet’s low barriers to entry make it easy to create political blogs or platforms, activists also need to be wary and sufficiently well trained so as not to become easy targets of state repression (Morozov 2012). During the Arab Spring uprisings, as governments began to restrict Internet connections, a ‘speak to Tweet’ system developed by Google and Twitter helped protesters and dissidents to express themselves. It provided them with a phone number so that they could dictate messages which would be turned into Twitter posts. Similarly, tools such as The Onion Router (Tor), which anonymises online connections and was partially developed and funded by the US government, are also frequently employed by activists. Finally, many opposition figures would benefit immensely from better encryption services, which could help them to evade government surveillance.

¹ I am grateful to Ms Kateryna Kruk and Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, MEP, for helping me to better understand this concept.
² While much of China’s online censorship is ruthlessly effective, some users have still been able to overcome it to some degree through the use of coded phrases. For more information see Qiang and Lyden (2013).
³ Some states, notably Russia, are trying to implement real name policies and similar tools that would further restrict citizens’ ability and readiness to post subversive content. Such plans, however, are still in their infancy and it remains to be seen what impact they will have.
In the digital era, technology can empower activists and authoritarians alike, and the EU should ensure that the former benefit the most from it. This could be achieved through providing tools and trainings that cover topics such as encryption, anonymous browsing, and overcoming government bans and blockades of websites. European institutions should therefore look into measures such as spreading anonymisation software and training activists in digital skills and cybersecurity. These activities should be framed as both democratisation assistance and countermeasures against Russian propaganda. Politicians must resist the temptation to blame encryption and threaten to restrict it in the wake of successful terrorist attacks. Criminals and terror groups will always find ways of using or smuggling effective encryption products (Doctorow 2015), while any ban on secure communications will cause the most harm to human rights activists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that need to relay anonymous messages in repressive environments. Finally, the EU should strengthen its export ban on surveillance technologies (Pop 2011), as many European companies continue to create products used for authoritarian surveillance.

**Cybersecurity, hybrid warfare and traditional security actors**

Information warfare aims to influence hearts and minds rather than directly steal data, cause physical harm or damage infrastructure. The latter effects, however, can be accomplished using cyber-attacks, a broad term that encompasses several dimensions and potential types of attack, including theft, espionage and cyberwar:

- Cybercrime, frequently theft and fraud, not only causes immense economic losses (estimated at around $400 billion in 2014) (McAfee 2014) but, like maritime piracy, is a cross-border phenomenon and therefore also a foreign policy matter.
- Cyber-espionage involves the theft of intellectual property from governments and companies.
- Cyberwarfare refers to large-scale actions against the state, and could be directed against infrastructure (including energy networks), state services and similar targets.

Cybersecurity challenges traditional security paradigms in two ways. First of all, it is difficult to attribute a cyber-attack to a specific actor. Scholars have debated whether a politically motivated cyber-attack on Estonian government services was the work of an agitated Russian crowd who opposed a perceived anti-Soviet gesture by Tallinn or a state-sponsored response. This difficulty in attribution makes cyber-attacks a valuable component of hybrid warfare. Immediately before Russia’s 2008 invasion of Georgia, Tbilisi’s government servers were flooded with significant amounts of data, knocking them offline. The timing and circumstantial evidence suggest that Moscow was responsible, but proving such a claim with complete certainty is almost impossible. The EU should take steps to tackle the cross-border nature of cybercrime and could, through
bilateral treaties, make cybercrimes illegal in both their country of origin and the country they target (as proposed by Nye 2014).

Second, cybersecurity requires deep public–private cooperation. The public sector often has the law enforcement and (in the case of cyberwarfare) military expertise to address cyber-incidents, while the private sector often owns and manages most of the infrastructure which could be hit by such attacks. It is therefore crucial that both sectors actively communicate, declare security breaches and trust one another. The EU should formulate a policy on how to respond to both private and state-sponsored cybercrime and cyberwarfare, while differentiating between them and ensuring that the reaction is balanced, proportionate and nuanced. This policy should be consistent across the EU, as data leaks or attacks on one state could spill over and have much wider repercussions. Similarly, the reporting of breaches should be made mandatory. This would ensure that every organisation that has been broken into reveals details of the breach and cooperates with the relevant authorities to prevent future incidents. Grouping all types of attack under the common umbrella term of ‘cybersecurity’ is often unhelpful, since different attacks are perpetrated by different actors and require different reactions. While a state’s intelligence and military services should investigate and react to instances of cyberwarfare, such a reaction is counterproductive when dealing with cybercrime such as theft. The cyber-attacks against Sony that were attributed to North Korea were framed by the US government as an attack on American freedoms of speech (Kerry 2014). Such a response, however, did not resolve the issue faster and unnecessarily blurred the line between international law enforcement and military affairs. States should distinguish between different types of cybersecurity problems and create differentiated, nuanced approaches.

Cyberwarfare and the military dimension of cybercrime

The current war in Eastern Ukraine has witnessed the use of some low-level cyber-tactics (Geers 2015; Coyle 2015), which will probably become more prominent in future hybrid warfare scenarios. Such tactics can be used in conjunction with propaganda campaigns to shape narratives, for example by knocking opposition websites offline and blurring the line between information warfare and direct attacks on physical infrastructure. Furthermore, it is very difficult to tell whether such actions are perpetrated by a state, private individuals or non-state groups. Finally, cyber-attacks are easy to conduct but difficult to defend against.

4 These ideas were first put forward at a workshop entitled ‘Cybersecurity and Advanced Threats in Practice’ that took place at the European Parliament on 24 March 2015, led by Jason Steer from computer security firm FireEye.

5 See Footnote 4.
As the cases of Georgia, Estonia and Ukraine demonstrate, all states, especially the most vulnerable ones, must improve their cyber-defences and resilience. Since such defences often concern civilian infrastructure, civilian EU assistance could also be used to bolster them. However, it is possible to alleviate the worst consequences of such attacks. Shortly after the 2008 attack, Georgian government websites were successfully transferred to less vulnerable US servers (Korns and Kastenberg 2009). The EU could encourage member states to engage in a similar type of burden sharing. During a potential future cyber-attack, member states could host attacked states' websites and information, which could significantly reduce an aggressor’s ability to disrupt digital communications during hybrid campaigns.

A cyber-attack has an immense offensive balance. Unlike a traditional attack, the cost of carrying out a cyber-attack is very low while the cost of defending a state or organisation against one is very high. This also means that states are constantly trying to find new ways of deterring cyber-attacks, the most notable of which is NATO’s Tallinn Manual (Schmitt 2013). It argues, among other things, that cyber-attacks count as a ‘use of force’; that they can be classified as ‘armed attacks’; and that some cyber-attacks should be met with a military, rather than merely a law enforcement, response. The Tallinn Manual, however, is not official NATO policy and has not been codified into any treaties. The EU should think deeply about the ways in which cyber-tactics form part of hybrid warfare and how to respond to them. Just as the recent invasion of Eastern Ukraine raised questions over what role NATO’s Chapter Five would play if a member of the Alliance was invaded by troops not operating under a national flag in a hybrid warfare scenario, so similar issues should be discussed with regard to cyber-attacks. The EU should look into the ethics and norms of cyberwarfare and help to form treaties that define legitimate and illegitimate targets. The European External Action Service is currently working on defining international norms that ban powers from targeting each other’s critical civilian infrastructure, and the other EU institutions should support such efforts.

Global Internet governance

While the Internet’s current structures often help activists, promote free exchange of information and aid democracy, such benefits are not inevitable. Designing the Internet’s wider governance mechanisms is rapidly becoming a foreign policy prerogative, since many of the Internet’s political and economic benefits rely on its open nature, which is increasingly under threat.

The economic and political benefits of the Internet are so immense that many authoritarian states have also embraced it. While some, such as North Korea, have managed to cut almost all of their citizens off from the Internet, they are the exception rather than the rule. Despite this, many authoritarian and developing states are trying to assume greater domestic control of the Internet.
EU and OECD states, in contrast, tend to promote the status quo, in which the Internet is governed by many different organisations through a system of consensus. Technical standards are mostly determined by groups of engineers. Many politicians, think tanks (Negroponte et al. 2013) and the European Commission (2015) have spoken out in favour of this multi-stakeholder, which has several advantages:

- It effectively replicates the design of the Internet. The idea of absolute state control clashes with the nature of universal transnational networks.
- It enables further organic growth. The Internet is expanding very quickly, making soft regulations much more effective than hard laws.
- It preserves human rights and free discussion online which could be at threat otherwise. A system in which states have greater control over the shape of their regional networks, as promoted by Russia and China, could lead to entire regions being closed off from the global Internet, an end to online anonymity or increased censorship.
- It allows for an effective response to many cybersecurity issues. As German representatives (Schaller and Thimm 2014) and analysts such as former US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte argue, cybersecurity is best maintained through an open Internet and common agreements on how to tackle cybercrime and cyber-attacks. Furthermore, since cybercrime spans both the public and private spheres, a joint public and private governance model for the Internet, rather than a merely state-driven one, is better placed to fight it (Negroponte et al. 2013).

Discussions over Internet governance are moving into the realm of high politics (Raymond and Smith 2013), and many states have begun to challenge the multi-stakeholder model (DeNardis and Raymond 2013). Some, including Russia and China, are trying to assert a greater degree of sovereignty over the Internet. Others, mostly OECD states, are still actively promoting the multi-stakeholder model. Finally, many post-colonial states are undecided but tend to support the sovereignty-driven approach as they feel that the current order is too US-centric and does not adequately represent their interests.

Many of the discussions about the future of the Internet and its governance are therefore also proxy debates about the wider role of the West in global governance. This debate comes at an important time. Supporters of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership argue that the agreement will help the EU and the US to shape new global economic norms. Similarly, the EU and the US also have important opportunities to address global Internet governance through other trade deals and diplomatic actions.

The flaws of the current Internet governance structures need to be addressed. The EU should engage with other powers, particularly those in the developing world, and assure them that the current system represents their interests. However, as it stands the current governance system is still too US-centric. A further problem is that the multi-stakeholder model will lead to the emergence of too many decision-making bodies. Wealthier states, which can afford more technical and diplomatic resources, are therefore better represented and tend to have a louder voice within such organisations (Negroponte
et al. 2013). Similarly, larger companies have much greater resources and are therefore disproportionately well represented and more influential than smaller firms and NGOs. This is a key concern of developing states and small civil rights and consumer groups, and needs to be addressed. Despite those flaws, the multi-stakeholder model is the most effective method of Internet governance and the EU should continue to promote it and oppose a sovereign, state-driven Internet. This could be achieved through leading by example and ensuring that member states embrace open Internet norms, promoting the multi-stakeholder model within international organisations, and perhaps by including provisions for an open Internet in some aid and bilateral trade deals.

Global digital democracy programmes and the EU

Several groups already carry out digital foreign policy programmes, the most prominent being the US’s Internet Freedom programme, run by the Department of State. The programme encompasses several aspects of digital foreign policy, including efforts to create and distribute censorship circumvention and anonymisation technologies, to begin a dialogue with US firms about the export of surveillance software and to advocate for an open Internet based on the multi-stakeholder model (Clinton 2010; Henry et al. 2014). RAND Corporation conducted a large-scale analysis of the programme and concluded that it was highly effective, particularly its backing of anonymisation software Tor, which was used in over half of the projects it pursued (Henry et al. 2014). However, the effectiveness of the Internet Freedom programme has not been sufficiently analysed by academics and practitioners, and it remains an open question whether it could provide an effective template for an EU digital foreign policy.

Even though digital foreign policy programmes already exist and both governments and some private companies such as Google (through Jigsaw, formerly known as Google Ideas) and Facebook (through Internet.org) try to promote free expression online, there are still many ways in which the EU could add significant value. Schemes such as the Freedom Online Coalition, a group of states campaigning for a multi-stakeholder Internet, provide an important platform for dialogue. Such conversations, however, are unlikely to bring about significant results if they are not tied to the atmosphere of urgency and momentum usually associated with democratisation and foreign policy projects.

The EU, however, could tie digital foreign policy programmes into certain aspects of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which already has significant influence in the region it covers. It could use institutions such as trade agreements or accession negotiations to promote an open Internet built along multi-stakeholder lines and greater government tolerance towards online anonymity. Not all Neighbourhood partners were rated as ‘free on the Net’ in the annual Freedom House ranking (Kelly et al. 2015). Much could be done to improve their standing. The EU could also make greater use of its networks, especially within the Eastern Partnership. It is not enough that tools such
as anonymisation software exist. They also need to target the right people, and the EU could use its links with civil society, activists and non-profit organisations to accomplish this.

Finally, while some states have implicitly accepted the US as the online hegemon that sets most Internet standards and leads on Internet freedom issues, the revelations of the US National Security Agency’s spying activities have caused significant damage to its soft power in that regard. The RAND Corporation report (Henry et al. 2014) investigating the efficacy of American Internet Freedom policies acknowledges that many pro-democracy activists will not want to be affiliated with the US or use digital tools produced by its government. The EU’s soft power has a different reach and orientation to that of the US, and its digital foreign policy tools and advocacy could therefore reach states and activists that view the Atlantic hegemon with ambivalence or distrust.

Any state or multinational actor engaging in digital foreign policy will face significant challenges. Political crises and demonstrations unfold quickly. It can be very difficult to immediately identify groups that need digital advice and anonymisation tools. Similarly, political actors are not experts at creating technological tools (Henry et al. 2014) and will require the close cooperation of technology firms and NGOs. Finally, policymakers will need to avoid the temptation of seeing the Internet solely as a force for democracy and liberation (Morozov 2012). The web will not organically reject attempts at authoritarian control, propaganda and surveillance. The EU should find ways of actively subverting and resisting such efforts.

**Conclusion**

Some aspects of foreign policy and democracy support are moving into the digital realm: human rights defenders and activists often use the Internet as a powerful tool, cyber-crime and cyber-attacks cross borders, and the global nature of the Internet requires international collaboration. The EU has the potential to lead on matters of digital foreign policy. It has an advanced technology industry, a history of promoting human rights, the necessary financial capabilities and soft power. Furthermore, many states are becoming increasingly frustrated with what they perceive to be US dominance in digital policy and issues. Europe has the potential to emerge as a new leader in this area—as a region that can continue the previously US-led campaign for an open and democratic Internet, but is not weighed down by a legacy of years of excessive online control.

Just as with other policy areas, the EU needs to look into both short- and long-term actions when dealing with digital foreign policy. In the short term, it is crucial to protect pro-democracy activists and to find new ways of tackling hybrid war and reacting to new security threats. However, there is also a real risk that other states will begin to close off or censor their Internet connections, negating many of the potential short-term gains of an effective digital foreign policy. Short-term action should therefore be complemented by an effective long-term strategy to further engage in Internet governance forums and promote an open Internet based on liberal principles.
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Europe’s twenty-first century challenge: climate change, migration and security

Michael Werz · Max Hoffman

Abstract Most of the refugees arriving in Europe are fleeing civil war and unrest. However, it is important to recognise how the second-order effects of climate change—which can undermine agriculture and increase competition for water and food resources—are contributing to instability and decisions to migrate. While migratory decisions are complex, climate change is an increasingly important contributing factor: it is threatening humanity’s shared interests and collective security in many parts of the world. The cumulative effects of these trends have serious implications for the stability of nations that lack sufficient resources, good governance and the resilience to respond. While there is a need for greater understanding of the detailed causes of...
migration, as well as the associated economic and political instability, a growing body of evidence links climate change, migration and conflict in troubling ways.

Keywords Climate change | Migration | North Africa | Mediterranean | Security | Europe

Introduction

The current migrant crisis in the Mediterranean was sparked by civil war and unrest in Syria, Libya and other places. But its roots go deeper: it is symptomatic of a process of dislocation reshaping the Levant, the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa. Climate change is affecting basic environmental conditions such as rainfall patterns and temperatures. It is contributing to more frequent occurrences of floods, droughts and other natural disasters. Over the long term, these changing conditions are likely to undermine rural livelihoods such as farming, herding and fishing. In effect, these factors squeeze the margins of rural life, and this rural dislocation shapes migratory decisions. Of course, migratory decisions are complex. Climate change is not the sole or even the primary cause, but it is an important contributing factor and should not be ignored. Even when migrants list economic reasons for their migration—agricultural dislocation or price disruption, for example—the influence of climate change often lies beneath the surface. In summary, the second-order effects of climate change—less predictable or reduced agricultural production and greater competition for water and food resources—can and often do contribute to instability and to higher numbers of migrants.

These trends will add to the pressures facing local and national governments in the decades to come. In light of these challenges, advanced and developing nations must revise traditional concepts of security and focus on supporting basic governance and building the resilience of vulnerable communities. European and international leaders will have to deal with climate-driven crises and demographic pressures by mobilising resources at levels generally reserved for traditional competition between nation-states. Currently, the international community is not prepared. Organisations such as the US Agency for International Development, the World Bank, the Red Cross and the World Health Organization do not have the financial capacity, manpower or global presence to deal with the effects of these challenging developments.

A pressing challenge for Europe

Recent intelligence reports and simulations—including some conducted by the US Department of Defense—conclude that vulnerable regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and South-East Asia will face food shortages or price spikes, water crises and massive flooding driven by climate change in the coming decades. The destabilising effects of these events will impact the EU and its foreign and economic interests. These insights lend urgency to attempts to rebalance the traditional
tools of diplomacy, development and defence to more effectively build basic human security. Thus far, Europe’s responses have been stymied by a lack of resources, a narrow bilateral focus and an absence of strategic coordination at the international level. Given the current influx of refugees, time is running out. A collective approach is essential, as responses will require investments in economic development, infrastructure, adaptation, and preventative efforts to bolster basic human and livelihood resilience that are beyond the capabilities of any single state.

However, the institutional tools and funding structures for such an approach have not yet been developed—and current policies within some of the EU member states are dangerously counterproductive (see Kiai et al. 2015; Jacobson 2015). The EU and its partners should refocus their engagement in order to address the slow-moving trends that are undermining basic human security. They should transfer greater authority and funding to agencies in charge of delivering foreign assistance and building resilience to climate change. Finally, they should revamp institutions to build interdisciplinary country teams able to address a wide array of overlapping factors linked to climate change, migration and instability.

The problems next door

The problems are developing next door, in north-west Africa (Werz and Conley 2012), where underlying trends of climate and demography have squeezed the margins of life at the family and community level, contributed to decisions to migrate, heightened conflicts over basic resources, and threatened to undermine state structures and regional stability. These developments may have exacerbated violence and contributed to the resulting migration—they dominated the policy debate in 2015.

According to the UN, up to 250 million people in Africa are projected to suffer from water and food insecurity this century, and three-quarters of rain-fed arable land in the Sahel will be greatly affected by climate change (Kandji et al. 2006; UN 2014). Rising temperatures, drought, desertification, erosion, flooding and sea-level rise all threaten different areas along the axis from Nigeria to Morocco (see Werz and Conley 2012; Di Bartolomeo et al. 2011). Niger and northern Nigeria have faced more frequent droughts and flooding over the last 30 years, along with temperature increases of between 0.5 °C and 1 °C (Kandji et al. 2006). The Niger River has seen diminishing flows, a trend which is an existential concern for those reliant on its waters. If current water consumption trends continue, withdrawals from the Niger basin will increase sixfold by 2025, with profound implications for the region. Lake Chad, a source of life for 25 million people, is drying up, and it is now down to one-twentieth of its size in 1960 (Niasse 2005). The northern parts of Algeria and Morocco, home to the population centres and most of the agriculture in both countries, may see reductions in rainfall of 10 %–20 % by 2025 (Alexander 2010). Finally, Lagos in the south and many parts of Algeria’s and Morocco’s northern coasts are under threat from rising sea levels and saltwater intrusion (Folami 2010; O’Neill 2009; Brown et al. 2011).
These are not the abstract complaints of climate scientists but represent a profoundly disruptive trend in a region dependent on agriculture and other rural livelihoods such as herding and fishing, and lacking quality infrastructure and integrated markets to relieve localised disruptions. When faced with deteriorating conditions, humans have long turned to migration as a basic adaptive mechanism. And, of course, these trends must be combined with the rapid population growth projected to occur throughout the Sahel and West Africa, increasing the strain placed on the countries along this migratory route. Niger has the world’s second-highest fertility rate and a median age of just 15 years, and its population is expected to quadruple in the next century. Nigeria’s population is expected to double by 2040. Population growth increases the strain on already scarce natural resources such as water, land and food and further contributes to migratory decisions (UN Population Division 2010).

All these trends affect Europe: North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa are traditionally tied together by long-standing and well-established migratory routes—routes which often continue on to Europe. As early as 2011, research indicated that some 65,000 migrants were passing through Agadez, Niger on their way north to Algeria, Morocco and Europe each year. As climate change takes its toll on farming, herding and fishing—undermining livelihoods and contributing to decisions to migrate—these migratory movements could increase.

Any effort to address the migrant tragedy playing out in the Mediterranean must understand and address these deeper root causes. The UN has consistently tried to draw greater attention to the issue, and in 2008 the EU’s foreign policy chief warned that large numbers of climate migrants from Africa were headed for Europe (Martin 2008). Though the alarm has been raised, policymakers are still tending to focus on the symptoms rather than the causes.

Europe finds itself in a particularly challenging political position. Rising migration from Africa—much of it illegal—has long been a contentious domestic issue in the EU, which has responded by partnering with the African Union to enhance safety at sea and formalise migration routes. The focus on better migratory coordination with the African Union was intended to reduce illegal immigration while creating a strong system of integration and remittances. Yet these two regional organisations have vastly different capabilities. Neither has made any serious concerted effort to cooperatively tackle the root causes of migration, such as climate change, rural disruption and conflict.

As important as the current work to regularise migration is, it will not resolve the migratory pressures on Europe. Javier Solana, the EU’s former high representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, pointed out that climate change threatens the entire multilateral system of the international community. He argued almost a decade ago, that ‘the effects of climate change would promote a policy of resentments between all those who are responsible for climate change and those who are its worst victims’ (Martin 2008; see Werz 2008). The warning was prescient: climate migration could convert the Mediterranean into a flashpoint between Europe and Africa.
EU policy: a limited response

Despite the difficulties of aligning the interests of member states into a broader regional approach, the EU has taken steps to address the nexus of climate, migration and security in the Mediterranean basin. One of the measures is the regional focus of the European Investment Bank (EIB) on the Mediterranean neighbourhood, with the intention of integrating EIB services into the region. A prime example is the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (see EIB n.d.), which provides financing and technical assistance to projects promoting sustainable economic growth along the Mediterranean littoral.

In the past decade, this financing has been accompanied by a promising process of institutional reform within the EU and the partial integration of environmental and migration concerns with development assistance. The EIB’s 2009 establishment of the Marseille Center for Mediterranean Integration offers an example of these nascent changes.

The realisation of the interdependence of the countries of the Mediterranean littoral—and their shared environmental concerns—constitutes an important step which, accompanied by projects to promote sustainable development and increase employment in migrants’ countries of origin, represents the opening attempt to tackle the problems posed by the nexus of climate change, migration and security. But there is undoubtedly a long way to go in integrating diverse institutional bodies, working with other regional institutions, and expanding the scope and magnitude of direct assistance to help other regions and appropriately reflect the magnitude of the challenge.

The need for research, coordination and funding

Worldwide, the academic community continues to explore causal connections between climate change, environmental changes and migratory patterns. There is ample anecdotal evidence of the correlation between climate impacts and migration, but the exact causation of decisions to migrate is very difficult to definitively establish. Thus far no ‘smoking gun’ has been found that could serve to mobilise an appropriate policy response. However, irrespective of exact causality, the picture emerging in north-west Africa and several other regions demands attention. A prudent strategic assessment calls for meaningful engagement with these trends now, rather than later. Such efforts would allow the academic community, international organisations and governments to develop ways to address underlying contributors to instability—to pioneer a fire prevention approach rather than calling in the default firefighters, the US Department of Defense.

In the face of these developments, governments in Europe need to design policies and projects that are cost-effective, resilient to climate change and able to meet the rising demand for resources. Today, security and prosperity is less about force and more about the ability to compel or organise collective action to solve transnational problems.
Europe, in concert with the US, should broaden its conception of national security to encompass the underlying trends which threaten the stability of the rules-based international order, which is the foundation of our own security and prosperity.

Such a joint approach could renew the transatlantic partnership at a strategic level. The 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review initiated by Secretary of State Clinton inaugurated this debate in the US. For the first time, the State Department engaged in a strategic review to elevate civilian power and focus on human security and livelihood protection. But when it comes to real legal authority and, most importantly, the allocation of funds and manpower, the US is still massively over-invested in traditional hard security capabilities and under-invested in the tools designed to build basic human security and prevent conflict.

Of course, there are instances, such as in Mali or Somalia, where the situation has deteriorated too far to take preventative action. Sometimes it is simply too dangerous to try to address the root causes of insecurity. In these places it can make sense for the international community, in conjunction with local partners, to use military force to protect local populations and provide the conditions needed to build basic human security. But the international community, led by Europe and the US, should be making a much bigger effort to prevent other places from descending into such conditions. Doing so means larger investments of people, time and money.

On-the-ground programmes to build such resilience include infrastructure investments such as irrigation systems, flood walls and mangrove protection, or housing for migrants—such programmes can help contribute to long-term stability in rural areas threatened by the effects of climate change. Transportation infrastructure can help bring crops to market and allow emergency supplies to reach disrupted areas. Integrated markets allow for more gradual price adjustments and fewer shortages.

Simple technological and conservation fixes can also have disproportionate effects in bolstering human security and addressing the factors underpinning conflict and instability. In developing countries wood fuel provides about one-third of the total energy requirement. This proportion is higher in poor rural areas, such as parts of Africa, where as much as 70% of energy is derived from biofuels (International Energy Agency 2014). In this context, providing inexpensive cooking stoves and solar lamps to fill this need can reduce deforestation, helping to prevent erosion and mitigate climate change while offering tangible evidence that governments are able to respond to fundamental challenges to human security, thus contributing to stability. Disaster preparedness steps, such as pre-positioning stocks and investing in emergency airlift and transport capabilities, can help to allay the political fallout of environmental disasters. By getting ahead of these trends with preventative action, funders such as the US and other developed countries can reduce the frequency and severity of more costly disaster-response or conflict-stabilisation efforts after the fact.
Europe must play a central role in this effort and engage emerging powers in the process. After all, the BRIC\(^1\) countries and emerging players such as South Africa collectively doubled humanitarian assistance from 2005 to 2008 and will continue to be important players despite their economic troubles. It is time to encourage this trend and seek to cooperate. Creating a successful coalition to address climate impacts will also require the participation of the private sector. US private philanthropy, remittances and private capital flows continue to exceed government assistance (Hudson Institute 2013). Also, private companies are often better than governments at tasks such as creating and securing supply chains or developing drought-resistant crops.

The infrastructure and commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict and instability such as climate change, rural disruption and migration need to match the scale of the threats that these factors underpin and perpetuate. In this regard, the most important obstacle to shifting funding and authority within the government to deal with underlying causes is political. In Europe, and even more so in the US, it is difficult to address the imbalance of funding and authority between military and non-military activities. Foreign assistance lacks a domestic political constituency.

Lastly, academic research has yet to fully explore the direct causal connections between climate change, migration and human conflict. But the expected impacts of climate change overlap with current areas of insecurity and existing migratory routes—the cumulative effects are therefore also important to consider. More information on the direct impacts of climate change and the secondary and tertiary effects, such as migration, staple prices and rural conflict or disruption is needed. Efforts such as the US Agency for International Development’s Alert Lists, which analyse fragility and future climate trends, are a good start, but research on the topic requires more data to aid forecasting and improve understanding. In the era of big data, it is astonishing that policymakers were caught off guard by the spike in staple prices—caused in part by a remarkable series of abnormal weather patterns (see Werrell and Femia 2013)—which prompted the global food crisis of 2011.

Conclusion

For both selfish and idealistic reasons, Europe should lead the drive for sustainable security. As the global emergency responder, the steps outlined above are cost-effective ways to reduce the burden of maintaining global stability. And as a beneficiary of the post-war liberal international order, the EU has an obligation to respond to trends that threaten to undermine the stability of that order. Doing so will require the Union, in coordination with the US and other partners, to overcome a long list of challenges. However, it is past time for national governments and global institutions to grapple with a new century of complex crisis scenarios.

\(^1\) Brazil, Russia, India and China.
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‘Cry “Havoc!” and let slip the dogs of war’: regulating private military and security companies

Anna van Oeveren

Abstract  The second biggest contingent in Iraq after US forces, contractors have become something of a staple in contemporary conflict resolution and peacekeeping operations. The rise of private security and military firms is not a recent phenomenon. It has been a given since the end of the Cold War, thanks to a particular momentum in the market for force. Traditional armed forces have had their budgets cut and have sometimes had to undergo drastic economic reforms. At the same time, the market for force has seen the arrival of huge numbers of highly qualified military personnel. These developments have been beneficial to the rise of private military and security companies. However, they have also exposed the weakness of international law and regulation (and EU regulation in particular) when it comes to dealing with these firms.

Keywords  Private security | Private military companies | Private security companies | Regular armed forces | Contractor | International humanitarian law | Defence
Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, most NATO members reduced the numbers of military personnel, while simultaneously tasking their armies with more overseas operations than previously. This often had the result of overwhelming the armies’ capacity to respond. The use of the services provided by private military and security companies (PMSCs) therefore presented itself as a viable alternative. It is quite unlikely that this trend will reverse itself in the near future as PMSCs have been diversifying their range of services in order to adapt to evolving contemporary conflicts. This trend and experiences with PMSCs over the last quarter of a century have called into question how states should define their policies concerning these companies.

One of the main arguments used to justify the use of services provided by PMSCs is based on what is strictly a cost-efficiency analysis: they offer a flexible and swift response which is often less costly than the use of regular armed forces. PMSCs offer a wide variety of services, but clients need only pay for the services they request. Another argument for resorting to PMSCs is the growing discrepancy between the renewal of political ambition on the foreign policy scene and the domestic push towards less numerous and boisterous military forces, with the related trend to further abandon military service and conscription. One of the ways to maintain this ambition to have a strong military capacity has been to resort to private security providers when externalising military operations, leaving the core functions of the military profession to the regular armed forces.

In this way, PMSCs have provided solutions to countries and their regular armed forces. But due to the wide range of services they perform and the scandals they have been involved in, they have also raised concerns. As the use of armed force falls under the responsibility of the state, military forces are state institutions that are employed and controlled by the chain of command of the countries they serve. Their purpose is to contain and resolve crises. In contrast, PMSCs are private actors motivated primarily by profit. Because of these differences, states must take into account the moral, ethical and regulatory consequences that arise from dealing with contractors. This article will shed light on the different schools of thought that have tried to provide answers to how legislation in this area should work. It will also present examples of how the use of PMSCs is currently being regulated.

International relations theory

In international relations literature, two schools of thought have emerged to frame the phenomenon of the rise of these private actors. The literature from English-speaking countries places economic arguments at the forefront and justifies the existence and rise of PMSCs. But it also emphasises the tactical aspect, as these actors are able to gather momentum more swiftly than regular armed forces, which often still need to be trained. In contrast, the continental European academic literature is, generally speaking,
more sceptical of such practices. It is wary of the authority of the state being taken over by these private actors.

On 11 September 2001, Western strategic interests—and more specifically, American interests—were targeted by a non-traditional and non-state actor. It was the first attack on US soil since Pearl Harbor. The events of 9/11 could have been the defining moment for the reinvigoration of traditional armed forces, but this did not occur. On the contrary, PMSCs were given a whole new raison d’être through the role given to them in the war against terror led by then US President George W. Bush. Today they have become decisive in the launching of military interventions. A growing number of actors on the international stage—whether states or international organisations—could not hope to participate in or launch a military operation without resorting to PMSCs. Private sector employees accounted for the second-largest contingent of armed forces in the 2003 Iraq War, after US forces.

How the soldier became the ‘contractor’: the emergence of a market for force

All markets are subject to friction, with externalities disrupting them, especially when the creation of those markets is still recent. The market for private force is no exception. As with any other market, it is the meeting point between supply and demand. This market was particularly influenced by the historic events that occurred towards the end of the twentieth century. With the end of the bipolar system, the need for large armed forces became less evident, and many conventional armies saw their budgets considerably reduced. This led to substantial numbers of qualified military personnel being laid off. Approximately seven million people suddenly found themselves on the job market (Schreier and Caparini 2005). Furthermore, not only were regular armed forces cut down in numbers, but they also underwent radical reforms in efforts both to modernise them and to increase cost-efficiency.

Simultaneously, a growing number of actors suddenly needed to resort to private firms for the security of their assets in third countries. This included governments, multinationals, international organisations and even high-level individuals. In 2008 actress Mia Farrow contacted Blackwater,¹ the largest US PMSC, on behalf of the human rights group she represents, Dream for Darfur. She was looking for advice after experiencing frustration with what she considered to be unnecessary delays by the UN in deploying a peacekeeping force in Darfur.

Due to the heterogeneous nature of their clientele, PMSCs provide a variety of services, ranging from tasks associated with internal security (peacekeeping within

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¹ Blackwater is one of the most well-known private security providers worldwide. It was founded in 1997 by Erik Prince, a former US Navy SEAL. It was renamed Xe Services in 2009, and then became Academi when it was acquired by a group of private investors.
borders) to external security (border protection). While a few firms are prepared to intervene directly in combat, private military companies generally offer three types of service with regard to external security: operational support, counsel and military training. In terms of internal security, private security companies offer services from site surveillance to crime prevention to the gathering of intelligence. The distinction between a security and a military company coincides with that between internal and external security. However, some contracts do not allow for this distinction to be absolutely clear-cut, and this means that the companies which carry them out cannot be easily categorised. For example, it is not clear whether special services such as counter-insurrection or counterterrorism should be considered to belong to internal or external security. Blackwater is a case in point. Its methods are similar to those of special police forces, and its targets are generally international crime suspects rather than other armed forces. Both points make it difficult to categorise its methods as those of either the military or the police. The growing demand for such services demonstrates the wariness of states that are facing international crime organisations and the increasingly blurred lines between internal and external security.

To support the idea that the market for force should be allowed to develop away from state intervention, neo-liberalists regularly advance the argument that the market will eventually rid itself of ‘unworthy’ elements. This will be achieved through procedures such as the naming and shaming of organisations that have been prone to wreaking havoc or have been unable to deliver on their contracts. Such procedures will then bring about the economic failure of these companies. Therefore, its supporters believe that the laissez-faire method will gradually stabilise the market for force and thus help to prevent a repetition of the scandals that have been reported in the media in the last few years.

A legal no man’s land beneficial to the rise of PMSCs

There have been incidents in which private contractors in Iraq have opened fire on and killed innocent civilians, and have not consequently been prosecuted (Leander 2006). Such scandals have made it clear that PMSCs operate in a grey area. Under international law, the use of private military force is regulated by two instruments:

- Article 47 of the additional Protocol of 8 June 1977 to the Geneva Convention subject to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts (Geneva Convention 1977); and
Article 47 defines a mercenary as an individual who is recruited locally or abroad to fight in an armed conflict, is motivated to do so through financial gain and is a national of neither party to the conflict. An individual that provides a client with his or her military expertise is not, however, automatically categorised as a mercenary under Article 47. However, the Article does deny that individual the status of prisoner of war should he or she be captured in conflict.

The definition provided by the international convention uses Article 47 as a starting point, but goes further, as it categorises the individual as a mercenary not only in ‘armed conflict’ situations, but also in ‘any other situation’. Though they are promising starting points, neither of the definitions provided by international humanitarian law encompasses the full scope of the activities executed by PMSCs. Rather, these definitions only focus on individuals, thereby ignoring the entrepreneurial dimension of the companies they work for.

As international law has proven to be too broad and thus unenforceable, to the point that it appears to have allowed certain employees of PMSCs to act in all impunity, national parliaments have had to step in, to discuss and question the legality of contractors’ conduct, and pass their own legislation. Clear acts of human rights abuse perpetrated by private contractors in foreign countries have been pushed aside, even by the states that are responsible for bringing them to justice. However, some recent high-profile cases, such as the sentencing of four Blackwater guards (Apuzzo 2015) for the Nisour Square massacre, could point to a new direction being taken that would diminish the state of impunity within which these private security providers have previously operated.

The need for stronger EU-wide regulation

Though regulation exists to some extent, tougher regulation within the EU in lieu of national legislation could pave the way to better conduct on the part of PMSCs. Regulation would identify the better practices of PMSCs. And going by the neo-liberal argument, the market would then make irrelevant those companies that did not comply. In response to the increasing public scrutiny of its activities, the industry has already made various efforts to adopt self-regulation and codes of conduct, such as the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (International Code of Conduct Association 2010). The gaps in legislative action have also been filled by regional regu-
lations, such as the International Stability Operations Association (2011) code of conduct in the US, and the Code of Conduct and Ethics for the Private Security Sector,\(^5\) which was signed between the Confederation of European Security Services and UNI Europa\(^6\) (2003). As of 2013 the latter code covers about a quarter of the 41,300 companies registered in the 28 member states and 3 other countries (Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). These regulations were adopted by the PMSCs themselves, out of a desire to bring about an atmosphere of professionalism within the sector, to enhance their public image and to improve public confidence in the private sector (Born et al. 2007).

While there is no EU-level regulation for the private security industry, the European Court of Justice has established its competence over matters of private security services. The Court monitors them under internal market rules (i.e. the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services), and national controls and requirements (the obtainment of a specific administrative licence at the national level, a minimum number of staff, minimum share capital, etc.). This makes it more difficult for foreign security services to operate in other member states.\(^7\) While the specific character of such services may justify the recourse to special administrative controls, member states must take due account of the administrative controls in place in the country of origin (Curia Europa 2015). However, while the internal market works very well when it comes to establishing a level playing field for member states, providing any political harmonisation falls outside its remit.

In the absence of harmonised EU regulation, there have been a number of national initiatives to regulate the use of services provided by PMSCs. These initiatives have tended to concentrate on the security aspect, as it has been shown that private security companies have encroached upon policing activities (UN Development Programme South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons 2005).\(^8\)

**Conclusion**

The use of private contractors offers a plausible excuse for policymakers to turn a blind eye: be it in cases of human rights abuses or in the numbers of casualties, as the number of deceased contractors in combat is rarely touched upon in the press or on social media. However, due to scandals such as high-profile cases of human rights abuses

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\(^5\) This code was signed on 18 July 2003.  
\(^6\) UNI Europa is the European services workers’ union.  
\(^7\) See InfoCuria (2006), point 55 of the judgment, citing founding case-law on this matter.  
\(^8\) According to a UN Development Programme South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons report (2005, 29), the lack of police in small towns has favoured private security companies being hired by local communities, as was the case in the village of Varbitza in Bulgaria, wherein the local police had declined the mayor’s proposition to increase its presence.
or the plain inefficiency of hired security services (e.g. the services rendered by G4S during the London Olympics (Neate 2013), dubbed a ‘disaster’ by the media), the question of legislative or at least political oversight of these firms’ services has been posed several times. So far only regional and national regulations have tried to respond to these preoccupations.

As already noted, PMSCs operate in a legal no man’s land on the international scene. A certain good will on the part of the industry is noticeable, as there are a growing number of codes of conduct that these companies have adopted. Further regulation, especially through the EU’s internal market—such as the code of conduct which in 2013 encompassed about a quarter of the 41,300 PMSCs registered in the EU and 3 other countries—should be the way forward to ensure a stable market for force that is better able to separate the wheat from the chaff.

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References


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Live long and prosper? Demographic change and the implications of Europe’s pensions crisis

Susanna Kochskaemper · Jochen Pimpertz

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Member states handle the demographic challenge differently, therefore, it is too narrow-minded to take a solely fiscal perspective from which to develop European reform strategies which meet the requirements for both fiscal balance and sustainable public pension systems. The EU should support national reform strategies by monitoring public pension reforms as well as improving the single market.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Russia’s downfall: the worst economic crisis since the collapse of the USSR

Vladimir Milov

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This working paper looks at the recent trends in the Russian economy and argues against the official view of the Russian authorities that the worst phase of the Russian economic crisis is over. The paper highlights the main driving factor behind the current crisis, the sharp decline of domestic consumption, unprecedented in the past 20 years, and argues that Western sanctions have had a great role to play in these developments.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Innocence and war: searching for Europe’s strategy in Syria

Michael Benhamou

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With the hundreds of thousands of refugees due to Syria’s war, which followed anti-despotic revolutions in 2011, Europe’s interests are directly at stake. EU policymakers are faced with slow EU Commission procedures and instruments; the adverse effects of well-intended humanitarian and sanctions policies; and the absence of a military culture and confidence in military options in Brussels. The EU should project its power differently in this violent context, with sharper civilian and military instruments in support of partners and countries sharing its values and interests.

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Michael Benhamou was a visiting fellow at the Martens Centre in 2015. Since 2010 he has been deployed in several NATO field operations as a political advisor. His current focus is on European defence and counterterrorism.
The long march towards the EU: candidates, neighbours and prospects for enlargement

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This paper discusses the future of EU enlargement policy in the context of past and current accessions. After seven consecutive enlargements, the EU is proceeding with its eighth wave of expansion towards the Western Balkans and Turkey. Furthermore, while no Eastern European countries have requested membership so far, the EU cannot pretend that this will never happen. A clear strategy for the EU’s eastern neighbours is needed. This paper considers three alternative scenarios for the future of EU enlargement policy: a definitive stop to enlargement; a third way, tentatively called ‘membership minus’; and last but not least, the continuation of enlargement.

This paper recommends the third option, with one string attached: the already developed verification mechanism must be further strengthened. Thorough verification is a must, even if it translates into decades-long enlargement processes.

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