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The Crisis of Euro-Atlantic Security

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The core of the crisis: Russia and Ukraine

This crisis is serious. Risks of miscalculation, of misinterpretation, and of escalation are significant. At no time since the end of the Cold War, not even during the heated debate about the Kosovo intervention or during the dispute about Iraq, was the atmosphere between East and West as antagonistic as today. It was generally believed by most in Europe that nationalistic propaganda and aggressive policy statements implying or involving threats of military intervention - or, worse, the actual or covert use of military force - were phenomena no longer present in the European context, something that ended, finally, at some point in the late 20th century.

We were, let us admit it, quite wrong. Yes: war has become unthinkable and impossible within the EU. That is a great, historic, and lasting achievement. But right outside the doorsteps of the EU, the use of force is not only not yet eradicated, as we have seen many times since 1990: think of Bosnia-Herzegovina, of Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, Georgia, Kosovo, and now of Crimea. More sadly, the use or threat of use of force appears to be back as an instrument of choice in the pursuit of the national – the nationalistic? – interest. Fear of military intervention is back with a vengeance, in particular in Eastern and Southeastern Europe and adjacent regions. Are existing borders safe, will they be recognized by all? We can no longer be certain.

Russia has apparently concluded that the consensus on European security, established by the CSCE Final Act, and by the 1990 Charter of Paris, does not bind it any more. In fact, the best description for Russia's new foreign policy is 'revisionism.' Russia has violated international law: not only the UN Charter, but also the NATO-Russia Founding Act, the Budapest Memorandum, and other multilateral and bilateral obligations. The claim that this is a justified Russian reaction to years of Western broken promises does not survive closer scrutiny. Assumed or perceived promises do not establish obligations under international law. Russia cannot present a single document demonstrating a NATO commitment or a U.S. commitment precluding membership in NATO of former Warsaw Pact countries. Of course, that does not mean the West has necessarily always done the right and prudent thing. But that's a completely different point. That concerns the quest for a truly comprehensive Euro-Atlantic security community, as sketched out not long ago by U.S., Russian, and European statesmen and experts in the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative launched and presented by the Carnegie Endowment. Igor Ivanov, Sam Nunn, Steve Hadley, and many others, including myself, worked together to present ideas for a more inclusive Euro-Atlantic security space. More recently, Sam Nunn's NTI presented excellent proposals to eliminate risks created, to this day, by very brief warning times for ICBMs, etc. The Russian government itself, during the Medvedev presidency, presented proposals on a European security treaty. In other words, there is certainly no shortage of forward-looking ideas regarding how to further enhance and solidify European security.

But here we are: back to square one, so to speak. During the first Clinton administration, in the early nineties, and then again in 2000 or 2001, the question of Russian membership in NATO was actively discussed, here in Washington, in Brussels and Berlin, and also with Moscow. Unfortunately, this now sounds like a song from a distant past. Russia today looks less like a

partner in managing global and regional security, but more like an adversary. And Russia has apparently decided to regard not only NATO, but also the EU, as organizations which stand in the way of Putin's dream of a Eurasian Union. Nobody regrets this more than the Germans. Let me remind you: we have been grateful to Moscow for over 20 years now, for participating in the decision to allow Germany to be a united country again. And no European country has spent more political energy and, frankly, capital, and no country has been more engaged than Germany to create a lasting and constructive partnership with the Russian Federation. We have not forgotten the devastation, the horror and terror caused by the Nazi invasion in western Russia, and in all parts of Ukraine. Politically, historically, and morally, Germany owes it to Russia, to Ukraine, and to Eastern Europe in general, to be generous, to be open, and to help overcome past and present East-West divides in Europe.

Back to the reality of the current crisis: What has become clear is that, from Moscow's view, an unstable Ukraine, unable to reform, is preferable to one that moves towards the EU and the West. Thus, even if the current crisis does not escalate much further, we may be looking at many months, possibly years, of political and societal crisis and violent unrest in Ukraine. In other words: we are in for the long haul. Such a debilitating situation in a large European country is in and of itself a substantial risk to European security. If we started to accept that borders are redrawn based on 'well, this province used to belong to us,' and on 'We have a duty to defend the interests of those who speak our language but happen to live in a different country,' we would be in a world of deep and permanent trouble. Imagine for a moment where we would be if everyone in Europe applied that principle: The Germans, for example, would still argue that Alsace-Lorraine used to belong to Germany, and that Silesia is really not part of Poland, but of Kaiser Wilhelm's German Reich…, and so on, and so forth. And Austria might present a historic claim to much of the Balkans, and to parts of Italy, and so on, and so forth. A recipe for peace? A recipe for disaster! This is also why the annexation of Crimea by Russia should not be recognized by the international community, not now, and not in the longer term. This is about more than just a piece of land: this is about a key principle of international law and security.

Thus, unfortunately, most of the reset effort is now history. Unless the Ukraine crisis is soon miraculously defused, we are probably looking at a long period of cold peace with Russia. And the policy of the past twenty years, offering to integrate Russia into key international and Western fora and institutions is, at least for the time being, on hold. We must not mistake any of this for Russian strength. It's a power play, for sure, but it's not a play from a position of strength. It is a power play designed to hide strategic Russian weaknesses, and to compensate for the colossal failure to keep Ukraine close to Moscow by relying on President Yanukovich. It is a power play based not on a strategic master plan, but on ad-hoc-decisions, driven by the panic the news of Yanukovich's departure from Kiev created in the Kremlin.

The closer you look, the smaller Putin actually is ("Scheinriese"). The price he is going to have to pay for Crimea, and for his aggressive stance on Ukraine – growing international isolation, and the amount of trust and goodwill squandered – is staggering. A pyrrhic, a very shortsighted victory, if a victory at all. Given the ongoing capital flight from Moscow, and given the many investment plans by foreign companies which are now going to be reviewed or stopped altogether, the question is whether the negatives do not already outweigh the positives for

Moscow. In the long run, they surely will. At the same time, we owe Vladimir Putin a not-quite-sincere 'thank you.' He has done more for the cohesion of Europe and for revitalizing NATO than anyone else in quite some time. Or, at the very least, Putin has given us a great opportunity to do so. Just a few examples:

EU foreign policy: The quest for a coherent and united EU foreign policy is now more than ever a clearly understood priority, an urgent necessity, and not just an illusion of some Brussels bureaucrats. Thank you, President Putin!

Energy: The strategic and security dimensions of energy, in particular the challenge of diversifying oil and gas suppliers, are now going to be evident to everyone. Finally, we are going to do something about it. Personally, I believe we will have a European energy union as proposed by Polish Prime Minister Tusk. Thank you, President Putin!

NATO, European security, and the transatlantic partnership: This crisis represents a tremendous rallying point for the transatlantic alliance. After the summer of Snowden, we got the winter of Putin. There's nothing like an external shock to help clear our minds about what matters most. Thank you, President Putin! NATO, by the way, is not only a great instrument of conflict prevention. NATO is also, and that is much less well understood by our publics, the most successful instrument of nuclear non-proliferation policy ever invented: how many European countries – think of Turkey, think of Germany, think of Poland – might have been tempted or might be tempted to go nuclear if the NATO umbrella did not exist? Have our Russian friends ever thought about that?

Germany's role

Even after Chancellor Merkel's visit to Washington on May 2, some in this town appear to continue to worry about whether Germany and the U.S. are on the same wave length. I have been listening to this question a number of times now: are the Germans dragging their feet once again? Now, there's no denying that some voices in the public debate in Germany are not in favor of a tougher response to Putin, and tend to minimize the gravity of Russia's actions. And yes, the fact is, stiffer sanctions would be felt by German companies more than by US companies. Investment in and trade with Russia has been a bigger item for Germany than for the U.S. But overall, Russia ranks only 11th in terms of market size for German exports. So the risk is manageable. Yes, Russia is Germany's biggest gas supplier, with 38.8 % of imports coming from there (2012 figures). But Germany does not primarily rely on gas. Gas accounts for only 22 % of the energy mix (2013 figures). A number of Eastern European EU partners are far more dependent on Russia than Germany. This is therefore not just a German issue; it is an issue for the entire EU. While only 38 percent of Germans favored economic sanctions in a poll a few weeks ago, Merkel is willing to spend political capital if necessary to bring about public support. And if Germans in fact used to be more Russia-friendly compared to other Europeans in the past, that sympathy has taken a significant hit: in March, only 15 % considered Russia to be a "trustworthy partner." (ARD Deutschlandtrend). The chancellor's position is clearly tougher than certain export industry representatives would like it to be. And the German Foreign minister shares this view. He just recently contradicted the chairman of an influential German business group who presented arguments against sanctions. Thus, to me, the German position is much less ambiguous than some

US op-eds appear to suggest. And finally: Americans should not get confused, neither Helmut Schmidt nor Gerhard Schröder represent the current German government. And neither one claimed to do so. Trust me: Germany will not allow the EU or the transatlantic community to be split over the Russian sanctions issue. The EU has been split too many times in the past. Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Steinmeier are fully aware that that would be tantamount to handing Putin a gift on a silver platter.

America as Europe's indispensable power

Two and a half years ago, referring to the Euro crisis, Radek Sikorski called Germany "Europe's indispensable nation." Today, we are reminded that, when it comes to security, America still is Europe's indispensable power. Richard Holbrooke wrote 18 years ago in *Foreign Affairs*, "In the 21st century, Europe will still need the active American involvement that has been a necessary component of the continental balance for half a century. Conversely, an unstable Europe would still threaten essential national security interests of the United States. This is as true after as it was during the Cold War." And it's still true today. I have some sympathy for the argument that a reduction of the U.S. presence in Europe might finally force Europeans to take their defense effort more seriously. But, I'm afraid, we are still not really ready to take full responsibility for our own defense. That is why we need the U.S. presence, that is why we need the U.S to tell us to pool and share, to spend our defense Euro more wisely, to leave 19th century-style national defense traditions behind, to finally get our act together on a EU foreign and defense policy worthy of 500 million people united in the EU. When, if not now?

It is true that pooling and sharing raises key issues of sovereignty. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the Dutch Defense Minister, put it very well at the Munich Security Conference in 2013: "What is sovereignty worth if an individual European state is no longer in any way capable of action on its own? This would be meaningless sovereignty, wouldn't it?" These legitimate concerns over sovereignty issues notwithstanding, the EU needs to agree on a sensible defense strategy. Here's what we should simply never forget: Strengthening EU defense cooperation and strengthening NATO are no longer mutually exclusive. In fact, they very much complement each other. It is worth repeating what Vice President Biden said in Munich last year: "[A] strong and capable Europe is profoundly in America's interest, and I might add, presumptuously, the world's interest."

What next? Dealing with the crisis in Ukraine – short term

While the crisis has helped us get some of our priorities straight, none of this means our options are easy or clear-cut. An assessment of "what next?" must start with the question "What's our objective?" With Crimea lost, the first order of business is to prevent a further destabilization of Ukraine. That's the ballgame. First, instead of maximizing the punishment of Russia, the single most important strategic challenge is to help Ukraine succeed. "Every carrot to Kyiv is a stick to Moscow," Carl Bildt recently said. Ukraine must make progress as a democracy, as a market economy, and as a functioning state – an extremely tall order in the face of the deep economic crisis; of corruption; of split loyalties of civil servants; and in light of unrest in the east and the south of the country. Today, Ukraine risks being a failing state. It is our job to keep it from falling

apart. If we succeed with this principal strategic objective, Moscow will be denied an important victory.

Second, as we draw a line in the sand concerning further Russian escalation beyond Crimea, we must define what this means. What measures are on the table – and how far does "level 3" of the sanctions regime go? I was very pleased to see that there was a demonstration of unity of purpose between Obama and Merkel on May 21; the decisive date we are going to be looking at is May 25 -- election day in Ukraine. If Russia is seen as sabotaging the elections, that would then trigger level 3 sanctions. But let's be clear that sanctions are usually the instrument you use in international diplomacy if you have no better idea how to move forward. It is what you do if you lack better instruments. They are unlikely to change Russian behavior. In short: sanctions are never a good substitute for a comprehensive strategy. Sanctions can be part of such a strategy, but we need to define our strategic priorities. One such priority, as I just argued, has to be the stabilization of Ukraine, preventing the country from becoming totally dysfunctional, and helping to establish stability, and the rule of law. That is why maximizing the use of the available instruments of the OSCE is so important, from the current observer mission to supervising and monitoring the electoral process. The OSCE Chairman currently in office, the President of Switzerland, is going to meet with President Putin. We will see whether Russia cooperates in allowing the OSCE to play its full role.

Third, none of these objectives can be achieved in a sustainable manner against Russian opposition. Ukraine needs the West, but Ukraine also needs Russia. Whether we like it or not we must, therefore, continue to talk. In the words of my British friend Ian Kearns, "a strategic response … means using a more nuanced mix of instruments to deny Putin opportunities in Europe while pursuing a dialogue with him about cooperation in the interests of all. The challenge for our diplomacy is to ensure the two do not become mutually exclusive. "

Fourth, building on that, we need to define an adequate framework for talks with all sides. "Geneva I" in mid-April actually defined useful principles, at least on paper. Unfortunately, there was no consensus on a follow-up process, and the points agreed upon in Geneva still wait to be implemented. My view is that the Geneva meeting ought to be turned into an ongoing process, a 'Contact Group' on Ukraine. This is what Foreign Minister Steinmeier has tried to move forward, and this proposal deserves full support from all sides, including from Washington, and, most importantly, from Moscow. If such a process can be initiated, based on the Geneva declaration, this could create a practical and comprehensive crisis management structure. And this contact group could in turn provide a basis for longer-term ideas about revisiting the grand vision of a more comprehensive European security architecture.

Euro-Atlantic security in the medium and long-term

Let me quote Richard Holbrooke again: "If the West is to create an enduring and stable security framework for Europe, it must solve the most enduring strategic problem of Europe and integrate the nations of the former Soviet Union, especially Russia, into a stable European security system." He was right. Unfortunately, this strategic problem remains unresolved. Instead of declaring a new Cold War, a "Doppelstrategie" – a twin strategy – of denying Putin opportunities in Europe while pursuing a dialogue with him about cooperation in the interests of all, should be

applied, as difficult as that may be in current circumstances. Right now is surely not a good time for grand structural initiatives concerning an all-encompassing Euro-Atlantic security community. The Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative launched by the Carnegie Endowment a few years ago was a visionary exercise, in which I participated with passion. But at some point, we will have to start anew the discussion about the creation of a more sustainable, more resilient, more crisis-resistant and more comprehensive European security architecture. That should include reviving the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and other arms control projects, such as the reduction and elimination of short range nuclear forces. It should also include steps to further strengthen the OSCE. The OSCE was all but forgotten, unfortunately, until the current crisis reminded us that it is the OSCE which can monitor elections, that is the OSCE which can send observers, and that there is a Vienna Document which allows military observer missions to be deployed .

Regarding the question of NATO membership and NATO enlargement, and the question of association with or membership in the EU, my view is that we should not abandon our long-held view that countries should be free to choose their associations. If, by pointing to Cold War-era Finlandization, some appear to suggest that Ukraine should now be permanently denied a membership perspective in NATO, I disagree. First, I believe that Finland today could, at any moment it chooses, apply for membership in NATO. NATO never said, and Finland – to my knowledge – never accepted, that this was a no-go-area. The Finland model is therefore not a good one for excluding a country from a NATO perspective. It is for Finland to decide whether or not to take steps in the direction of NATO or not. Let the Finns decide, and only the Finns. I am sure my friend Martti Ahtisaari will not disagree with me on that one. And Ukrainians should not be treated differently from Finns, full stop. In the same vein, Ukraine must not be denied, at least not in principle, a membership perspective in the EU if one day it were to meet relevant membership criteria. In this case, comparing Ukraine to Finland is okay: if Finlandization of Ukraine means eventual EU membership, fine with me. So much for the great country of Finland, which has produced not only Martti Ahtisaari, but also the Helsinki Final Act.

Regarding the longer-term strategic objective, events of 2014 might lead us to mandate a comprehensive review of the European security architecture. The last OSCE or CSCE summit which produced an important document was the 1990 Summit which produced the Charter of Paris, on the basis of the Helsinki Final Act. My humble view is that, once the dust on Ukraine will hopefully have settled a bit, the EU should propose that another OSCE summit be organized in due course, meaning in the course of the next two or three years. Needless to say, such a project makes sense only if carefully planned and programmed, and if we are certain to produce not just more hot air, but more security for all. Ladies and Gentlemen, I know some of you will think: this crazy German, how can he propose we invite Putin and the Russian leadership to a conference after all this ugly behavior on Crimea and now on the whole of Ukraine? The simple answer is: even during the worst periods of the Cold War, we talked. Explaining strategic objectives to each other, and laying the groundwork for a credible and sustainable re-affirmation of principles of European and global security – that can never be wrong. Whether it will lead to anything, only history will tell.

Thank you for your patience.

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Ambassador Ischinger has been Chairman of the Munich Security Conference since 2008. He is also Global Head of Government Relations, Allianz SE, Munich. From 2006 to 2008, he was the Federal Republic of Germany's Ambassador to London. Prior to this assignment, he was the German Ambassador to the United States of America from 2001 to 2006, and from 1998 to 2001 Deputy Foreign Minister. In 2007, he represented the European Union in the troika negotiations on the future of Kosovo. Wolfgang Ischinger studied law at the universities of Bonn and Geneva and obtained his law degree in 1972. In 1975, he joined the Federal Republic of Germany's Foreign Service. From 1982 to 1990, Wolfgang Ischinger served on the staff of the Federal Foreign Minister, became the Minister's Private Secretary in 1985, and Chief of the Parliament and Cabinet Division of the Federal Foreign Office in 1987. In 1990, he was appointed Minister and Head of the Political Section of the German Embassy to Paris. In 1993, he was named Director of the Policy Planning Staff of the Federal Foreign Office. In 1995, he became Political Director-General. As Political Director, Mr. Ischinger was Head of the German Delegation during the Bosnian Peace negotiations in Dayton/Ohio in 1995, the negotiations on the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1996/1997, and during the Kosovo crisis in 1998. In 1999, he was named a member of the German-Russian Strategic Working Group which the German Chancellor and the Russian President had jointly established. Since December 2009, he has been co-chair of the Euro-Atlantic Security Inititative (EASI) of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Furthermore, he is a member of the Independent Commission on Turkey, chaired by Peace Nobel Laureate and former President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari. Ambassador Ischinger is currently a Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the Wilson Center.

Ahtisaari Symposium

The Ahtisaari Symposium series, established at the Wilson Center in 2010 in honor of Nobel Laureate and former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, addresses vital issues concerning European and transatlantic security.