

# How to Bury the Cold War

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Over the past two years, concerns about Europe's security have eased. This is due to the marked improvement in US-Russian relations that has followed from President Barack Obama's foreign policy "reset," as well as from Moscow's outreach to the West as it searches for resources to help it achieve a technological modernization. The Georgia war of 2008 is now a distant memory. So too, with NATO's enlargement on hold, are tensions between Moscow and Kiev.

Yet the fundamental issue that almost led to collision in Europe's east two years ago is still unresolved: A number of countries on the continent, including Georgia, Ukraine, and Russia, are not part of any meaningful European security system.

The idea that such a system could be built by enlarging NATO and the European Union all the way to the Russian border, while giving Moscow the sop of a special partnership with the alliance and union, worked up to a point. But 2008 demonstrated that the safe limits of NATO's eastern expansion had been reached.

An alternative system proposed in 2009 by Russian President Dmitri Medvedev—a League of Nations-type collective security arrangement—is obviously unworkable. It would attempt to use simple legalistic instruments to resolve deep-seated political, strategic, psychological, and values-based differences. Before Europe's security architecture can be redesigned, the foundation of the future edifice must be built.

## THE END OF BALANCING

The immediate objective should not be fitting Russia into NATO. That is a great idea whose time has passed—or not arrived yet. Rather, the goal should be to remove from the strategic equation the use of military force between Russia and its neighbors, and between Russia and the United

States or NATO. To put it differently, military balance must be replaced with mutual accommodation, restraint, and, increasingly, trust.

This, if achieved, would effectively extend to the entire European continent the zone of stable peace that has existed in North America and Western Europe since the 1950s, and that has recently come to include Central Europe. The Balkans, the Caucasus, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Kazakhstan, and Russia would all be part of a common security community with NATO member states.

This is not a pipe dream. Two principal factors currently inform Moscow's security policy. The first is the country's inability to keep the balance with the United States and NATO, even as Russia faces real security threats along its southern facade and contends with strategic uncertainties in the east. The second is the Kremlin leadership's belief that the nation's international status and indeed its future depend on the ability to modernize its economy and society. A companion belief is that Russia will not be able to modernize on its own. It has to reach out for external resources, especially from Europe and North America.

To be sure, it would be wrong to mistake Moscow's attitude about modernization for a readiness to "bandwagon" with the United States. Russia will continue to insist on strategic independence. The country's political system will eventually evolve, but not because of a grand bargain with the West. Russia's social system, as well as its system of values, will take a long time to modernize. Globalization, and particularly direct contacts with modern European societies, will play a paramount role in Russia's transformation, but the transformation will occur only gradually.

At this point, then, it is best for the West to focus on strategic accommodation with Moscow, and particularly on demilitarizing Russia's relations with its neighbors and with the West.

The way forward, however, does not lie in arms control. Arms control in fact betrays a fixation on balance and thus only reconfirms an obsolete rela-

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tionship between Russia and the West. To really change the relationship, one needs to address two central issues that underlie Europe's security in the early twenty-first century.

The first is Russia's obsession with the aims of American power, specifically translated into concerns over NATO's eastern enlargement, US missile and troop deployments, and American efforts in democracy promotion. The second is an obsession with Moscow's designs on the part of Russia's neighbors, who perceive a desire to bring them back into the Russian sphere of influence.

## PARALLEL LEADERSHIP

On the issue of Russia's obsession with US power, a game-changing innovation would be a US/NATO effort to construct with Russia a jointly coordinated missile defense system. In terms of demilitarization, this would be the functional equivalent of Russian membership in NATO. Regarding regional suspicion of the Kremlin's motives, a breakthrough could come if Moscow made a dedicated effort to fully normalize relations not only with Poland—the key country—but also with the Baltic states. Thus, the United States and Russia should both lead, on parallel tracks.

Russia's interests in such an arrangement are clear. Europe, meanwhile—east as well as west—would be free from the threat of war, with its energy security assured and “frozen” conflicts either resolved or on the way to resolution. Washington would benefit in three ways: one, by consolidating the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic region; two, by replacing residual great-power competition with real partnership; and three, by establishing closer US-Russian collaboration across a range of issues, from nuclear proliferation to Asian security to global governance.

Two decades after the end of the cold war and the collapse of the communist system it is time that security in the Euro-Atlantic region finally be consolidated. In order to demilitarize international relations in Europe, the strategic, political, and psychological legacy of the cold war must be dismantled and new cooperative strategic ties forged. This ultimately means fully renouncing lingering enemy images. National military guidelines should be purged of notions that the United States

and Russia might again become adversaries. This would have clear and massive implications for contingency planning, force deployment, exercise patterns, and eventually for nuclear deterrence strategies and postures.

The way forward leads through unilateral and mutual strategic restraint, and gradually replacing balancing with transparency and cooperation. Mutual accommodation would mean allowing for strategic self-determination in countries such as Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and Azerbaijan. This is not impossible: Kiev now talks about a non-bloc status for Ukraine; Chisinau, about national reintegration and neutrality. Tbilisi and Baku, of course, need to solve currently “frozen” conflicts before determining their security status. Solving the frozen conflicts, starting with the easiest in Transnistria and ultimately addressing the more difficult ones in the South Caucasus, would create momentum for eschewing archaic strategic rivalry.

Russia faces a mammoth task of domestic transformation, societal and political, as well as economic and technological. Security reform is very much a part of this. Whether Russia is able to modernize at this stage will be crucial for the purposes of strengthening the nascent security community in the Euro-Atlantic, and guaranteeing that it will not collapse. Material and mental changes in Russia are bound to lead to changes in the way the country is perceived elsewhere in Europe and in North America. However, de-demonizing Russia is a favor other countries could and should do for themselves.

We need to think in new terms. Cold war and “great game” language throws countries back by reviving ghosts from the past. We need to come up with new semantics reflecting the realities of the twenty-first century, and develop a new narrative that allows advancement to a new identity and new relations. This is, in fact, precisely what happened between the United States and Great Britain at the turn of the twentieth century; between Germany and France after World War II; and between Western and Central Europe after the cold war. The task at hand now is to finish the job of making Europe whole at last—by extending the security community to the east of the continent, without exception. ■

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