

Global Security and the Ukrainian Crisis

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not find the captive audience he is counting on for a pro-Russia regime to last. Besides, post-war reconstruction would put an enormous strain on Russia's budget, especially in the face of severe sanctions.

While it is true that so far Western sanctions have not succeeded in forcing the Kremlin to end aggression in Ukraine and prevent further escalation, the more punishing sanctions that the US and its European allies and partners have threatened to impose on Russia could cripple the Russian economy and inflict pain on its billionaires, government officials, and ordinary citizens alike.

Considering the many blind spots of war optimism, it is important that both Zelensky and Putin, as well as other political leaders, at a minimum take a pause to recognize their own and other actors' delusions and seek

to mitigate their effects by soliciting alternative sources of information and interpretations. Leaders should also ensure not only that the people around them feel comfortable reporting bad news, but also that the incentives for reporting factually accurate information are stronger than the incentives for "maintaining organizational silence."

As a flurry of diplomatic talks between Western leaders, Moscow, and Kyiv continues, all parties involved should consider very seriously the sources of their optimism about whether further violence will change the inevitability of political negotiations and concessions.

Submitted on 16 February 2022

About the Author

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COMMENTARY

Global Security and the Ukrainian Crisis

By Dmitry Stefanovich (IMEMO, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow)

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The dramatic recognition of the DNR and LNR as sovereign states will affect the developing security trends in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere. However, it should not be seen as some sort of a 'grand finale' and 'full stop' signal to the ongoing process of re-shaping the international security order.

While highly symbolic, such a move by Russia seems to be only tactical, or operational at the most, intended to limit the military escalation scenarios around Donetsk and Lugansk. Strangely enough, during the emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, the Ambassadors of both Russia and Ukraine stated that the Minsk Agreements are still relevant. Of course, to keep the situation contained, or 'frozen' (who could have thought that this word can have a positive connotation), the hostilities along the contact line should cease, and, hopefully, it will happen as soon as the Russian Armed Forces are deployed in these Republics according to the relevant Agreements. The status of such deployment will remain contested for years to come, but this is a reality we will have to deal with. At the moment the situation is still developing, but the current crisis is not about Ukraine.

It is rooted in far greater issues of a European security architecture—or the absence of such.

Thus, the Russian strategic effort to negotiate so-called 'security guarantees', or rather re-negotiating the written and perceived 'terms' under which the Cold War ended, remains on the table. So far there has been some progress with the so-called 'secondary agenda', which includes very serious issues of arms control, transparency and confidence-building measures. If implemented, those can stabilize the situation in Europe, with a positive spill over to other regions of the world. Credit where credit is due, the US response to the Russian original proposal demonstrated that people in Washington properly tried to do their homework in that part. However, it is linked to broader issues of a political nature, the 'primary agenda'. The most crucial of those are the binding commitment by NATO to non-extension into the post-Soviet space and the degrading of NATO military infrastructure in the new member states to the status it had in 1997, as well as the withdrawal of foreign troops from those member states. All of these are heavily flavoured with the concept of indivisible secu-

rity, which is contested from all directions. Diving deep into these discussions is not a goal of this essay. However, this process can help to find a mutually acceptable solution for the ‘primary agenda’, as the current non-flexible attitude of the US and NATO is not helpful.

Still, the ‘secondary agenda’, based on long-standing Russian proposals addressing the post-INF situation, restraint on military exercises and limits on deployments of some long-range strike platforms can be used to continue the engagement and develop solutions that will be implemented once there is some progress on the ‘primary’ one. Moreover, such a process will affect the attitude of the parties involved. After all, now there are extremely limited domains where Russia and the US, or Russia and NATO, are looking for solutions—instead we are too busy ‘standing up’ to each other.

All these ideas are obviously affected by the actual military deployments, with no major ‘de-escalation’ in sight. On that, there are two points that should be considered. First, it is a fact that somewhat proper engagement on the issues listed in the previous paragraph started only when coupled with ‘pressure’ from the Russian side—and there is a genuine concern that without such pressure the process will halt. Second, both general purpose forces deployed to the Western borders of Russia, the Union State of Russia and Belarus, and other regions (most importantly the Mediterranean) and the

strategic deterrence forces (which were demonstrated in a major exercise over the weekend) continue to send a signal that the US and NATO will not be able to ensure their military security through unilateral measures in this sphere. Under any circumstances Russia will be able to impose military costs in case of a conflict—thus it is necessary to look for collective, ‘indivisible’ security solutions. And such solutions remain possible—as long as they will address the long-term security concerns of the parties involved based on reciprocity.

There is a Russian saying—“a terrible end is better than terror without end”, however this seems hardly applicable to international security. Scholars, experts, politicians, diplomats, servicemen and the general public are obviously tired of the ongoing crisis, but it remains contained. Full-scale conflict (and it does not really matter whether it will take the form of military action or apocalyptic sanctions) will hardly pave a road to immediate solutions, and there is still room to develop a more stable international security arrangement based on what we already have. Destroying everything pre-existing will not help in this endeavour, and we in Russia know only too well that a ‘new world’ built on ruins and debris does not become a better one.

Submitted on 22 February 2022

About the Author

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COMMENTARY

Russia Crisis 2022: A Truth Moment for Germany

By Kateryna Zarembo and Marianna Fakhurdinova (New Europe Center, Kyiv)

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Since the Second World War, Germany has pursued a pacifist foreign policy, driven by the ideas of non-violence and dialog, with a view to promoting peace on the European continent. This is especially true regarding German policy toward Russia, where the German position is reinforced by a sense of historical guilt and responsibility on the one hand and business interests on the other.

This moment in history, when Russia is demanding a revision of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture,

threatening Ukraine by force, is a test for Germany of whether it has actually learned the lessons of the past and can play a leading and uniting role in the European Union. This peculiar German mixture of pacifism, anti-Americanism, (selective) historical guilt and desire for dialog with Russia no matter how autocratic, can work against German intentions. The German position is all the more outstanding since it stands in stark contrast to those of the US, Great Britain and other Ukraine allies.