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How to rebuild Europe's security architecture?

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Russia's war on Ukraine is overturning the European security order in place since the end of the Cold War. The *Helsinki Final Act (1975)*, the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990)*, the *1992 Helsinki Summit, as well as the fragile acquis of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), failed* to build and maintain a system involving all countries of 'Greater Europe', including the Russian Federation. For at least two decades, Russia has expressed discomfort regarding its perceived status in a 'concert of nations' dominated, in its perception, by the Atlantic Alliance and the European Union. Still referring to a conception of security based on spheres of influence, it has considered NATO's eastward expansion as a threat to its national security (Russian National Security Strategy, 2015, 15).

"Only during 'critical junctures' – relatively rare watershed moments marked by rapid change and upheaval – are security architectures likely to be fundamentally reconfigured" (Hyde-Price, 2014, 105). The war in Ukraine is already listed as such a turning point in history. In addition to continuing efforts to support Ukraine and stabilize the situation on the battlefield, the time seems ripe for an in-depth assessment of Europe's security regime. Many might argue that it makes little sense to discuss architecture while the house is burning. I answer that it is our responsibility to stress our preparedness and explore all opportunities. Just increasing military expenditures cannot be the only option. We

need a 'Code of Conduct' for the 21st Century that would allow no more – real or perceived - 'security vacuums'. This is in no way intended to accept the Russian narrative. Even during the Cold War, European countries were able to progress in building a common security architecture through dialogue and negotiations. It was less than a month after the brutal military suppression of the Prague Spring by the Warsaw Pact States, in 1968, that the Finnish Government initiated the process that ended up in the Helsinki Final Act.

A complex issue with no easy answers - or Sysiphus' work revisited

Only defending the *status quo* and our rules-based system against revisionist Russia might not be sufficient. The Russian Federation is not going away. Expecting its defeat, its transformation and even its fragmentation (Panych, 2022) is a dangerous illusion. Our threatening neighbor has a vested interest to be part of a properly functioning European security system. And I assume that such architecture can only be robust if Russia is an active part of it. "Now is the time to think big and imagine a new, more durable order, one that can encompass Russia" (Graham & Menon, 2022). It will require "great courage," former German Chancellor Angela Merkel observed in a recent speech (Merkel, 2022).

Finding the right "umbrella" to devise a more inclusive European security architecture will be another challenge. At first glance, the OSCE seems the best equipped platform to

fulfil a pan-European security agenda requiring a comprehensive approach. Unfortunately, the Vienna organization has been crippled in Ukraine, and its participating States are hardly able to find the necessary consensus even when it comes to decisions of minor importance. Without prejudging its role after the war, the OSCE must restore a sufficient level of internal consensus and cohesion before embarking on a fresh discussion of that kind. NATO and the EU, two other obvious anchor points, neither offer much prospect for success. As for Emmanuel Macron's European Political Community, which met for the first time in Prague on 6 October 2022, it is my belief that it is only a kind of "UFO" with no future. At the end of the day, should U.S.-Russian bilateral talks be the primary negotiating forum?

History shows that negotiations on new regimes usually last decades and cannot be agreed overnight. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act was preceded by lengthy discussions including 2,400 meetings and deliberations on 4,660 proposals. "The starting point is the recognition that American and Russian principles regarding European security are irreconcilable" (Graham & Menon 2022). With such assessment, political will to accept compromise solutions will be required. *Zero-sum* approaches will need to be abandoned, as well as attempts to create spheres of interest/influence: a new security architecture must not amount to a "Yalta 2".

Dialogue alone will not solve the current impasse. A thorough and constructive inventory of (perceived) threats and challenges might offer a good first step, following the precedent of the EU Strategic Compass (March 2022) and its preliminary '360 degrees' analysis. Identifying cornerstones of European security and acknowledging common interests, especially when it concerns truly vital issues, might also contribute to regain trust. Jointly reviewing existing mechanisms and procedures would allow reconfirm their relevance, their update if necessary, and explore new ones. Ultimately, inclusive discussion will be required on key topics such as arms control, conflict prevention and management, and of course security regimes/guarantees (including for Ukraine and other "in-between" States).

Navigating towards Helsinki+50

2025 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 35th anniversary of the Charter of Paris. This double milestone commemoration should provide additional political momentum to strive for a "New Helsinki" spirit, as Pope Francis advocated at the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Nur-Sultan, on 14 September 2022.

The outcome of any effort to create a new security architecture is of course uncertain but it should be attempted, nonetheless. "A British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, once said that politicians should fear only one thing – 'events, old boy, events'. In the absence of bold and visionary leadership, Europe's security architecture will be left to

evolve in a piecemeal and incremental manner, driven by reactions to happenstance and the unexpected – in other words, to 'events, old boy, events'." (Hyde-Price 2014, 114). The vision of a brighter future must emerge from the ashes of war.

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