

Post-Conflict Options for European Security and Arms Control

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The Knight at the Crossroads

This painting of Victor Vasnetsov is a version of the Russian legend. The artist depicts the knight who is reading his fate written on a stone marker: “If you go straight ahead, there will be no life; there is no way forward for he who travels past, walkspastorfliespast.” This version perfectly fits into the dark picture of our reality: it can be interpreted as a warning against nuclear escalation: “Don’t cross the line, there will be no life!”



The lecture includes three focal points:

- (1) the root causes of today's unprecedented crisis;
- (2) the post-conflict scenarios of European security;
- (3) the impact of the Ukrainian conflict on arms control and related issues

How did we find ourselves in today's unprecedented crisis?

- CSCE/OSCE was a collective response to the needs of the Cold War, primarily **the legitimization of post-war order, first of all, of the post-world borders in Europe.**
- The CSCE turned out to be a great political and diplomatic success: it went beyond the recognition of the post-war order in Europe and introduced the common notion of indivisible European security and common rules of behaviour (the **Helsinki Decalogue**).
- The Helsinki process reached its climax in 1990 at the Paris summit in 1990. It marked the formal end of the Cold War in Europe with its pivotal **Charter of Paris for a New Europe** and played a crucial role in **CFE Treaty**.



The hidden side of the Paris summit:
“CSCE presents a major threat to NATO,”
which provided a strategic link between the US and Europe.

Bipolarity has not been replaced by New world order

- In 1991 the old world order collapsed but the new one did not arise.
- The West considered itself the winner in the Cold War, and did not see any reason to change anything. Such a conviction resulted in: NATO-isation of European security, marginalisation of the OSCE/Russia; the Russia-West rivalry in the post-Soviet space; and eventually the deepest crisis in the Russia-West relations.
- The Ukrainian conflict can be viewed as a creation of the Russia-West conflicting views about security arrangements in Europe. But also - as a turbulent transition to a new world order.
- The outcome of the Ukrainian conflict will crucially determine the nature of this order.

Post-conflict scenarios

Two scenarios should be excluded from the analysis:

(1) Nuclear escalation of the conflict. It is realistic, but it will make discussions about the future of European security irrelevant;

(2) Final Peace in Ukraine, because it is unrealistic. There are few examples of Final Peace, which requires full reconciliation between former opponents. It is essentially the same as the concept of Kant's "Perpetual Peace".

Immanuel Kant: **"No treaty of peace shall be held valid in which there is tacitly reserved matter for a future war,"** explaining that such a pact is merely a truce, not true peace. (*Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* 1795)



Post-Conflict Options

- Whatever the outcome of the Russian special military operation in Ukraine, Europe is entering a new cold war. Hence there is only one scenario on the table: a new division of Europe and Ukraine and a new cold war or confrontation.
- A new block confrontation will be significantly different from the past, since the configuration of the blocks will be different.
- Within the confrontational scenario, both hardline and softer options are possible. A peace treaty is not a panacea but it is better than a frozen conflict.
- Two thorny questions are to be resolved: security guarantees to Ukraine and territories.

Post-Conflict Options

- **Donald Trump** wants to end the war as soon as possible. **His/ Russian position: a package deal -first a peace treaty, then a ceasefire agreement .**
- **Europeans: ceasefire must precede peace talks.** They are ready to lead a multinational force (coalition of willing) in Ukraine “to assist in the regeneration of Ukraine's forces, in securing Ukraine's skies, and in supporting safer seas, including through operating inside Ukraine”. The Paris Declaration on Security Guarantees for a solid and lasting peace in Ukraine” offers a number of measures but the format and timetable are not clear yet.
- **Kyiv wants a "clear understanding of security guarantees"** before it could make any decisions about other contentious issues, namely territories.
- Approaches to security guarantees for Ukraine are in flux. (Initially: the German model, the Israel model, the Cyprus model, the South Korea model. Now: the coalition of willing).
- The **Donbas region remains a major sticking point in peace negotiations.** Its western part, the so called fortress belt, is considered vital to Kyiv's defence of the rest of Ukraine.

Two versions of the post-conflict Cold war scenario

The worst option

- The block confrontation;
- Collapse of the arms control system;
- Arms race;
- Nuclear proliferation;
- Demise of the OCSE;
- New conflicts;
- Nuclear escalation threat

More optimistic version

- The peace treaty in Ukraine;
- Russia and the West achieve a peaceful coexistence and limited cooperation on European security, with the OSCE again adopting an inclusive nature and framework;
- Eventually a European forum would be held to determine a new order for Europe and security guarantees for Ukraine and the other East European countries

The Impact of the Ukrainian Conflict on Deterrence, Arms Control and ENDT



The Ukrainian conflict has strongly affected the concept of deterrence increasing reliance on nuclear weapons, and severely damaged arms control suspending U.S.-Russia dialogue, enhancing militarisation and innovation in defense tech.

More specifically about proliferation and deterrence

Disappointment in ensuring security without nuclear weapons has become the main driver for nuclear proliferation.

Deterrence has lost its genuine meaning to prevent a nuclear war and conventional aggression

Erosion of nuclear taboos.

The good news is that nuclear deterrence is still working, the bad news is that it is very fragile.



The Ukrainian conflict has severely damaged the global arms control framework

- **Erosion of Treaties:** In 2023, Russia and the United States suspended their participation in New START, on-site inspections and data exchange. The collapse of the conventional arms control system in Europe, which was regulated by three important agreements – the CFE Treaty/Adapted CFE Treaty, the Vienna Document, and the Open Skies Treaty.
- **Suspended dialogue:** With the Russia-U.S. tensions over Ukraine neither side is showing any sign of quickly resuming bilateral contact over strategic stability issues.
- **Increased importance of nuclear weapons:** Ukraine's experience has underscored the risks of disarmament.
- **Reduced transparency**

Emerging and New Disruptive Technologies

AI, space based capabilities, cyber and drones widely used in the Ukrainian conflict are creating new threats while highlighting arms control limits:

-ENDT are destabilizing factor for nuclear deterrence. They complicate strategic stability by increasing escalation risks, blurring lines between conventional and nuclear weapons;

-ENDT are fundamentally software driven. Hence they challenge the very core of traditional arms control based on reductions of hardware as well as on verification ;

-The primary goal with regard to ENDT is understanding how to manage these innovations to maintain deterrence and prevent great power war;

-True drones have proved to be central in the Ukrainian conflict, but any conflict is unique. Even in the current conflict they are not to shape its fate.



Towards New World Order

A new dialogue on arms control requires a benign international environment based on commonly recognised rules of behaviour in the international relations. The transition to the new world order will depend on the outcome of the Ukrainian conflict. Hopefully it will be more stable than the current protracted transition.

“A stable world order is a rare thing. When one does arise, it tends to come after a great convulsion that creates both the conditions and the desire for something new. It requires a stable distribution of power and broad acceptance of the rules that govern the conduct of international relations”. (Richard Haass “How a World Order Ends”).

