



# NATO-Russia Relations: Resilience and Beyond

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# NATO-Russia Relations: Resilience and Beyond

András Rácz, Marcin Terlikowski

**The aim of this paper is to provide readers with an overview of contemporary NATO-Russia relations before the Warsaw Summit, and to make recommendations for the upcoming meeting.**

## INTRODUCTION

Nearly two years have passed since Russia occupied and forcibly annexed the territory of the Crimean Peninsula, and launched an armed intervention into Eastern Ukraine. As the NATO summit in Warsaw is approaching, it is useful to provide an overview of the strategic situation between the NATO and Russia.

In March 2014, as Crimea was being cut-off by unmarked Russian forces, few assumed that relations between the West and Russia would quickly escalate to an unprecedented crisis, prompting media to ask if Europe is not at the verge of the new Cold War. Most NATO allies were caught by surprise by Russia's determination to use every possible tool – including open military force – to derail Ukraine from its Euro-Atlantic integration path. Russian actions, including massive and rapid military drills and nuclear muscle-flexing made many in the West question the chances of setting a cooperative agenda with Russia anytime soon.

However, Russia was also surprised by the scale and solidarity of Western response to the aggression in Ukraine. Sanctions, both individual and those imposed by the EU and the U.S. came as an unwanted and largely unexpected cost to be paid for an attempt to revise post-cold war order in Europe. Moreover, by recognizing the threat posed by Russia's unquestionably advanced military capabilities, NATO suspended military cooperation with Russia and made significant steps towards strengthening its presence in the Baltic and Black Sea regions, and to reassure Eastern members of the operability of the collective defense guarantee. The NATO forces temporarily deployed in the Baltic States in response to Russian actions, though not significant in their numbers, constitute a tripwire force, similar to the one stationed in West-Berlin in the Cold War era: no military attack from the East is possible without harming them, and harming them would most probably invoke Article 5. of the Washington Treaty. This is a major risk Moscow is unlikely to take, but even this scenario cannot be fully excluded.

In a swift reaction, Moscow employed a variety of tools and tactics to evade effects of sanctions, or at least to weaken their coherence. The Russian tactics may seem sophisticated, particularly as Moscow applies tailored narratives and actions, depending on the field of confrontation with the West. It speaks and acts differently at the military level, then in the economic sphere. Besides, it pursues different policy lines with the largest EU Member States than vis-a-vis the Central-Eastern European countries, thus employing a traditional divide-and-rule game.

The used Russian strategic narratives are composed of four main elements. First, Moscow tries to present the annexation of the Crimea as a done fact, and separate this question from the armed intervention in Eastern Ukraine and the non-compliance with the need to adequately examine the fate of the passenger airline Malaysian Airlines MH17. Second, the Kremlin intends

to present the tensions using a narrative according to which the West risks too much by maintaining the tense relations with Russia. Third, according to the Russian narrative, sanctions harm EU countries much more than Russia. Fourth, Russia tries to picture itself as an indispensable partner in addressing issues of global security, and thus legitimize its actions in the post-Soviet region and its claims elsewhere.

Hence, understanding these strategic narratives is of key importance to resist the Russian pressure, to maintain the security and credibility of both the Alliance and its strategic partners, and also to assess the future possibilities of cooperating with Russia in issues of joint interests.

## **1. UKRAINE: ‘WHAT IS MINE IS MINE; WHAT IS YOURS IS OURS’**

Regarding Ukraine, Moscow’s policies reflect the view that Ukraine is not a fully sovereign country; moreover, as if Ukraine would exclusively belong to Russia’s own sphere of interest, and the West would have no right even to form an opinion. Therefore, because the West has nothing to do there, Ukraine should not constitute a factor in the relations of Russia and the West at all.

This approach is very visible on the duality of Moscow’s policy line vis-à-vis questions of the Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. On the one hand, the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula was a clear violation of international law, as well as of the rights of the Crimean population – who, despite of frequent Russian claims, did not vote democratically either for “independence” or for Russian annexation. However, since the annexation Moscow has been behaving as if it was a done deal, about which there is no room for questions<sup>1</sup> and as if it should have no effect on its relations to the West any more. This approach has been well reflected in several declarations of the Russian President, Minister of Foreign Affairs and other leaders, who frequently say that the annexation was justified, like President Putin did in early 2016 in his interview given to the German newspaper Bild.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, regarding Eastern Ukraine, Russia still pretends as if it was not a part of the conflict, despite numerous direct and indirect evidences pointing not only to a massive Russian involvement, but actually Russia’s leading role from the very beginning. While formally still denying its involvement, Moscow tries to push the Kyiv government to give the Russia-operated rebel territories a level of autonomy which would practically provide Moscow with a permanent, direct leverage over Ukraine’s domestic, foreign, security and defense policies.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, by trying to portray the Donbas situation as a domestic issue of Ukraine, Russia implies that the Donbas crisis should also not affect relations with the West. Moreover, Russian politicians and official media frequently accuse the West of directly intervening in Ukraine’s internal affairs. The discourse ranges from picturing the EuroMaidan as a West-

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<sup>1</sup> Official Russian military press proudly speaks about the new Russian military installations on the peninsula: D. Boltenkov – M. Shepovenko, *Russian Defense Arrangements in Crimea*, Moscow Defense Brief, 2014/5, <http://mdb.cast.ru/mdb/5-2014/item4/article1/>

<sup>2</sup> Putin – *The Interview*. “For me it’s not border that matter”, Bild, 11 January, 2016, <http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/wladimir-putin/russian-president-wladimir-putin-the-interview-44092656.bild.html>

<sup>3</sup> In a generally similar way to the so-called Kozak Memorandum, which was a Russian proposal for the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict in Moldova. The Memorandum suggested the federative transformation of Moldova in such a way that would have empowered the separatist region with a de facto veto right over all important issues of the federative state.

orchestrated coup d'état to accusing the U.S.<sup>4</sup> and Poland<sup>5</sup> of sending mercenaries and weapons against the so-called rebels of the Donbas.

Hence, Moscow demonstrates a serious disrespect to the very sovereignty of Ukraine first by pretending that annexing parts of its territory has been justified, and second, by claiming a possibility to continuously intervene into the policies of the Kyiv government through the wide autonomy to be granted to the Russia-sponsored rebel regions.

Besides, it also pushes the West to decouple the two issues from each other, thus passively accept the annexation of the Crimea, while negotiating only about Eastern Ukraine. This Russian policy has already been partially successful, as the strong EU economic and political sanctions are tied to the full implementation of the Minsk II agreement<sup>6</sup>, while the fate of the Crimea is not mentioned in this context any more. However, one needs to recognize that this duality itself strengthens the Russian narrative about the existence of “spheres of influence” between Russia and the West. Hence, if the EU and the NATO soften their commitment to the full implementation of the Minsk II agreement, Moscow might well take it, not only as a confirmation of the perceived justification of its actions, but actually as an encouragement to further adventurism.

## **2. MILITARY SITUATION: ‘YOU’RE RISKING TOO MUCH...’**

Already, when Russia started to deploy its special forces to Crimea in March 2014, it began to send military signals to the NATO. Snap exercises, which amassed tens of thousands of troops at the borders of NATO’s Eastern Flank<sup>7</sup>; relocation of strategic forces closer to Allied territories; flights of nuclear-capable bombers in the international airspace; probing of aerial and maritime space of NATO members. All these moves were meant to send a clear message towards the Alliance<sup>8</sup>, roughly read: don’t meddle in Ukrainian conflict, or you risk misunderstanding, incidents, escalation and – last but not least – war.

Russian use of the military as an instrument directly supporting diplomacy can indeed be considered exemplary. Over 2014 and 2015 there have been hardly a meeting between US and Russian leadership, within the Normandy Format or the Minsk negotiations, which wouldn’t be accompanied by Russian military showing-off. As much as Moscow’s tactics were escalatory and surprising at first, it gradually became obvious, transparent and foreseeable. While at first it was shocking for NATO to see how Russia returns to the language of military power in Europe and cold-war style force posturing, it became quickly “assured”, that Russia would be repeating such actions anytime, when negotiations regarding the Ukrainian conflict, or NATO defense posture in the Eastern Flank for that matter, are taking place.

In this sense, Russia has quickly lost its key advantage, which helped it in steering diplomatic efforts around the crisis in Ukraine to its benefit – the surprise factor. Unless Russia significantly increases the scale of such military actions, the addressors are not likely to react the

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example: *400 U.S. mercenaries ‘deployed on ground’ in Ukraine military op*, RT.com, 11 May, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/news/158212-academi-blackwater-ukraine-military/>

<sup>5</sup> *‘Slap sanctions on nations that supply weapons to Ukraine’ – Communists to PM*, RT.com, 12 March, 2015, <https://www.rt.com/politics/240077-russia-sanctions-weapons-kyiv/>

<sup>6</sup> *EU Links Russian Sanctions to Minsk Agreement*, RFE/RL, 20 March 2015,

<http://www.rferl.org/content/european-union-ukraine-russia-sanctions-brussels-summit/26910898.html>

<sup>7</sup> J. Norberg, *Training to Fight. Russia’s Major Military Exercises 2011-2014*. FOI Report, December 2015, [www.foi.se/Documents/foir4128.pdf](http://www.foi.se/Documents/foir4128.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> See: J. Durkalec, *Nuclear Backed “Little Green Men” Nuclear Messaging in the Ukraine Crisis*, PISM Report, 29 July 2015, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl)

same way as they did when the fighting in Donbas was at height and the Russian army was amassing at Ukrainian borders. In other words, Moscow made NATO quickly get used to a strong presence of military factor in its policy towards the West.

What is far more important than the sole fact that Russia has been using the military factor to disrupt – or at least complicate – diplomatic calculations of the West with regards to Ukrainian crisis, is the argued inevitability of escalation had an incident occurred between NATO and Russia forces. It has been widely stated by Russia, and then adopted by many Western leaders and experts, that the growth of military activity in Europe, combined with the degeneration of transparency and trust building regimes, may easily lead to incidents, which in turn may end up in escalation to the level of hot conflict. By flying its airplanes with identification transponders being shut off and probing airspace of NATO, Russia was happily helping this narrative to take ground. At the same time, Moscow was not interested in using the existing channels of communication with NATO, like the hotline between the Military Committee Chief and Russian General Staff. An air, or maritime accident leading to skirmish and even war – a truly disturbing perspective, which reminded the worst times of Cold War and thus, played effectively with imagination of Western leaders.

But the tactics of Russia has been mercilessly compromised in Syria. The shooting-down of the Russian bomber - tragic in a humanitarian sense because of the war crime committed by the Turkmen forces killing the captured pilot - entailed only economic and political reprisals from Russia. If this is the case, then why should NATO propose a robust – in the meaning of formalized – military transparency building regime to make such incidents less likely? Incident avoidance can be achieved in existing formats and arrangements, which require only good will on both sides to be effective (to remind, Russia keeps its diplomatic and military personnel still affiliated to NATO, so there is a constant option for information exchange).

Consequently, the Warsaw summit should reiterate, that Russia welcomes to have a substantial dialogue with the Alliance, but under the condition that Moscow is actually willing to subscribe its rules bona fide. Such an approach would also be perfectly in line with the position of Moscow vis-à-vis NATO defined in the new National Security Strategy.<sup>9</sup>

There is a specific Visegrad dimension of this question: Russian diplomacy is doing its best to create cracks and deepen the existing divisions between the Visegrad countries. While often accusing Poland of being Russophobic thus practically annulling cooperation with Warsaw, at the same time Hungary and Slovakia are both pictured as friends and prospective cooperation partners in the field of energy, industry and even defense industry.

Moreover, Russian second track diplomacy often pictures the situation that the “deal over Ukraine” with the West is inevitably coming, thus if Visegrad countries still keep up taking anti-Moscow positions, they might be simply left out of the deal.<sup>10</sup> However, when Russia is trying to push the Visegrad to make concessions over Ukraine, it is not mainly about bilateral relations with the Visegrad countries, but about to weaken the internal coherence of the EU and NATO from inside, thus is basically a classic divide-and-rule strategy.

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<sup>9</sup> K. Pynnöniemi – A. RÁCZ, *Threat perception affects operational doctrines: Russia's new national security strategy does not offer much hope for cooperation*, FIIA Comment 2016/2, 27 January, 2016, [http://www.fia.fi/en/publication/561/threat\\_perception\\_affects\\_operational\\_doctrines/](http://www.fia.fi/en/publication/561/threat_perception_affects_operational_doctrines/)

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Russian official, Bratislava, June 2015.

### 3. SANCTIONS: 'YOU ARE SHOOTING IN YOUR OWN FOOT!'

Russian narrative about economic sanctions is even more distorted and used as a mean of manipulation, than it is in the case with regards to the military dimension of the current standoff. Sanctions do have an effect on Russian economy, though they are not exclusively responsible for the current recession (which is also a result of record-low oil prices and import countersanctions, imposed by Russia on European goods), and – most importantly – will have a cumulative effect over time.

The immediate effect of sanctions can be best grasped in the aftermath of shielding Russian financial sector and hydrocarbons industry from access to global financial market. These companies were forced to quickly repay their debt held in foreign currencies, rather than roll it, as it is usually the case. This situation created pressure on foreign exchange reserves, which had to be used to keep liquidity of affected companies. According to many sources, the level of reserves dropped sharply by at least USD 100 billion by June 2015, though, they are not expected to decrease further, owing to lowering of external debt level, being the natural result of repayments<sup>11</sup>. What followed however, was a dramatic depreciation of ruble, which lost 45% of value almost overnight at the end of 2014 (though the inflation impulse came also from countersanctions, which left many Russian-made consumer goods the only available substitutes of imports)<sup>12</sup>. In the conditions created by the record-low oil prices combined with the ban on transferring modern technologies to Russia and the outflow of the West, Russian economy contracted by 3,8% of GDP in 2015<sup>13</sup>. The recession meant also that the real incomes of households dropped visibly, followed by the decrease of industrial sales and output, and a soaring inflation<sup>14</sup>.

No matter how technical this description might sound, the result of sanctions, combined with low oil prices and countersanctions, is that Russian economy has been put under unimaginable pressure. Facing structural problems ever since the transition from central planning began, the failure of modernization under the “Medvedev era” and abused by oligarchs, Russian economy is facing an existential problem now. In short- to medium time frame, creative accounting and other tricks can help sustain the powerhouses of the economy – the hydrocarbons industry and financial sector. But in the long run Russia needs to open trade with the West as much as breathing air. To implement structural reforms, it needs Western goods, capital, innovations, know-how etc. Otherwise, it will remain stuck, offering no or poor social services, like healthcare, education or infrastructure, and being a hardly attractive partner for global powers, including the BRICS, often presented by Russia as the future counterbalance to western liberal order.

The state of denial however is the best description of Russian narrative about its economy. In official channels, Russia is stressing that sanctions actually help breaking dependencies on imports from the West and constitute a development incentive, rather than a slow-down factor. Russia is also celebrating the tightening of economic relations with China, presenting this uneven partnership as a geopolitical and economic counterbalance to the US and the West. A strategic

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<sup>11</sup> See: S. de Galbert, *A Year of Sanctions Against Russia – Now What?*, CSIS Report October 2015, compare: S. Secieru, *Russia Under Sanctions: Assessing the Damage, Scrutinising Adaptation and Evasion*, PISM Report, November 2015.

<sup>12</sup> S. de Galbert, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> Up to 20% by September 2015. See: V. Milov, *Russia's Downfall: The Worst Economic Crisis Since the Collapse of the USSR*, Martens Centre, December 2015.

message to the US and Europe, sent by Moscow is simple – either you change your mind and do business with us, or we will build an alternative alliance with the power you are fearing the most. This way Russia is effectively playing on American fears of the rise of China, even if the latter does not really consider Moscow among its top partners.

But Russia is also fostering economic deals with selected European countries, which do not really want to follow sanctions. Projects like the Hungarian Paks nuclear power plant, the Nordstream-2 or the credits for Greece, have as much – or even more - political weight than economic sense. Apart from anchoring Russian capital – and thereby influence – in the EU countries, which are traditionally looking favorably at Moscow, these initiatives are strong indications to states, which stand by the policy of sanctions: we will bypass you and return to business as usual with your neighbors, while you will be losing money. Indeed, Europe has felt the effect of sanctions and countersanctions. Although the trade with Russia did go down, in total around 16% in value, European exporters largely found alternative markets<sup>15</sup>. And it's needless to say that European economy, despite its own structural problems, is in a far better condition than the Russian one. Being a source of innovation, based on mixed sources of growth and governed by liberal principles of common market, it will withstand disruption of trade with Russia

#### **4. ISSUES OF GLOBAL SECURITY: 'WITHOUT US YOU FAIL'**

Another important element of the Russian narrative that Moscow pictures itself as an indispensable, key partner in handling problems of global security. Based on this argument, Russia continuously keeps speaking about the need for a new European security order, in which Russia would be an integral part. This approach is similar to the one used in Mikhail Gorbachev's concept about a Common European House, as it was also about the inclusion of Moscow in European matters of foreign and security policy with decision-making power. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the concept emerged again and again, ranging from the proposals of then Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozyrev to the so-called Medvedev-proposal, titled 'The draft of the European Security Treaty'<sup>16</sup>.

When taking a closer look at the areas of security policy, where Russia and the West are either already cooperating actively or will need to do so in the near future, the list is actually impressive. First and foremost, the nuclear threat reduction needs to be mentioned, in which the United States and Russia have reached important results, particularly in the field of strategic nuclear weapons. While there is still a lot to do regarding tactical nuclear weapons, the importance of keeping up the dialogue and cooperation cannot be questioned. One needs to realize though that since the beginning of the war in Ukraine there is a significant backdrop in the process.<sup>17</sup>

The same is true for combating the proliferation of other weapons of mass destruction. Russia played a key role in arranging the destruction of the chemical weapons of the Assad-

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<sup>15</sup> S. de Galbert, op.cit.

<sup>16</sup> President of the Russian Federation, *The draft of the European Security Treaty*, 29 November, 2009, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/6152>

<sup>17</sup> For more details, see: D. Bartha – A. Péczeli, *Nuclear Arms Control – Implications from the Crisis in Ukraine*, NATO Defense College Research Paper No. 108, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=767>

regime in Syria in 2013-2014.<sup>18</sup> Besides, the disarmament of Russia's huge stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction inherited from the Soviet era, is still a common interest. In 2002 the G8 launched a 10-year-long project, called the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, aiming to prevent the spread of WMDs, the safe handling and dismantling of chemical weapons, decommissioned nuclear submarines in Russia, properly safeguarding nuclear and fissile material.<sup>19</sup> Though among the present circumstances starting another, similar program with Russia is only a distant possibility, this does not mean that the challenges listed in the original project would have all been fully resolved. Despite the present tensions, several joint, mutually beneficial anti-WMD cooperation projects are still going on, which need to be continued. There is still a lot to work to do on safeguarding WMD facilities and potentially dangerous sites and material in Russia, particularly taking into account the grave situation of the Russian budget.

Moreover, though it is arguable that in Ukraine Russia has been supporting terrorist groups as well, Moscow is still an important partner in the fight against terrorism, concerning particularly the need to fight radical Islamist terrorism, including the so-called Islamic State. This applies particularly to the exchange of intelligence information about persons suspected of maintaining connections with radical Islamist organizations, including former ISIS combatants, who are citizens of the EU or Russia. One needs to realize that Russia itself has also been seriously affected by terrorism, and Islamic State militants holding Russian citizenship pose a serious threat to the security of the Russian Federation. Hence, the Russian armed forces conduct actions in Syria against positions of the Islamic State because it is in Moscow's essential interest to fight this terrorist group. Besides, though it is not directly linked with terrorism, Russia is an impressively successful contributor<sup>20</sup> to the fight against international piracy as well<sup>21</sup>, particularly due to fearful reputation of the Russian navy<sup>22</sup>.

By putting aside the moral dimension of supporting the Assad-regime, it should be realized that Russia's actions in Syria are important, because they demonstrate that Moscow is not only willing, but also capable to provide substantial military assistance even to a geographically distant country, if its government requests Russia to do so. This capability of Russia might become particularly important in the light of the decreasing Allied presence in Afghanistan, and the subsequent worsening of the security situation due to the spread of radical Islamism in the Central Asian Post-Soviet republics.

By assessing Russia's increasing involvement in the civil war in Syria, one needs to realize that the interests of Moscow are not fully overlapping with the one of the West. By bombing practically all opposition groups (thus not only ISIS) most likely Russia intends to create such a binary situation, when the West could choose only between Assad and the ISIS. If

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<sup>18</sup> P. F. Walker, *Syrian Chemical Weapons Destruction: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead*, Arms Control Association, December 2014, [http://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/2014\\_12/Features/Syrian-Chemical-Weapons-Destruction-Taking-Stock-And-Looking-Ahead](http://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/2014_12/Features/Syrian-Chemical-Weapons-Destruction-Taking-Stock-And-Looking-Ahead)

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of State, *G8 Global Partnership*, <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/184759.htm>

<sup>20</sup> S. Saradzhyan, *The Dynamics of Russia's Response to the Piracy Threat*, Connections – The Quarterly Journal, Vol X, No. 3, Summer 2010, pp. 19-44, <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/16866/uploads>

<sup>21</sup> J. Helmer, *Oh Boy, Russian Navy Gives Hell to Somali Pirates*, Business Insider, 6 May, 2010, <http://www.businessinsider.com/russian-navy-attacks-somali-pirates-2010-5?IR=T>

<sup>22</sup> *Russian Navy 'sent Somali pirates to their death'*, The Week, 12 May 2010, <http://www.theweek.co.uk/politics/14701/russian-navy-%E2%80%98sent-somali-pirates-their-death%E2%80%99>



successful, they could hit two birds with one stone: their favored actor, Assad may stay in power, and ISIS could be defeated with the help of the West.

In addition to all these fields, affairs related to global climate change, as well as to the cooperation in the Arctic region constitute additional fields, in which both Russia and the West clearly need to cooperate, simply due to the sheer size and global nature of both issues.

All in all, it needs to be realized that despite the serious tensions related to Russia's intervention in Ukraine and the worsening of NATO-Russia and U.S.-Russia relations, cooperation with Moscow is still important in several issues of global security. At the same time, the West needs to be aware that in issues of joint interests Moscow's game is not necessarily the one of an honest broker. Instead, Russia is always pursuing exclusively its own agenda – in cooperation with the West, when interests overlap, but not otherwise.

## **CONCLUSIONS: THE NEED FOR RESILIENCE**

In the context described above, the upcoming NATO Summit in Warsaw shall not make a mistake in assessing Russia's real strength, as well as its real global significance in the post-Cold War order. We also need to decide in which policy fields and for what duration the cooperation with Russia is indispensable and keep on working together with Moscow in these areas. Besides, in the long term we should keep the door open for cooperation with Russia, had it returned to the framework of international law.

However, the West needs to show resolve in deterring Russia from making further steps in its revisionist policy at the expense of its Central and Eastern European NATO and EU-members. On the military level, reassurance measures need to be continued and persisting capability gaps have to be addressed efficiently, including the question of defense-spending in the Alliance, as well as the strategic and operational questions of defending the Baltic States, if necessary.

On the economic level, NATO-member countries need to remain persistent about linking the economic sanctions against Russia to the full implementation of the Minsk II agreement. This is the way to secure the stability of Ukraine, as well as to preserve the overall credibility of Western policy towards Russia

Regarding the Visegrad, Russian narrative and policy efforts aimed at dividing the V4 and distancing it from the West need to be resisted. Despite occasional intra-Visegrad disagreements over EU affairs, as well as bilateral and Russia-related matters, the four Visegrad countries have to firmly maintain their full commitment to the alliances they belong to.

All in all, the key challenge to NATO vis-à-vis Russia is twofold. First, NATO needs to increase resilience to Russia's assertive and divide-and-rule actions. As military force is an integral part of Russia's foreign and security policy toolbox, and will remain so in the coming future, neutralizing the possible military threat must remain on the top of our agenda. Countering information operations as well as subversion efforts also deserve high attention, and adequate resources.

Secondly, Moscow's intentions to present itself as an indispensable part of global security, have to be handled according to Russia's real significance. On the one hand, we need to cooperate with Russia where it is necessary, primarily in the field of nuclear threat reduction and in the fight against international terrorism, in line with our joint interests. On the other hand, we need to resist Moscow's efforts to link non-linked issues, thus demand concessions in such areas, where its actions violate the fundamental norms and interests of the Alliance.

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