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Matthew Rojansky

The Geopolitics of European Security and Co-operation: The Consequences of US-Russia Tension

Introduction

In modern Western political and media discourse, wars, natural disasters, and all manner of humanitarian crises are understood to be of general interest. Accordingly, it is out of fashion to ask the question, "why should we care?" about events taking place far beyond a nation's borders. Yet political leaders are sometimes pressed to provide an answer, particularly when they seek to mobilize popular support for intervention in a seemingly far-off crisis.

The most often heard justification for Western concern about the crisis in Ukraine has a distinctively modern or even post-modern ring to it. According to US President Barack Obama, "Russia's actions in Ukraine challenge [the] post-war order [… that] bigger nations should not be able to bully smaller ones".[1] While formal legal instruments abound purporting to set forth the agreed rules of behaviour for nations, these specific precepts are seldom cited. Rather, it is Moscow's apparent disregard for the "international order", or the appropriate behaviour for a "modern civilized nation" that seems to animate Western outrage over Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and its armed intervention in the Donbas.

Is the Ukraine crisis really such a threat to global order? As Krastev and Leonard have explained, "for the past 300 years, Europe was at the centre of global affairs. […] Even during the Cold War – when the global superpowers were non-European powers – order was still centred around control of Europe and the contest between democratic capitalism and Soviet communism as a battle between European ideologies."[2] Indeed, it was at the very height of that rivalry, in 1975, that a concert of European and non-European states came together to enshrine the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, which laid the

Note: A version of this article was first published in: *Security and Human Rights* 2/2014, pp. 169-179.

1 The White House, *Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly*, New York, 24 September 2014, at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/24/remarks-president-obama-address-united-nations-general-assembly.

2 Ivan Krastev/Mark Leonard, *The New European Disorder*, 20 November 2014, European Council on Foreign Relations, at: http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_new_european_disorder322. It should be noted that Krastev and Leonard are perhaps focusing overly on formal geography when they describe the United States and the Soviet Union as non-European powers. In fact, both powers were deeply engaged in Europe for most of the last century, all the more so after their shared victory in the Second World War, and Russia and the United States might both fairly be described as European powers – or at the very least, powers in Europe – to this day.

moral, intellectual, and political foundation for the post-Cold War Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990), and the creation of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Thus it does seem that until China, India, Brazil, and other non-European rising powers are prepared to pay the costs and endure the constraints entailed in maintaining global order, the responsibility will reside primarily with Europe, and thus with the OSCE.

If OSCE participating States bear such unique responsibility for European and thus global order in the twenty-first century, can they now live up to the challenge? As the product of political consensus among its participating States, rather than a legally binding international convention, the OSCE depends on the continuing political will of those same states to achieve any meaningful outcome. The success or failure of the OSCE, therefore, depends on interactions between the major powers in the OSCE space, which during the Cold War, were the US and the Soviet Union. Over more than two decades since the Cold War's end, the balance of military, political, and economic power has shifted significantly to the West, yet the key actors remain largely unchanged – the US and its NATO allies on one side, Moscow and its clients on the other.

At the present moment of obvious tension between Moscow and Washington, it may be tempting to dismiss the likelihood of progress on any diplomatic front, let alone in the complex multilateral format of the OSCE. Yet recall that the 1972-75 Helsinki Process itself was birthed in a period of intense rivalry between the US- and Soviet-led blocs, suggesting that reasoned dialogue and consensus on core issues of shared security in the OSCE space is possible, despite – or perhaps even because of – the looming threat of conflict between geopolitical rivals. Thus a key question emerges: Have the current terms of interaction between Russia and the West produced circumstances similar enough to those of four decades ago that they once again necessitate a shift from conflict to co-operation, in which the OSCE could play a central role? Put differently, is the present conflict a new Cold War, with all that would entail, or is it something different?

The Current Crisis and the Cold War in Context

On some levels, the tension between Moscow and Washington in the post-Ukraine crisis period seems quite similar to that which existed between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War. On both sides, the dominant tone of political debate and popular rhetoric has shifted from unease or dismissiveness toward the other to outright hostility, often devolving into demonization of individuals, especially the two presidents. As Robert Legvold has argued, the highly propagandized narratives heard on both sides tend to describe the origins of the current crisis in absolutist terms – the other side is seen as solely at fault for provoking and exacerbating the conflict at

each stage.[3] And as Michael Kofman has explained, both sides are engaged in significant military escalation with a clear flavour of Cold War-style strategic military rivalry, in some cases even including nuclear sabre rattling.[4] Some observers have referred to a "new containment" policy on the US side to balance the perceived threat of Russian aggression.[5]

Neither side devotes significant attention to efforts at preserving or enhancing co-operation via official or unofficial channels, even in areas of obviously shared interest – President Obama's explicit acknowledgment of Russia's important role in clinching the recent Iran nuclear deal being the exception that underscores the rule.[6] Although the White House has been more careful in its statements about Putin and Moscow than have members of Congress and certainly more so than the 2016 presidential candidates, most official US views on Russia fall into either or both of two categories: It is a serious and dangerous threat and/or it is a declining regional power.[7] In the official Russian view, echoed in state sponsored media, the US and NATO are seen as major threats to Russia, bent on containing Russian power and influence and ultimately bringing about violent regime change.[8]

Not surprisingly, there is ample pressure from the political classes and the general public in both countries to impose "tit for tat" punishments on the other side, in a potentially endless escalation of sanctions and counter-sanctions.[9] Finally, the two states are engaged on opposite sides and at varying levels in a series of proxy conflicts in third countries, especially along the post-Soviet periphery and in the Middle East. As in the Cold War, both Moscow and Washington have courted support for their positions from other

3 Cf. Robert Legvold, Managing the New Cold War: What Moscow and Washington Can Learn From the Last One, in: *Foreign Affairs* July/August 2014, at: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2014-06-16/managing-new-cold-war.

4 Cf. Michael Kofman, *Putin's Plan to Deter Hawks in Washington*, War on the Rocks, 24 August 2015, at: http://warontherocks.com/2015/08/is-russias-power-to-annoy-changing-the-game.

5 Cf. Eugene Chausovsky, *Why the U.S. Feels It Must Contain Russia*, Stratfor Analysis, 23 August 2015, at: https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/why-us-feels-it-must-contain-russia.

6 Cf. Roland Oliphant, Barack Obama Praises Putin for help clinching Iran deal, in: *The Telegraph*, 15 July 2015, at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/11740700/Barack-Obama-praises-Putin-for-help-clinching-Iran-deal.html.

7 On Russia the threat, cf. J.J. Green, *Pentagon: Russia poses "existential threat" to the United States once again*, WTOP.com, 21 August 2015, at: http://wtop.com/national-security/2015/08/pentagon-russia-poses-existential-threat-us; on Russia the declining power, see Joseph S. Nye, *Russia the Declining Power*, Project Syndicate, 14 April 2015, at: http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/russia-decline-challenge-by-joseph-s--nye-2015-04.

8 Cf. Paul Sonne, U.S. Is Trying to Dismember Russia, Says Putin Advisor, in: *Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2015, at: http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-is-trying-to-dismember-russia-says-putin-adviser-1423667319.

9 Cf. Andrew E. Kramer, Russia Seeks Sanctions Tit for Tat, in: *The New York Times*, 8 October 2014, at: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/09/business/russian-parliament-moves-closer-to-adopting-law-on-compensation-for-sanctions.html.

states, sometimes achieving international alignments or coalitions that are disturbingly reminiscent of Cold-War geopolitical "blocs".[10]

Yet there are important differences between this conflict and the past. First and foremost, contacts between Americans and Russians at the level of individual citizens, private firms, and charitable or religious organizations are unprecedented in scope and depth. To be sure, ties between Russians and Americans are hardly universal or fully reciprocal. Yet the generations on both sides who have come of age after the Cold War are far better connected to one another than were even the Soviet and US elites a half century ago. Though not necessarily more pro-American than their parents, young Russians are far more likely to speak English, have visited the United States or Western Europe, and have access to an unfiltered window on America through popular culture and social media. Such familiarity with Russian language, culture, and lifestyle is not reciprocated on the US side. However, among Americans with professional or personal ties to Russia, connections are both more widespread and more robust than they were for even US Soviet experts during most of the Cold War period.

The imbalance in knowledge of one another is mirrored in the overall power imbalance in US-Russia relations since the end of the Cold War. The United States, coming off a quarter century of hyperpower status, is not accustomed to deferring to the interests of other global actors, including Russia. Despite the setbacks of two gruelling and costly decade-long wars in the Middle East, many Americans remain comfortable seeing themselves and their country as exceptional and indispensable, with the right and obligation to use its power to "help others" around the world.[11] For its part, Russia has recovered considerably from its post-Soviet collapse, bristling at the encroachment of US power into regions where it once held sway. Yet official Moscow still defines its priorities in primarily regional terms, and describes the global system as inherently multipolar or "polycentric".[12]

In many areas, US and Russian interests have remained largely compatible during the post-Cold War period, and they have remained so despite serious differences over Ukraine. Even since the outbreak of conflict in Ukraine, Russia and the US have co-operated to good effect on transit and

10 Moscow's efforts to cajole, constrain, and coerce its closest post-Soviet neighbours to support its position on Ukraine are a prime example of the goals and potential difficulties of maintaining Cold War type "bloc" positions on today's controversial questions of European security. See, e.g. Adam Taylor, Why Belarus and Kazakhstan are watching Crimea very, very carefully, in: *The Washington Post*, 11 March 2014, at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/03/11/why-kazakhstan-and-belarus-are-watching-crimea-very-very-carefully.

11 "I'm proud to be an American because we have done something no other great nation in the history of the world has done – we have used our great power not to enslave others, but to enable them." K.T. McFarland, *The United States of America: The one essential, exceptional, indispensable nation*, Fox News Opinion, 30 June 2015, at: http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/ 2015/06/30/why-im-proud-to-be-american.html.

12 Cf. *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020, Approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, 12 May 2009, No. 537*.

drug interdiction in Afghanistan, evacuating Syrian chemical weapons stockpiles, and negotiating for a settlement of the longstanding Iran nuclear issue.[13] Pragmatic co-operation in areas of explicitly shared interest should be no great surprise. After all, there is no major ideological divide between the two sides as there was in the Cold War, with basic agreement on free market principles and even on the essential formula of electoral democracy, despite a serious dispute about the extent to which the state must defer to universal human rights and political freedoms.

Lastly, compared to the implicit threat of mutually assured destruction that defined Cold War interactions, there is a low perceived threat that US-Russia rivalries could escalate to direct conventional or even nuclear confrontation. Some observers theorize that talk of a revived US-Russia strategic nuclear rivalry is just that – talk, intended by one side to remind the other that it should be taken seriously.[14] When 2012 Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney characterized Russia as the top geopolitical threat to the United States, President Obama dismissed that view as a Cold War relic with the quip: "The nineteen eighties are now calling to ask for their foreign-policy back because the Cold War's been over for 20 years."[15]

From this assessment, it would be reasonable to conclude that despite some superficial similarities, relations between Russia and the US today are sufficiently different from the past that they cannot accurately be described as a conflict in the same category as the Cold War. Further deterioration in economic and political ties remains entirely possible, and perhaps even likely, if the crisis in Ukraine is not resolved, yet the greatly enhanced connections between Russia and the West, basic consensus on free market capitalism, and disinclination toward direct confrontation of the past 25 years should exert a moderating influence on these tensions. Unfortunately, this mixed picture of US-Russia interaction carries both positive and negative implications for the OSCE, European security, and the global order.

On the positive side of the ledger, the enhanced mutual understanding achieved in the post-Cold War period, the absence of ideological conflict, and the considerable extent of shared interests all suggest that a foundation still exists for restoring some degree of balance and productivity to US-Russia interactions. It goes almost without saying that any "new normal" would have to address the Ukraine crisis head on, and probably would entail the adoption of a face-saving exit strategy for Russia from its current intervention, with

13 Cf. Fyodor Lukyanov, *US-Russia Mideast cooperation in balance over Ukraine?* Al-Monitor, 5 March 2014, at: http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/03/ukraine-middle-east-russia-syria-us.html.

14 "Russia's leaders want to be considered as the existential threat that the USSR was, a country the United States negotiated and compromised with, instead of chiding, sanctioning, and ignoring." Kofman, cited above (Note 4).

15 Glenn Kessler, Flashback: Obama's debate zinger on Romney's "1980s" foreign policy (video), in: *The Washington Post*, 20 March 2014, at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2014/03/20/flashback-obamas-debate-zinger-on-romneys-1980s-foreign-policy.

gradual easing of all but a handful of symbolic US and EU sanctions. While this would in no way erase the cleavages that have accrued over Ukraine, it could enable a return to limited pragmatic co-operation around areas of shared interest, including in the OSCE context.

Yet there is also a disturbing downside to the fact that US-Russia tensions today do not fully replicate those of the Cold War. Without the relentless ideological rivalry and near universal geopolitical confrontation between the nuclear superpowers of the Cold War, both Russians and Americans today lack the acute fear of a crisis spiralling out of control that, for half a century, acted as a brake on intentional or reckless escalation of conflict. In other words, even though Russia and the United States still have the capability to destroy one another and the world, the perceived stakes of US-Russia conflict may not be high enough for either side to feel pressured to make concessions to avoid escalation, much less to achieve a renewed and enduring consensus on European security.

The lower perceived stakes of US-Russia confrontation are not only a function of the relatively greater connectedness between Russian and American citizens, businesses, social groups, and others today. The perception also depends on individual experience. In the past quarter century, despite frequent disagreement on matters of regional security, trade, or, especially, human rights, Russia and the United States have not come close to the type of razor's edge crises and proxy conflicts that during the Cold War were a constant reminder of the danger of escalation. The Helsinki Process itself commenced in an atmosphere of détente that followed flashpoints in Berlin in 1948, Korea in 1950-53, Hungary in 1956, Cuba in 1962, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Vietnam from the mid-1960s, each of which could have been the opening salvo of a wider confrontation.

By the 1970s, recognizing that regional or proxy conflicts in which US and Soviet interests clashed raised a serious risk of escalation to general nuclear conflict between the superpowers, the leaders in Washington and Moscow concluded that they had to accept a basic framework for coexistence and co-operation in which, though rivalry would continue, maximalist ambitions would be set aside in order to avoid a general catastrophe. Between some Soviet and US leaders, especially Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan on the US side, and Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Mikhail Gorbachev on the Soviet side, relatively stable working relationships developed, with occasionally even a positive personal rapport.

At the present time, personal relations between the US and Russian leadership are frosty at best. Even at the height of a "Reset" intended to improve US-Russia ties in 2009, President Obama referred to Vladimir Putin as a man with "one foot in the old ways of doing business",[16] while since the

16 Chris McGreal/Luke Harding, Barack Obama: Putin has one foot in the past, in: *The Guardian*, 2 July 2009, at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jul/02/obama-putin-us-russia-relations.

outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, he has declared that Russia's President is behaving in an uncivilized manner, or is "on the wrong side of history".[17] Though more careful in his public pronouncements, Putin seems to harbour no particular respect or affection for Obama.[18] Moreover, domestic political pressures on both presidents now increasingly favour confrontation, and both leaders correctly assess that to compromise with the other would open them to accusations of weakness from political opponents, pundits, and the public at large in both countries.

Is a New European Security Consensus Possible?

In light of these considerable constraints, is it possible for Russia and the United States to achieve significant progress on shared security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space?

As noted above, no major improvement in US-Russia engagement will be possible without progress on the ongoing crisis in and around Ukraine. Such progress would entail, at a minimum, a durable ceasefire to bring the Donbas violence to a halt, with measures to prevent the sides from substantially rearming or preparing for renewed hostilities in the future. As the Minsk framework agreements have rightly concluded, the ceasefire must be accompanied by an internal Ukrainian political process to restore Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, while enshrining a special status for the separatist regions that all sides can accept.[19]

Though a cessation of fighting and an internal political settlement in Ukraine are urgently needed to defuse tensions, progress between Russia and the West on the broader portfolio of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security will also require a broader approach to resolving the regional conflict of which Ukraine is a part. In that context, a framework for compromise might include several key steps.

First, both Russia and the West could agree to a temporary moratorium on competing integration projects in the post-Soviet space. The Baltic states aside, no post-Soviet state has successfully managed such a transition without serious political, economic, and security disjunction, while neither Western nor Russian integration projects yet offer a credible perspective for compatibility or even coexistence that is essential for the region's long-term economic success. Competition between European-oriented and Russian/Eurasian-oriented economic, political, and security integration projects has had mixed

17 Obama: Russia "on the wrong side of history", in: *The New York Post*, 3 March 2014, at: http://nypost.com/2014/03/03/obama-says-russia-is-on-the-wrong-side-of-history-in-ukraine.

18 Cf. Fiona Hill/Clifford Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, Washington, DC, 2015, pp. 285-311.

19 Cf. *Ukraine ceasefire: The 12-point plan*, BBC, 9 February 2015, at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29162903.

effects for individual post-Soviet economies, but has clearly driven worsening tension between Russia and the West, with disastrous consequences for the entire region.[20] A temporary halt to this geopolitical "land rush" would at least give governments in the region breathing room to prepare their populations and restructure their economies to better accommodate any future integration programme. At the same time, a pause would clear the table enough to permit a badly needed direct dialogue between Russia and the West.

The second key step to be addressed through such dialogue should be to restore and reaffirm the foundational idea that borders must be changed only by the mutual consent of the parent country and the regional population, and only by peaceful means. This mutual reaffirmation would implicitly acknowledge Russia's longstanding objection to NATO intervention in Yugoslavia and Kosovo's subsequent independence as an exception to the rule, but also recognize that Russia's seizure and annexation of Crimea was a clear violation, to which Ukraine and the West will maintain a standing objection. With a restored commitment from both sides, the outliers to a half-century of essentially stable and secure European borders can be treated more productively as disputed exceptions that do not negate the underlying rule, rather than the drivers of recrimination and worsening confrontation that they have become in recent years.

The third key step forward in a framework solution around the Ukraine crisis should be that foreign military forces are not deployed on another state's territory without that state's consent. Because so much dispute has surrounded the legitimacy of Russian deployments in the post-Soviet space over the past quarter century, including in south-eastern Ukraine, there is no doubt that Russia would have to offer a concrete gesture of reassurance to the United States, Europe, and its own neighbours that it still considers this to be a tenet of European security. The best opportunity for such a demonstration would be in the Donbas. Despite Ukrainian and Western assertions to the contrary, Russia still has not formally acknowledged that its soldiers are participating in an occupation of Ukrainian territory, yet it has agreed to support the terms of the Minsk ceasefire and disengagement of forces on both sides.[21] In the context of a general cessation of hostilities, Russia could support Ukraine's initiative for an international peacekeeping mission, in which it could also participate, with a mandate to include verifying the withdrawal of any foreign fighters from the region and sealing the Russia-Ukraine border.[22]

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20 Cf. David Cadier, Eurasian Economic Union and Eastern Partnership: the End of the EU-Russian *Entredeux*, in: *The Geopolitics of Eurasian Economic Integration*, LSE IDEAS Special Report, June 2014, pp. 60-65, at: http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/SR019. aspx.

21 Cf. Russia backs Ukraine peace deal but Kiev is blocking progress, says Putin, in: *The Guardian*, 6 June 2015, at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/06/russia-backs-ukraine-peace-deal-but-kiev-is-blocking-progress-says-putin.

22 Cf. Ukraine MPs pass law allowing international peacekeepers, *Ukraine Today TV*, 4 June 2015, at: http://uatoday.tv/news/ukraine-mps-pass-law-allowing-international-peacekeepers-into-country-432774.html.

None of these key principles could gain much traction in isolation. To foster such positive initiatives from either side would also require ongoing US and Russian participation in a serious dialogue on the larger problems of European, Euro-Atlantic, and Eurasian security. How might such a dialogue take place?

The best hope is likely a return to the original Helsinki principles, which were first negotiated by regional states in the context of a Cold War rivalry between blocs led by Moscow and Washington. Today, the United States, Europe, and Russia all share an interest in renewal of just such a dialogue, although what will not – indeed what must not – return is the Cold War "balance of terror" that exerted pressure on all sides to participate seriously in the original Helsinki Process. The motivation for a new regional security dialogue must instead come much more from Europe itself, where European states must also play a more central role commensurate with their enhanced capacity.

The United States will not be absent from this process. Yet, as the most powerful single global actor, Washington faces an unprecedented array of challenges ranging from defusing traditional and non-state conflicts in the Middle East and East Asia to managing the potentially cataclysmic impacts of global climate change and cyber or conventional attacks on critical infrastructure. As a consequence, the longstanding US call to its European allies and partners to shoulder a greater share of the burden in ensuring their own security is now heard with greater frequency and urgency, even as Washington rushes to provide reassurance to its NATO allies. Perhaps more importantly, Europe's ability to act in a co-ordinated fashion is also greater than ever, prodded along by the necessity of responding to the continuing Eurozone and Ukraine crises. Much has been made of Germany's growing comfort with the role of European hegemon, yet Berlin is very unlikely to depart from the pan-European infrastructure it has been so instrumental in erecting and in which it retains such a high financial and political stake.[23]

Despite official rhetoric defining Russia's unique Eurasian path and increasingly cosy ties between Moscow and Beijing, there is also no reason to believe that Russia will abandon its longstanding desire for an equal role at the top table in managing European security. The US, the EU, and NATO can be confident that if they are open to the resumption of a serious dialogue on regional security in a pan-European context, Russia will at least be certain to come to the table. Moreover, since Russia and various European economies have grown increasingly interdependent over the past quarter century, Russia and Europe should share the recognition that a faltering security order on the continent will deliver severe economic damage to all sides, which will in turn

23 To give just one recent example: see: Matthew Holehouse/Christopher Williams, France and Germany behind plans for "common EU corporation tax", in: *The Telegraph*, 26 May 2015, at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/11630468/France-and-Germany-behind-plans-for-common-EU-corporation-tax.html.

exacerbate destabilizing trends at the extreme ends of both Russian and European politics.

A renewed Helsinki-type dialogue on European, Euro-Atlantic, and Eurasian security must certainly be inclusive, with formal representation for every regional state as well as others with compelling interests in the region, such as major trading partners and international organizations. However, in practical terms, the process must also acknowledge the changed reality of regional blocs today, including both the European Union and NATO, on the one hand, and the Eurasian Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and even the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, on the other. The point of this "big-tent" approach is not to drown difficult regional problems in a platitudinous international alphabet soup, but rather to ensure that the dialogue aims at solutions that can actually work against the backdrop of the region's more significant integration projects and its interconnections with the wider world.

Despite its outsized power relative to any other individual regional state, the US would be well advised not to cast a giant shadow over this renewed dialogue. For one thing, Russia must be confronted with the full significance of its current alienation from most of Europe, and overbearing US leadership would undoubtedly distract from that message. More importantly, if Washington hopes for a durable consensus to emerge, it should be prepared to let Europeans lead the process, and to lend its support, even if some compromises do not fully conform to its own values in all instances. The most important US role will be to underscore the continuing strength of collective security so that NATO allies, EU member states, and other partners in the region can be fully confident, rather than fearful, in pursuing a comprehensive settlement that respects Russian interests as well as their own.

Lastly, in addition to seeking consensus at the political level, the state-to-state dialogue should foster and endorse an ongoing process of direct dialogue among civil societies within and around Europe. Such a dialogue is now badly needed to begin to address the deficits of trust and goodwill among ordinary citizens throughout Europe, but especially in the East, where Russians and Ukrainians, Poles, Balts, and others are resurrecting rhetoric and imagery from the most poisonous chapters of their shared history.[24] Without a robust European security consensus, reconciliation between and within societies will not take place; but without a civil society dialogue aimed at reconciliation, no security arrangement can long endure.

24 See, e.g. Will Englund, In Russia, a Soviet revival grips leadership, in: *The Washington Post*, 22 April 2014, at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/in-russia-a-soviet-revival-grips-leadership/2014/04/22/68505fc1-5d3d-49b7-a42b-fff2ed79716a_story.html; and Jared McBride, How Ukraine's New Memory Commissar Is Controlling the Nation's Past, in: *The Nation*, 13 August 2015, at: http://www.thenation.com/article/how-ukraines-new-memory-commissar-is-controlling-the-nations-past.

Conclusion: Helsinki Plus 40

As the fourth decade since the Helsinki Final Act draws to a close, it is clearly past time to begin the inclusive, multi-level dialogue envisioned above. It would be overly optimistic to presume that a renewed security consensus on the Helsinki model could be quickly achieved, nor would the dialogue itself need to conform neatly to any particular timetable. Yet the crisis in and around Ukraine today provides an incentive for urgent action to prevent an even greater catastrophe, which can spur governments and private actors to undertake difficult steps they might otherwise have avoided or delayed.

While immediate steps must be taken to prevent further violence in Ukraine, and others must follow to enshrine a longer-lasting political compromise, no settlement can be complete without attention to the worsening region-wide tensions between Russia and the West. The best forum for such attention would be a renewal of the type of process that produced the original Helsinki Final Act at the height of the Cold War. Relations between Moscow and Washington have reached a low point reminiscent of that period in some respects, yet the perceived risks of the current confrontation by themselves are not sufficient motivation for the US and Russia to be the driving forces for dialogue. Rather, with support from Washington, Europe must play the leading role, building on its enhanced unity and capacity as it emerges from the existential political and economic crises it has faced over the past several years.

The 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act comes at yet another moment of acute crisis for Europe, and it raises the question of whether the community of European, Euro-Atlantic, and Eurasian states is prepared to step up to such a weighty challenge. For now, the answer is not clear, but it is not unreasonable to hope that by the next major Helsinki anniversary, this community will have revived and restored a strong consensus on European security that can endure for at least another half century or more. By the time of that more distant future, perhaps the vision of a global order that assures peace, human security, and prosperity will be more than the hopeful abstraction it remains today.