

**STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN EUROPE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGIC STABILITY**

**Dr. Schuyler Foerster
Principal, CGST Solutions**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study focuses on the rapidly changing strategic environment in Europe and seeks to identify the critical variables that would define a 21st century model of strategic stability in Europe. It concludes, first, that strategic stability in Europe cannot be taken for granted and, second, it will require a comprehensive political, economic, social, diplomatic, and military strategy by the United States and its European Allies designed to achieve that end.

Traditional notions of strategic stability in Europe focused on the post-World War II bilateral, bloc-to-bloc structure defined by NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In its military dimension, the post-Cold War model still bears many of the hallmarks of that legacy. However, that narrower Cold War model presumed an over-arching geopolitical stability, which is now being challenged on at least four fronts:

- First, Russia has, especially within the past decade, pushed back, notably in Georgia and Ukraine, and asserted its right to a sphere of influence on which the West is seen to be encroaching. Putin's regime protests the incursion of "Western" institutions and values into the former Soviet space and views this as a direct threat to Russian national interests.
- Second, while Russian military capabilities have been enhanced in ways that are themselves potentially destabilizing, Russia's political operations have targeted—with alarming effectiveness and less risk—the resilience of Western democratic institutions.
- Third, the refugee crisis and broader debates about immigration in European societies have engendered a rise of nationalism and "nativism," which—on a societal level—runs counter to the integrationist ethos of the "European project" and—on a policy level—fuels the political appeal of efforts to regain national sovereignty at the expense of European cooperation, for which "Brexit" is but one example.
- Fourth, during the tenure of this research effort, the Trump Administration's equivocation regarding the United States' commitment to transatlantic security has raised serious doubts among European Allies about the durability of that commitment, which only exacerbates already centrifugal forces that challenge Alliance cohesion.

Hence, understanding the requirements for "strategic stability" in Europe going forward must take into account domestic and regional developments that go beyond the simpler model of a military relationship between Russia and a cohesive Western block. Within the EU, economic crises and rising nationalism, fueled by immigration fears, have signaled the potential of disintegration. In NATO, growing fears not only of Russia but of terrorism and migrant flows from the Middle East and Africa have created competing strategic visions about both the threats to which NATO should attend and the means by which NATO should address those threats.

In short, European stability—long seen as the product of quintessentially European and transatlantic institutions of cooperation and integration—is now threatened not only by new and reemerging threats but also by the prospect of disintegration within its very institutions. To the extent that institutions such as NATO and the EU endure, they will not be the same. If they are to endure, they must adapt to a changing strategic environment, with a clear understanding of what kind of "stable" world they seek.

Defining Strategic Stability for the 21st Century

Almost three decades ago, colleagues of mine and I defined stability as “resistance to sudden change, such that a security relationship is unlikely to shift quickly from peace to war even under pressure of a crisis. It does not connote absence of change, only that, to the extent possible, change will be measured and deliberate, evolutionary, predictable, and manageable.”¹

Strategic stability, therefore, is not a static condition, but a relativist, dynamic, and interactive condition in an environment characterized by persistent threat. This definition suggests three further characteristics:

- First, stability does not require an absence of threat, only that the threat does not alter its form or character precipitously.
- Second, an increasing security threat is not inevitably a threat to the stability of the relationship: threats to security can increase, but they could do so in an evolutionary way, and those who are the object of that threat would have the opportunity to observe that increasing threat and react appropriately and in an evolutionary fashion.
- Third, evolutionary changes within a stable relationship can develop momentum and take on a revolutionary character: as reaction time decreases, a stable relationship can become unstable. Similarly, action without an appropriate countervailing reaction can turn a stable security relationship into an unstable one.

The context for this definition, at the time, was a study outlining a conceptual approach for conventional arms control in Europe, just as the Cold War was ending, the Berlin Wall had come down, and NATO and the then-Warsaw Pact were gathering in Vienna to launch negotiations on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). At that time, we already had the benefit of over a quarter century of thinking about the nature of strategic stability as it related to nuclear deterrence and had been applied in various strategic nuclear arms control agreements. That conceptual foundation—articulated most famously by Thomas Schelling and Morton Halperin almost 50 years ago—held that arms control was an important complement to policies regarding one’s own force posture. By virtue of the nature of nuclear weapons, avoidance of catastrophic war was an area in which otherwise prospective enemies could share a critical common interest.²

[T]he present study is concerned less with reducing national capabilities for destruction in the event of war than in reducing the incentives that may lead to war or that may cause war to be the more destructive in the event it occurs.

That model persisted throughout the Cold War, focusing largely on the nuclear relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. For the most part, decisions on weapons systems

¹ Schuyler Foerster, William A. Barry III, William R. Clontz, Harold F. Lynch, Jr., *Defining Stability: Conventional Arms Control in a Changing Europe* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 5-6.

² Thomas C. Schelling & Morton H. Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control* (New York: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1985, reprinted from the 1961 original), p. 3 (*emphasis in the original*). See also Schelling’s *The Strategy of Conflict* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), which developed the complementary concept of “crisis stability” based on the reciprocal fear of surprise attack. In addition, Hedley Bull’s *The Control of the Arms Race: Disarmament and Arms Control in the Missile Age* (New York: Praeger, 1965) outlined the critical distinction between “arms control” and “disarmament.”

development, force employment, and arms control policy were designed to reduce the incentive for any party to strike preemptively. As Schelling later recalled, “We all knew what we meant by ‘stability.’ We usually called it ‘stability of deterrence, not ‘strategic stability,’ but we knew we did not want deterrence to be too ‘delicate,’ and we knew that stability was a mutual goal.”³

As the Cold War ended, this model of strategic stability found further expression in strategic arms control reductions, in CFE ceilings on the numbers and deployments of conventional weapons systems that would otherwise enable a preemptive combined arms offensive, and in a wide variety of confidence building measures designed to provide significant transparency in military force deployments and readiness.

Over the next two decades, the question of what constituted strategic stability lost any urgency as a policy imperative. Russia’s economic weakness following the collapse of the Soviet Union essentially suspended its military recovery and modernization until well into the first decade of the 21st century. NATO’s first post-Cold War Strategic Concept in 1991 acknowledged that the “threat of a simultaneous, full-scale attack on all of NATO’s European fronts has effectively been removed.”⁴ NATO’s 1999 Strategic Concept repeated the 1991 language that the fundamental purpose of NATO’s nuclear forces was “political” and that the circumstances in which NATO might have to contemplate their use were “extremely remote.”⁵ That document highlighted Russia’s “unique role in Euro-Atlantic security” and anticipated that NATO and Russia “will give concrete substance to their cooperation.”⁶

By 2010, simmering tensions with Russia over the Balkans, persistent Russian complaints about NATO enlargement, Russia’s 2007 cyber attack in Estonia, and Russia’s 2008 invasion and occupation of parts of Georgia had all given reason to reconsider the prospect of substantial cooperation between NATO and Russia. Yet NATO’s 2010 Strategic Concept emphasized a global security threat more focused on terrorism, regional conflict—primarily in the Middle East and South Asia, including NATO operations in Afghanistan—and the proliferation of ballistic missiles, nuclear weapons, and other means of mass destruction. The document highlighted the general volatility of the global security environment and stressed NATO’s role in projecting stability through Alliance cohesion and the continued presence of NATO military forces in Europe and in crisis management operations abroad. The document declined to identify any adversary, affirmed “NATO’s resolve if the security of any of its members were to be threatened,” dropped the 1991 and 1999 disclaimers that “the fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces of the Allies is political,” but repeated earlier formulations that the circumstances under which NATO might contemplate use of nuclear weapons were “extremely remote.”⁷

³ Thomas C. Schelling, “Foreword,” in Eldridge A. Colby & Michael S. Gerson (eds), *Strategic Stability: Contending Interpretations* (Carlisle PA: Strategic Studies Institute & U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), p. vii.

⁴ *NATO’s New Strategic Concept (1991)*, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_23847.htm, para. 7.

⁵ Compare *NATO’s New Strategic Concept (1991)*, paras. 54 & 56, with *The Alliance’s Strategic Concept (1999)*, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm, paras. 62 & 64.

⁶ *The Alliance’s Strategic Concept (1999)*, para. 36.

⁷ *Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon, 19 November 2010*, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm, paras. 16 & 17.

NATO's 2012 Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR),⁸ commissioned by the 2010 Lisbon Summit, likewise described an “unpredictable security environment,” shaped by regional conflicts fueled by states and nonstate actors, terrorism, piracy, globalization, cyber threats, challenges to energy security, new weapons technologies, and the proliferation of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction. Despite this growing list of strategic threats and sources of instability, the DDPR reaffirmed the importance of Alliance cohesion and NATO's core missions of collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security, but it stopped short of framing a concrete agenda for how to cope with these new forms of global instability.

In sum, during the two decades following the end of the Cold War, traditional notions of strategic stability—which were centered on nuclear weapons and the threat of surprise attack—largely disappeared. At the same time, it was becoming clear that the post-Cold War security environment was especially volatile, overshadowing whatever notional stability might have persisted within the seemingly less relevant East-West strategic military relationship.

Significantly, the Cold War world had been a largely stable geopolitical environment between two power blocs, each able to destroy the other, but in which both the U.S. and the Soviet Union had an incentive to preserve a level of stability in their nuclear and broader military relationship. In that context, the concept of “strategic stability” could be focused on nuclear—and, later, conventional—weapons; could be operationalized within that context; and could inform concrete policy decisions about weapons systems, force deployments, and cooperative restraints through arms control and transparency measures.

In the first decade of the 21st century, however, NATO increasingly framed “stability” in the context of a broader geopolitical environment in which new actors, new power dynamics, new technologies, and new threats were almost uniformly viewed as disruptive to an established global order. There is no evidence, however, that NATO or its member nations understood how stability could be operationalized in this broader strategic context.

In his foreword to an important 2013 study on strategic stability, Schelling conceded that, since the Cold War, the world had become “so much more complex ... so much changed, so much more complicated, so multivariate, so unpredictable, involving so many nations and cultures and languages in nuclear relationships, many of them asymmetric.” Schelling's lament betrayed a focus that remained—not inappropriately—on nuclear relationships: “it is difficult to know ... what ‘stable deterrence’ is supposed to deter in a world of proliferated weapons.”⁹

That 2013 study highlighted a debate about how one should even view strategic stability in this new geopolitical context. Most authors stressed the need to focus on relationships between nuclear powers. James Acton, for example, complained that the words “strategic stability” implied a pretentiously broad concept that lacked real utility, preferring to translate the words as “deterrence stability,” to be “modestly applied” as “one—and not the only—criterion against which to assess nuclear policy.”¹⁰

⁸ Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (2012), www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm.

⁹ Thomas C. Schelling, “Foreword,” in Eldridge A. Colby & Michael S. Gerson (eds), *Strategic Stability: Contending Interpretations* (Carlisle PA: Strategic Studies Institute & U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), p. vii.

¹⁰ James M. Acton, “Reclaiming Strategic Stability,” in Colby & Gerson, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

In that same volume, however, C. Dale Walton and Colin Gray distinguished between a narrower “weapons-oriented” and a broader “holistic” conception of strategic stability.¹¹

While the material military balance may be an important—sometimes even the most important—factor in keeping the peace between two particular states, context is sovereign. It is only when one considers weaponry in its broader political context that one can assess its role in maintaining strategic stability accurately.

Whereas some may prefer to confine “strategic stability” to a narrower context of military (largely nuclear) relationships, there is a risk that addressing instability in a broader geopolitical context may be overlooked. The former is, to be sure, easier to operationalize. But it may be also fall victim to the siren call of familiarity: addressing familiar problems with familiar solutions that fail to address the more compelling sources of strategic instability. As Walton and Gray argued, “strategic instability is a genuine circumstance, but a relative one.”¹²

The significance of this distinction became even more apparent in the wake of the Ukraine crisis, which began to brew in 2013 and boiled over in 2014, as Russia annexed Crimea and became actively engaged militarily in securing, with Ukrainian separatists, a pro-Russian stronghold in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. In 2014, Russia also escalated tensions with NATO countries with a threefold increase in Russian military air activity in European airspace, over the North, Baltic, and Black Seas, and over the North Atlantic Ocean, as well as increased Russian air and naval activity along the U.S. Atlantic and Pacific coasts and in the Caribbean.¹³

Analyses of Russia’s activities highlighted a strategy often characterized as “hybrid warfare”¹⁴ While there is no agreed definition of this concept—or even consensus on the utility of that phrase—we can identify three core ideas to underscore its significance:

- First, Russian strategy has consistently been aimed at achieving a desired political reality, in which military means are one—but only one—means to that end.¹⁵
- Second, new technologies have enabled effective ways of conducting information warfare, attacking critical infrastructure, and otherwise shaping a political environment to one’s advantage, without resort to direct military force.

¹¹ C. Dale Walton & Colin S. Gray, “The Geopolitics of Strategic Stability: Looking Beyond Cold Warriors and Nuclear Weapons, in Colby & Gerson, *op. cit.*, p. 85. *Emphasis in the original.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹³ “NATO Intercepts 19 Russian Military Planes in 1 Day,” ABC News, October 29, 2014, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/nato-intercepts-19-russian-military-planes-day/story?id=26552875>. See also “US and Russia in Danger of Returning to Era of Nuclear Rivalry,” *Guardian*, January 4, 2015, www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/04/us-russia-era-nuclear-rivalry.

¹⁴ See, among others, Maria, Snegovaya, *Putin’s Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia’s Hybrid Warfare*, Institute for the Study of War, Russia Report I, September 2015, www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Report%201%20Putin%27s%20Information%20Warfare%20in%20Ukraine-%20Soviet%20Origins%20of%20Russias%20Hybrid%20Warfare.pdf; Damien Van Puyvelde, “Hybrid war—does it even exist?” *NATO Review*, www.nato.int/docu/review/2015/also-in-2015/hybrid-modern-future-warfare-russia-ukraine/en/index.htm; Michael Cecire, “Russia’s Art of War: State Branding by Other Means, 7 February 2017, *Foreign Affairs*, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2017-02-07/russias-art-war.

¹⁵ For various reasons, Russia has consistently been a good student of Clausewitz—better than the West.

- Third, while military force may serve as an important backstop as well as an instrument of political intimidation, so-called “hybrid warfare” measures allow Russia (and others) to advance its political goals while remaining under a threshold that might trigger a consensus NATO decision to invoke the collective defense commitment in Article 5.¹⁶

To be fair, NATO has *begun* to recognize a more “holistic” concept of strategic stability, even if it has not yet come to terms with how to address all of the ways in which strategic stability can be threatened. Strategic stability is a global and multifaceted phenomenon. Even in its regional context—the focus of this study—NATO’s security relationship with Russia is multidimensional. ***Today, Europe faces existential threats that may not involve the use of military force. Europe’s security institutions—including but not exclusively NATO—need to operationalize strategies to address these threats in a realistic and sustainable way.***

This is not to diminish the importance of 21st century nuclear relationships: as in the second half of the 20th century, these weapons pose a real existential threat to the United States and our Allies. Moreover, there is a long menu of prospective actions the U.S. could pursue in its relations with Russia and China, among others, to promote strategic stability in the nuclear domain.¹⁷ But the prospects for success in these important but more narrow endeavors hinge on a broader set of factors—political, economic, social, technological—that will shape the relative stability of the relationship. We must view strategic stability in a more comprehensive fashion, in which all of these facets—including the strategic military relationship—are interconnected.

The remainder of this study seeks to identify the sources of strategic stability in Europe historically, the ways in which that stability is threatened today, and how the West¹⁸ can begin to address those threats in its own strategic response.

Strategic Stability and Instability in Europe: Lessons from History

It is in the nature of international politics that some historical periods manifest relative strategic stability, whereas others demonstrate a greater tendency to degenerate into violent conflict. This is clearly the case in Europe, which has witnessed cycles of relative equilibrium alternating with spasms of extreme violence. While each of these cycles is unique, with its own historical context, one can nonetheless discern certain conditions that have made the international system more prone to violence, as well as conditions that have enabled the system to restore at least relative strategic stability.

Setting aside recurring monarchical rivalries and lesser territorial conflicts, one can identify four major periods over the past 500 years in which Europe fell victim to systemic breakdown

¹⁶ The NATO Treaty’s core Article 5 states that “an *armed* attack against one or more of them ... shall be considered an attack against them all” (*emphasis added*). At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO acknowledged that “armed attack” in this context could include a cyber attack. See Wales Summit Declaration, 5 September 2014, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm#cyber, para. 72.

¹⁷ See, for example, Brad Roberts (2017), Strategic Stability Under Obama and Trump, *Survival*, 59:4, 47-74, DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2017.1349780, and Christopher S. Chivvis, Andrew Radin, Dara Massicot, & Clinton Bruce Reach, *Perspective: Strengthening Strategic Stability with Russia* (Santa Monica CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE234.html.

¹⁸ Because this analysis emphasizes a more comprehensive approach to security and strategic stability, I will refer to “the West” when the intention is to capture not just NATO but also the EU, both as institutional actors in their own right and with reference to their respective memberships.

and, relative to the time, cataclysmic violence. Each of these periods culminated in a multinational attempt to create the conditions for strategic stability in Europe, with mixed results:

- During the 16th and 17th centuries, Europe was convulsed by protracted and brutal religious conflict, culminating in the Thirty Years War. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) established the foundation for the modern state system and created a set of norms that—while by no means ending conflict—created a regional stability that withstood systemic challenges by major powers for over a century.
- The beginning of the French Revolution (1789) led to the collapse of France’s *ancien régime*, followed by a period of violent anarchy from which Napoleon emerged as an emperor with a mission to conquer Europe. Following Napoleon’s defeat, the Congress of Vienna (1815) established a new political order that lasted for much of the 19th century, albeit with the seeds of its own later destruction.
- The emergence of a unified German state (and to a lesser extent a unified Italian state) in 1871 following France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War marked a significant shift in the balance of power in Europe. A climate of competition and mistrust among major powers helped create the conditions for World War I. The Paris Peace Conference (1919) had the task of managing the disintegration of four European empires—Austro-Hungarian, Prussian, Russian, and Ottoman—while the new Soviet Union established itself as a new revolutionary regime and the United States retreated into isolation.
- Within 20 years of the Paris Peace Conference, global economic depression and the rise of fascism led directly to World War II. The San Francisco Conference (1945) gave birth to the United Nations, but the emerging bipolar Cold War stalemate proved to be the defining feature of the international order for almost a half century.

Despite the span of centuries and a myriad of unique circumstances that might cast a shadow over any broad generalization, there are certain common elements from each of these periods of extreme political violence that bear on our understanding of whether attempts to create stability in their aftermath might be sustainable.¹⁹

First, each of these conflicts was fueled by revolutionary ideas that challenged the legitimacy of the existing order. The normal course of medieval rivalries took on a whole new flavor when the Protestant Reformation challenged the very legitimacy of the Catholic Church and the

¹⁹ This analysis is drawn from a vast literature that cannot be fully cited here. Of particular relevance are E. H. Carr, *The Twenty-Years Crisis, 1919-1939* (London: Palgrave, 1981); Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005); Michael Howard, *War in European History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976); Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 1995); John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Robert Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts* (New York: Random House, 2012); Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812-22* (New York: Friedland Books, 1957); Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014); Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003); Margaret MacMillan, *The War that Ended Peace: The Road to 1914* (New York: Random House, 2013); Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Macmillan, 1963); Barbara Tuchman, *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War: 1890-1914* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (New York: New York Review Books, 2005, first published 1938).

monarchies it sustained. The mantra of the French Revolution—*liberté, égalité, fraternité*—was catalyzed by the excesses of Louis XIV and the example of the American Revolution, but it also reflected an inheritance from over a century of liberal ideas about human rights and the necessity of limiting the powers of government. The 19th century stew of industrialization, nationalism, and communism all rejected the model of absolutist monarchies that had been the staple of European governance for centuries, and it arguably took two world wars before one could seek to establish, even tentatively, an international order based on a different set of norms.

Secondly, technological advances in these periods offered new weapons with which militaries would fight, new domains (including societal) in which war could be waged, and new instruments of communication and political influence with which societies could be engaged. Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517) were reproduced with relatively new printing technology and rapidly distributed throughout Europe. Napoleon's army would not have been as effective without conscription of civilians, which brought not only mass to the battlefield, but also a sense of national association. Over the centuries, ever-accelerating advances in military technology have put a premium on firepower, given advantage to the attacker who could mobilize and coordinate offensive weapons and formations, created weapons of mass destruction, and introduced precision strike capabilities in all domains of warfare, now including space and cyberspace.

In short, when forces believe the existing order no longer serves their interests, when they are able to mobilize the instruments that would give them advantage in battle, and when they can envision—whether rationally or not—a political outcome that is achievable and worth the risk, then the system has repeatedly proven itself unstable and prone to violent conflict.

So, to what does one attribute the relative success of efforts to bring to closure each of the violent periods? The first and obvious reason that wars end is that one side is defeated, thereby allowing (and obliging) the victors to reshape the system in their interests. In each of these cases, the survivors were exhausted by the violence and shared, at a minimum, an interest in ensuring that they not be drawn again into such violence, at least not unless it was on their terms.

The Peace of Westphalia is commonly viewed as the origin of the modern state system, with two principles that were key to post-conflict stabilization. The core concept of state sovereignty—affirming that the sovereign has exclusive authority within the territory of a state—has a corollary principle that states do not interfere in another state's sovereign affairs. Conflict could continue, for example, after 1648 in England's Civil War, as long as it was confined to England's borders. What was not acceptable was for revolutionary (or counter-revolutionary) confessional ideas to justify violence against the people of another sovereign state.

The principle of non-interference and respect for others' sovereignty did not, however, command the respect of revolutionary ideologies. Liberalism, Marxist class warfare, fascism, and anarchistic ideologies in the 19th and 20th centuries rejected existing political and economic governing structures. Likewise, nationalist impulses tended to be at odds with existing state structures, either because nations were struggling against established authorities to become unified nation-states (*e.g.*, Germany and Italy), or because nationalities were more often than not subjects of a multiethnic empire that did not recognize their rights. In the 19th century, imperial powers shared a common interest in preserving the system and blocking these challenges to their

rule, most of which erupted in the revolutions of 1848. These revolutions were put down, restoring a temporary equilibrium to the system, but none of their driving ideas were put to rest.

The second Westphalian principle was balance of power, reflecting an understanding among major powers that, first, no state should seek to dominate the others, and, second, an attempt by one state to dominate the system should be met by a defensive coalition of other states to block it. This principle prevented major war in Europe until Napoleon launched his unsuccessful attempt to dominate all of Europe; it was then reaffirmed by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. It lasted for another half-century, but the creation of a unified German state signaled, to some, the end of balance of power as a principle that could be relied upon to preserve the peace.²⁰

Not a single principle in the management of our foreign affairs, accepted by all statesmen for guidance up to six months ago, any longer exists. There is not a diplomatic tradition that has not been swept away. ... The balance of power has been completely destroyed.

To some extent, the balance of power in Europe that followed the Peace of Westphalia and, later, the Congress of Vienna relied on geography and the distractions of global enterprise. Until German unification, major powers in Europe surrounded a weak and fragmented center. Given the technologies of the day, it was impractical to wage total war against other major powers, to which Napoleon's defeat attests. But major powers could wage war with each other outside Europe, whether in North America, Africa, or on the fringes of the Russian or Ottoman Empires.

The 20th century, however, saw total war come to the European continent with a vengeance. The 19th century balance of power had been sustained by states and empires largely dedicated to preserving a system of absolutist governance. This blinded their ability to adapt to—or coopt—the ideological challenges facing them. In addition, the absence of major conflict during that period seduced political leaders to believe that war could easily be avoided. In the end, as historians have noted, Europe “sleepwalked” into World War I in what they imagined was “a controlled game of bluff and counter-bluff.”²¹ It was not inevitable.

World War I ushered in a century where the U.S.—already a global power—became the ultimate “balancer,” as long as Washington agreed to be engaged. Every other major power, whether victor or vanquished, had been devastated by war. Yet, the U.S. withdrew after 1919, and none of the new League of Nations’ “great powers” had the will or the capacity to enforce international norms or maintain order in the chaos that followed.²² Without any serious credible forces to defend the post-1919 order, Europe in the 1930s was ripe for exploitation by powers intent on revising that order to suit their expansionist purposes. In that regard, even fascism and communism could find common cause, at least until they turned on each other in 1941.

In retrospect, what had changed over the centuries was not that states had suddenly become predatory. Shifting borders had always been a feature of European politics, with states periodically being dissected if not totally digested, and peoples of various ethnicities and

²⁰ British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, in a speech on 9 February 1871, quoted in William Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), pp. 13-14.

²¹ MacMillan, *The War that Ended Peace*, *op.cit.*, p. xxvii.

²² One exception to U.S. withdrawal was the decision to rescue the German economy from its total collapse in 1923, which set Germany on a road to stable recovery and a parliamentary democracy until the Great Depression created a new round of chaos and set the stage for Hitler's return.

religions relocated at the whim of their rulers. What changed was the human and material cost of these actions. *War in Europe had become an existential danger to both governments and societies and not just some remote or mercenary enterprise for the glory of crown and country.*

For many in Europe, war was seen as an existential danger even before the nuclear age. French Premier Henri Queuille warned in 1947 that it was no longer practical to wait for the U.S. to liberate a conquered Europe: “the next time, you would probably be liberating a corpse.”²³ A world in which two opposing superpowers wielded extensive nuclear arsenals only reaffirmed for the rest of the world what was already true for Europe.

The devastation of two world wars in less than a half-century thus created both a moral and a practical imperative to find ways to prevent a third. This was the stimulus for the creation of the United Nations (UN), to which the United States committed in 1945. Yet, the real source of stability that characterized the Cold War was not the UN—whose efficacy was diluted by superpower conflict—but the seemingly impervious bipolar international structure led by those same superpowers. The most significant accomplishment of the 20th century is easily that the Cold War never turned “hot,” and that the tectonic shifts in international politics following its end occurred without war. To be sure, there were many instances in which crises, periods of “bluff and counter-bluff,” or even accidents, could have thrust the world into a cataclysmic conflict. Perhaps the fear of extinction offered the most compelling restraint.

Peace in Europe following World War II was not simply the result of a superpower balance of power. It also required a durable solution to the political, economic, and social problems that had thrown Europe into war in the first place. The Marshall Plan and the unprecedented U.S. commitment to European security through the NATO Alliance established the foundation for European recovery. Both were predicated on a concept of European multilateralism in which sovereign states in Europe would form a higher association, gradually sharing sovereignty. Jean Monnet’s vision of a “federated Europe” was not to replace a system of sovereign states, each with its distinct history, culture, and language, but to enlarge the framework so these states could find benefit in cooperation, rather than in zero-sum conflict. Europe needed security, which the U.S. provided through its NATO commitment; it needed new economic realities, the seeds of which were provided by the Marshall Plan but which had to come from demonstrable benefits of economic cooperation within Europe itself; and it needed time, both to heal and to build a normative foundation that would be legitimate in the eyes of democratic societies still wedded to their national origins.²⁴

Multilateral solutions to European recovery after World War II also created a framework for the legitimate restoration of German power. In 1944, William T. R. Fox explained it this way:²⁵

Simply to divide Europe between East and West not only would give a wholly undesirable inflexibility to the postwar political system but would in addition outrage the sensibilities of Europeans of all kinds. ... Since Germany is the only nucleus within Europe around

²³ Quoted in Stephen Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), p. 103.

²⁴ For a concise summary of Monnet’s vision and the evolution of institutions that would make up the European Union, see Strobe Talbott, *Monnet’s Brandy and Europe’s Fate*, The Brookings Essay (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 7 February 2014).

²⁵ William T. R. Fox, *The Super-Powers* (New York: Harcourt, Brown, 1944), p. 112.

which forcible consolidation of power could take place, the first problem is to discover the strategic controls which would render the fresh rise of an expansionist Germany impossible.

With the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, the European Economic Community or Common Market in 1957, the European Union (EU) in 1992, and the adoption of a common European currency in 2002, Europe has gradually created supranational institutions alongside sovereign states. Like any system of shared sovereignty, it has had no shortage of tension and flaws, but it has been an instrument for managing the inherent tensions that in previous centuries had often led to war. Its defenders point to the importance of “process”: institutions designed to foster consensus and to share the benefits of participation, even at the expense of efficiency and “product.” This, they argue, has been an important reason why Europe has remained at peace for almost three quarters of a century.

Germany has been at the heart of European integration from the beginning. Its post-World War II leaders championed greater European integration as a way of enabling and legitimizing the restoration of Germany’s place in Europe. As West Germany’s first Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer wrote, in terms that would still be relevant today for any state in central Europe:²⁶

There are three courses that Germany can take. ... One is that we join with Soviet Russia. The second is that we join with the West. And the third is that we join neither, but stand on our pride and depend on our resources. I deliberately refrain from using the word neutralization, for that is no neutralization. A neutral country is one which has the power of defending its neutrality against all comers. A country that survives only by the tolerance of others is not a neutral. ... We want the integration of Europe, and we want to be allied with the West. For us there can be no doubt or scruples about that.

Likewise NATO—which initially did not include West Germany as its member—became a vehicle by which Germany could be rearmed and contribute to European security, not least because West Germany formed a border between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Ultimately, restrictions on German military power—both in size and in how it could be used—found expression not just in the dictates of occupying powers, but also in self-determined German law. This reassured both allies and adversaries in the neighborhood and enabled Germany to become the formidable ally and partner it has become. Soviet acceptance in 1990 of a unified Germany free to join NATO, rather than (like Austria) a neutral state, reflected Gorbachev’s recognition that a powerful Germany within NATO was less a threat than one untethered in the middle of Europe.²⁷ It was not a coincidence that German unification on these terms was followed almost immediately by the Charter of Paris in November 1990—viewed as the termination of the Cold War—and, in early 1992, by the Treaty of Maastricht that established the European Union (EU).

Germany’s self-imposed restriction on its military capabilities was especially important with respect to nuclear weapons. Even in the 1950s, the West German government insisted that its

²⁶ Konrad Adenauer, *World Indivisible* (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), pp. 54-55, as cited in Walter F. Hahn, *Between Westpolitik and Ostpolitik: Changing West German Security Views* (London: SAGE Foreign Policy Series no. 3, 1975), p. 5.

²⁷ See W.R. Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin: The Cold War Struggle Over Germany* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999, especially Chapter 19, pp. 351-396. West German Chancellor Kohl essentially made the same argument that Adenauer had made almost four decades before: Germany in NATO was “safer” for all concerned.

willingness to forego nuclear weapons depended on its participation in and the continuation of NATO. In 1966, amid negotiations on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the U.S. intelligence community estimated that West Germany could produce its own nuclear weapons within two years, if it so decided.²⁸ Ultimately, after a long-running and difficult domestic debate, the new West German government signed the NPT in 1969, with a unilateral declaration that its accession assumed, *inter alia*, “that the security of the Federal Republic of Germany and its Allies remained guaranteed through NATO or a corresponding security system.”²⁹

The stability of the post-World War II international order was not solely the product of Westphalian principles of non-interference and balance of power. The bipolar stalemate reflected a sometimes-fragile balance of power, or perhaps terror. Moreover, in a clash of ideologies, non-interference evidently did not apply to information strategies. Rather, stability in the Cold War also depended on Western cohesion embodied in multilateral institutions including NATO and the EU, which were grounded in some shared core values: beliefs in democratic governance, market-based economics, international institutions, and the rule of law.

Although this so-called “liberal world order” only represented one-half of the Cold War bipolar standoff, it set a global framework as others emerged as actors within that international system, including after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It was established with U.S. leadership, based on an extraordinary and unique concentration of power—military, economic, political, cultural, and moral—after two world wars. It enabled a historically unprecedented expansion of prosperity and security throughout the entire system, which is to say it also produced pragmatic results that served broader interests.

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet empire only reinforced the assumption that Western military strength, Western economic vitality, and Western values had been the key elements in preserving strategic stability and avoiding the return of major war. The anguished Cold War debates about the credibility of NATO’s extended deterrence doctrine quickly receded from memory as a nightmare from which Western Europe had awoken. The immediate agenda was to decide how to respond to calls from former states of the Warsaw Pact and some new states from the former Soviet Union who wanted to join NATO and the EU.

Ending the Cold War division of Europe also created the opportunity for “Europe” to move beyond the confines of “Western Europe” and extend its political, economic, and security reach as far as political realities would allow. All post-Cold War European security institutions—NATO, the EU, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)—posited a comprehensive concept of stability and security that extended beyond military postures alone. “Western” institutions could be applied to countries emerging from the restrictive structures from the Soviet era; “stability” meant building up those institutions within a “Europe whole and free,” encompassing Eastern Europe, Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union—in the words of the OSCE, “from Vancouver to Vladivostok.”

²⁸ *The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the German Nuclear Question, Part II, 1965-1969*, National Security Archive, George Washington University, https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2018-03-21/nuclear-nonproliferation-treaty-german-nuclear-question-part#_edn7.

²⁹ For the German text of its declaration, see <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20729/volume-729-A-10485-Other.pdf>, p. 267.

This strategy also assumed—rightly or wrongly—that Russia concurred with the model, including the liberal values expressed in the 1990 Charter of Paris³⁰ even before the Soviet Union disappeared and in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act,³¹ which incorporated an agreed framework for subsequent NATO enlargement.

The result was enlargement of both NATO and the EU. The decision to admit new states to NATO membership—as opposed to being part of NATO’s so-called “Partnership for Peace”—was controversial. Many on both sides of the Atlantic feared that NATO would be taking on commitments it could not reliably fulfill, while provoking Russia.³² Against that reasonable concern, however, was another legitimate concern: to deny these states the opportunity to “join Europe” would leave them stranded in the middle of Europe.

Each of these arguments cited the imperatives of maintaining strategic stability, although their conclusions were diametrically opposed. In the end, NATO agreed on enlargement, a process that began with the accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in 1999, continued through the accession of Montenegro in 2017, and the invitation (in July 2018) of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to become NATO’s 30th member. That debate continues, as Russian opposition to further NATO enlargement has gotten louder, and Georgia and Ukraine—assured of the eventuality of NATO membership in the 2008 NATO Bucharest Summit³³—remain at the door.

The continuing debate over NATO and EU enlargement highlights the essential dilemma of 21st strategic stability in Europe. If preservation of the status quo provided a basis for strategic stability in the Cold War, does revision of the status quo in Europe—which enlargement represents—enhance or challenge stability?

We have seen this story before: rigid preservation of the *status quo* will be stabilizing as long as that order is viewed as legitimate, but it can also—as in the 19th and early 20th centuries—lead to an even more violent and uncontrolled explosion. Stability can also be an illusion; it may be that challenges to the *status quo* are out of reach—or not possible yet. But we also know that, if others do not view the *status quo* as legitimate, if they have the resources to challenge that *status quo*, and they believe they can accept the risks of doing so, then they will be inclined to do so.

Fortunately, this did not happen in the second half of the 20th century. The world has not witnessed total war between major powers for almost three quarters of a century, and that is an almost unparalleled success in modern history. The Westphalian principles of non-interference and balance of power remain relevant, but their efficacy as rigid principles of statecraft has been

³⁰ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 21 November 1990, www.osce.org/mc/39516.

³¹ Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation, Paris, 27 May 1997, www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm.

³² One notable critic of enlargement was George Kennan, the architect, in 1947, of the U.S. policy of containment. See, Thomas Friedman, “Foreign Affairs: Now a Word from ‘X,’” *New York Times*, 2 May 1998, www.nytimes.com/1998/05/02/opinion/foreign-affairs-now-a-word-from-x.html. For a case study on the U.S. debate, see James Goldgeier, “NATO Expansion: The Anatomy of a Decision,” in James McCormick, *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy* (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 6th edition, 2012), pp. 383-398.

³³ “NATO welcomes Ukraine’s and Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries *will* become members of NATO.” (Emphasis added.) *NATO Bucharest Summit Declaration*, 3 April 2008, www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm, para. 23.

diminished. Each of those principles has been challenged by the experiences of two world wars and a Cold War and the international order that subsequently emerged. The legitimacy of an international order simply means that actors have an interest in preserving that order. But that order must also be adaptive—to new actors, changing power dynamics, and emerging threats.

Order is never static, and the “liberal world order” is being challenged on many fronts.³⁴ That order may reflect a mainstream of Western values, but it is clearly not universally viewed as a legitimate foundation for a stable international order. The world is changing rapidly, and the cohesion within Europe that characterized the past seven decades cannot be taken for granted. The question remains whether Europe—including its transatlantic partnership with the U.S.—can defend, and adapt, that order to strengthen strategic stability in a different world.

Sources of Strategic Instability in 21st Century Europe

The world of the 21st century is not the world of the last half of the 20th century. It is both a good news and a bad news story.³⁵

- Globalization and the information age—arguably the products of that “liberal world order”—have enabled an explosion of global wealth and a substantial reduction in extreme poverty, but they have also supported growing gaps between rich and poor, both in actual wealth and in opportunities to access wealth.
- Global population growth rates are declining as a direct consequence of improved maternal and post-natal healthcare, the increasing numbers of women seeking higher education and employment out of the home, and urbanization. Yet future population growth will be most pronounced in areas (especially Africa) least able to cope with increasing populations, while the developed world will witness declining native-born populations. The result—even without the stimulus of refugee-producing conflicts—is inevitable pressures for migration from poor to affluent societies.
- Technological advances will continue to enable economic growth and improved quality of life, but will also produce unprecedented vulnerabilities: socioeconomic dislocation due to the changing nature of work; proliferation and fragmentation of information sources and growing questions about the reliability of that information; and continuing advances in weapons technology that pose existential threats to the security of societies and the stability of the system.
- There are now more significant powerful state and non-state actors in the world which, however “regional,” still have global reach in various domains, whether military,

³⁴ For representative arguments, see Hugh White, “What’s So Great About American World Leadership?” *The Atlantic*, 23 November 2016, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/11/trump-world-order-foreign-policy/508547/, and Daniel Deudney & G. John Ikenberry, “Liberal World: The Resilient Order,” *Foreign Affairs* (97/4, July/August 2018), pp. 16-24.

³⁵ This is a sample list: see Mathew Burrows, *Global Risks 2035: The Search for a New Normal*, The Atlantic Council, 22 September 2016, www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/global-risks-2035/; U.S. National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2035: Paradox of Progress*, January 2017, www.dni.gov/index.php/global-trends/trends-transforming-the-global-landscape; and World Economic Forum, *Global Risks Report 2018* (13th edition, 2018), <http://reports.weforum.org/global-risks-2018/executive-summary/>.

economic, cultural, or informational. Some are stagnant or declining, but seek to hold on to a once-possessioned or imagined stature; some are seeking to emerge as true global powers; some are regional powers with voices contrary to each other as well as the existing world order; some are violent revisionists seeking to overturn Westphalian principles. Few adhere to the values that underpin the liberal world order—democratic governance, market-based economics, international institutions, and the rule of law.

- The U.S. remains preeminent in the world but does not command the uniquely dominant position it once did, nor could the U.S. expect to retain that postwar dominance. The U.S. is still a military power without parallel, but many argue that its other instruments of power (diplomatic, economic, and moral power) have diminished, if not atrophied. The U.S. retains a leadership position in the world, although the domestic consensus on the desirability of that role has declined. In any event, the U.S. cannot exercise any leadership effectively in isolation, without allies and partners.

These trends portend a world of growing wealth and opportunity, but one also replete with the seeds of instability and violence, both within and between societies. While the world has unprecedented resources to address many issues, societies and institutions are increasingly vulnerable to systemic risks, whether or not by deliberate human attack, including the breakdown of complex systems—climate and the environment, finance, information, governance, energy, and infrastructure—on which modern life depends. It remains an open question whether local, national, or global institutions have the capacity to deal effectively with these challenges.

These are global trends, but they have a direct and substantial impact on Europe and whether Europe can adapt its 20th century strategies and institutions to fit this changing world. We saw in the previous section that stability in the Cold War rested on a complex and tenuous balance of power—and terror—between East and West, in which the West held together not only by fear but also by a commitment to shared values. We also saw that stability in the aftermath of the Cold War presumed both a continuation of that Western consensus on a liberal world order and a form of cooperative security with Russia, which appeared willing to accommodate, or at least tolerate, the enlargement of Western institutions and the expansion of Western ideas. Neither of these conditions can be presumed in Europe today.

For Europe, we can identify at least four significant sources of instability that challenge the assumptions on which strategic stability was based during the Cold War and its aftermath.

First, Russia has, especially within the past decade, pushed back, notably in Georgia and Ukraine, and asserted its right to a sphere of influence on which the West is seen to be encroaching. Putin's regime protests the incursion of "Western" institutions and values into the former Soviet space and views this as a direct threat to Russian core national interests.

Russia clearly no longer sees—if it ever did—NATO enlargement as the expansion of a benign and constructive world order. As justification for its own national security posture, the Kremlin's 2015 National Security Strategy specifically cited the following complaints about U.S. and Allied policies:³⁶

³⁶Russian National Security Strategy, www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf, paras. 12, 15, 17, & 18, respectively.

- Opposition to Russia’s “independent foreign and domestic policy” and the continuation of a Cold War policy of containment, including “the exertion of political, economic, military, and informational pressure.”
- “The buildup of the military potential of NATO ... the endowment of it with global functions pursued in violation of the norms of international law ... galvanization of bloc countries’ military activity ... further expansion of the alliance ... location of its military infrastructure close to Russian borders.”
- “The West’s stance aimed at countering integration processes and creating seats of tension in the Eurasian region,” pointing specifically to U.S. and EU support “for the anti-constitutional *coup d’état* in Ukraine,” making Ukraine “into a chronic seat of instability in Europe and in the immediate vicinity of Russia’s borders.”
- “The practice of overthrowing legitimate political regimes and provoking intrastate instability and conflicts” in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and Korea.

This does not mean that Russia wants to close off relations with the West; rather, Russia insists that it be treated as an equal in the international system. As Angela Stent recently noted, Putin wants “to renegotiate the terms under which the Cold War ended. ... Although he does not seek to restore the Soviet Union, he would like the rest of the world to treat Russia as if it were the USSR, a country whose interests are as legitimate as those of the West, one that is respected and feared.”³⁷

The impasse, of course, is that Russia’s behavior—including military modernization, aggressive military activities, continued occupation of parts of Georgia and Ukraine, and the annexation of Crimea, which the West insists it will never recognize—has led NATO to respond through its own military enhancements and the U.S. and EU to respond with economic sanctions. In April 2014, NATO “suspended practical civilian and military cooperation” under the auspices of the NATO Russia Council, while keeping open a channel at the Ambassadorial level, most recently on 31 May 2018, and, in April 2018, between NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander and the Chief of the Russian General Staff.³⁸ Each side inevitably frames its actions as defensive, and as a reaction to what it sees as the other side’s illegitimate, illegal, or unacceptable behavior.

Bridging this impasse, however, will require more than a handful of high-level meetings, including even the recent (July 2018) Trump-Putin summit meeting in Helsinki. Real progress will have to await some kind of breakthrough—or crisis—that brings both Russia and the West into a meaningful conversation about Russia’s place in a European security architecture that is acceptable to both Russia and the West.³⁹

³⁷ Angela Stent, “What Drives Russian Foreign Policy?” in John R. Deni (ed), *Current Russia Military Affairs: Assessing and Countering Russian Strategy, Operational Planning, and Modernization* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, July 2018), p. 6. See also Stent’s *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

³⁸ “NATO-Russia Council meets in Brussels,” www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_155036.htm, 31 May 2018. See also “Relations with Russia,” www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50090.htm, updated 26 June 2018.

³⁹ In this author’s conversations with NATO and national officials and experts in several European capitals in 2017 and 2018, none saw any prospect of such a breakthrough in the foreseeable future.

For its part, Russia's 2015 National Security Strategy set the condition for productive relations with NATO, with only thinly veiled reference to continued NATO enlargement: "The depth and content of such relations will be determined by the readiness of the alliance to take account of the interests of the Russian Federation when conducting military-political planning, and to respect the provisions of international law."⁴⁰

Second, Russian has enhanced its military capabilities in ways that are potentially destabilizing. Moreover, Russia's "hybrid" political operations have targeted—with alarming effectiveness—the resilience of Western democratic institutions. The result is a Russian strategy that offers non-military weapons to achieve political ends without the risk associated with direct military conflict, but backed up by a more formidable military capability.

Putin's Russia is under economic sanction and is jolted by swings in oil prices, but he has effectively consolidated his power with a level of popular support fueled by his own appeals to national identity and pride and no shortage of mechanisms to suppress opposition.⁴¹ This has enabled him to launch a broad-based program of military modernization, both with respect to strategic weapons and conventional forces,⁴² and call into question the arms control framework established at the end of the Cold War, which he feels is unduly restrictive and intrusive.

One particular concern is Russia's development of intermediate range cruise missiles, which, according to the U.S., would violate the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The Trump Administration's 2018 Nuclear Posture Review signaled development of a new sea-launched cruise missile as a way of enticing Russia back into compliance, but the issue remains at an impasse.⁴³ The whole point of the INF Treaty was to enhance deterrence stability by removing the ability of missiles from Russia to reach strategic targets in Europe, or missiles in Europe holding at risk strategic targets in Russia.

The possible collapse of the INF Treaty—along with Russia's 2015 suspension of its participation in the CFE Treaty and the prospect that the New START agreement signed in 2010 will expire in 2021—means that the entire arms control framework that brought a measure of strategic stability in the nuclear and conventional military domains at the end of the Cold War may totally unravel. Even the OSCE's Vienna Document, incorporating numerous confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), is effectively in limbo: although Russia, under Medvedev, had been active in suggesting "reforms" to the Vienna Document, Russian policy changed after 2012, preferring fewer CSBMs and less "intrusion" into their affairs.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Russian National Security Strategy*, para. 107.

⁴¹ For insight into Russian society and attitudes under Putin, see Anne Garrels, *Putin Country: A Journey into the Real Russia* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2016).

⁴² Steven Pifer, "Pay attention, America: Russia is upgrading its military," Brookings Institution, 5 February 2016, www.brookings.edu/opinions/pay-attention-america-russia-is-upgrading-its-military/.

⁴³ Russia similarly accuses the U.S. of violating the INF Treaty, allegations that the U.S. rejects. See Ankit Panda, "The Uncertain Future of the INF Treaty," Council on Foreign Relations, 21 February 2018, www.cfr.org/background/uncertain-future-inf-treaty.

⁴⁴ Valerie Pacer, *Russian Foreign Policy under Dmitry Medvedev, 2008-2012* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 85.

Another significant concern is Russia's development of hypersonic weapons that could—if deployed—travel at several times the speed of sound and strike targets anywhere in the world.⁴⁵ Unlike ballistic missiles (which can be detected at launch) or the current inventory of cruise missiles (which travel at subsonic speeds), hypersonic weapons can strike with little or no warning. The result could be a much less stable security relationship because it offers the prospect of being able to strike strategic targets with effect, with or without nuclear weapons.

There remain, nonetheless, substantial limits on Russian military modernization. Economic constraints are real, and sustaining Putin's regime requires that funds are sufficient to maintain the support of the oligarchs around him as well as for social programs. Moreover, many observers note that Russia is risk-averse. Regardless of Russia's military capability, war would threaten the existence of the Russian state. Hence, beyond military modernization, the more salient development is the refinement of non-military measures, which are relatively low cost and designed to achieve political objectives in ways that do not risk war.⁴⁶

Russia's National Security Strategy highlighted the importance of these non-military measures: "Interrelated political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic, informational and other measures are being developed and implemented in order to ensure strategic deterrence and the prevention of armed conflicts ... to prevent the use of armed force against Russia, and to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity."⁴⁷ What we have earlier referred to as "hybrid warfare" encompasses a broad range of non-military activities, ranging from active diplomatic engagement, infiltration and espionage, propaganda and disinformation campaigns, cyber warfare—including intrusion, hacking, and disruptive attacks—and influence campaigns in which disinformation is weaponized through social media.

While none of these methods is new, advances in information and communication technologies have enabled them to be refined and expanded at relatively low cost, while having significant political effect. The targets have been civilian more than military, including energy infrastructure and political campaigns in both the United States and in Europe, and its purposes range from demonstrating the ability to hold critical infrastructure at risk to actively influencing political outcomes that are disruptive to Western cohesion and advance Russian political interests.⁴⁸ Active measures, as one analyst explains, include "reflexive control, media manipulation, forgeries, and occasional murders," and disinformation—both defensive and

⁴⁵ See, Christian Davenport, "Why the Pentagon fears the U.S. is losing the hypersonic arms race with Russia and China," *The Washington Post*, 8 June 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/why-the-pentagon-fears-the-us-is-losing-the-hypersonic-arms-race-with-russia-and-china/2018/06/08/7c2c3b4c-57a7-11e8-b656-a5f8c2a9295d_story.html?utm_term=.fc8e1e6bdf81.

⁴⁶ See Julia Gurganus, "How (and Why) Russia Does More With Less," in Deni, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-13.

⁴⁷ *Russian National Security Strategy*, para. 36.

⁴⁸ See Nicole Perlroth and David Sanger, "Cyberattacks Put Russian Fingers on the Switch at Power Plants, U.S. Says," *New York Times*, 15 March 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/03/15/us/politics/russia-cyberattacks.html. For Russian interference in the U.S. 2016 election, see Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections, www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf. For Russia's continuing efforts to interfere in U.S. 2018 elections, see Michael D. Shear & Michael Wines, "Russian Threat is 'Real,' Trump Officials Say, Vowing to Protect U.S. Elections," *New York Times*, 2 August 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/08/02/us/politics/russia-election-security-midterm.html?emc=edit_na_20180802&nl=breaking-news&nid=59687590ing-news&ref=cta. On Russian influence in European elections, see "Putin's Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia and Europe: Implications for U.S. National Security," Minority Staff Report, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 10 January 2018, www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FinalRR.pdf.

offensive—is an integral element.⁴⁹ These campaigns have not all been successful, but they have had a disruptive effect that is, at a minimum, politically divisive throughout the U.S. and Europe. Beyond measures to meddle in elections and referenda in the U.S., UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy, they have also effectively shifted public opinion in the newer members of NATO and the EU, in Central and Eastern Europe, where Russian information outlets such as RT and Sputnik have a dominant role. These operations have been persistent, low cost, low risk, deniable, and especially difficult to counter.

Third, the refugee crisis and debates about immigration in European societies have engendered a rise of nationalism and “nativism,” which—on a societal level—runs counter to the integrationist ethos of the “European project” and—on a policy level—fuels the political appeal of efforts to regain national sovereignty at the expense of European cooperation.

Russian disinformation campaigns cannot succeed without vulnerable targets, but the domestic political grievances in the U.S. and in many European states have created a fertile ground for manipulation. The 2015 UK Brexit referendum offered an early example of the significance of this phenomenon. Russian influence—largely by funding British Brexit influence efforts and promoting pro-Brexit messages—helped tip the balance in a close referendum in which anti-Brexit voter participation was unusually low. Nonetheless, the dissatisfaction among a certain slice of British voters was real enough. That same pattern was in evidence not just in the U.S. 2016 presidential election, but also in elections across Europe in 2017 and 2018.

Globalization has produced a lot of winners throughout the world, but there have also been a lot of losers, especially older, working class people trying to find a future in a post-industrial society, especially after the 2008 recession eliminated a substantial portion of whatever wealth they may have accumulated. Throughout Europe, in which socioeconomic safety nets have been the norm for decades, economic austerity policies threatened already fixed incomes. Among the fledgling democracies and new members of the EU in Central and Eastern Europe, in particular, there is a nagging disenchantment with the EU. Many in the older generation face their senior years with anxiety about their ability to maintain a quality of life and frustration that they had expected they would have after more after two decades of EU membership.⁵⁰

Likewise, among many in the younger generation—especially in rural areas, where education and opportunities have lagged behind the major cities—there is fear they will be stuck in menial jobs without even the modest prospects their parents had enjoyed in a more traditional industrial economy. There is a real divide between the “globalized” capitals, where there are jobs for those with the skills to get them, and the rural areas, where there is lower quality education, higher unemployment, and a siren call for extremist solutions from both socialist and fascist fringes.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Jonathan White, *Dismiss, Distort, Distract, Dismay: Continuity and Change in Russian Disinformation*, Free University Brussels, Institute for European Studies, Issue 2016/13, May 2016, www.ies.be/node/3689.

⁵⁰ This belief seems especially pronounced among “the older generation, men, less educated, ethnic majority populations, and the religious.” Matt Browne, Dalibor Rohac & Carolyn Kenney, *Europe’s Populist Challenge: Origins, Supporters, and Responses*, Center for American Progress, 10 May 2018, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2018/05/10/450430/europes-populist-challenge/>.

⁵¹ Having spent five months living, working, and traveling in Central and Eastern Europe in 2017 and another six weeks there in 2018, teaching and working with students and young professionals, this author has heard this narrative on numerous occasions and witnessed the stark differences between rural and urban firsthand.

This socioeconomic environment is also a fertile field for nativism and authoritarian populism, exacerbated by the substantial influx of immigrants and refugees from the Middle East and North Africa over the past decade, in which refugees from the Syrian civil war were a significant but not the only source. Fear is also an important factor, which has been exploited by populist political leaders across Europe and in the U.S. Ironically, this fear appears to be highest within those societies and communities that have had fewer immigrants. In European surveys, those reporting the greatest level of discomfort of having immigrants in their societies are precisely those Central and Eastern European countries that have resisted EU quotas of refugees, while those who report higher levels of comfort in social interactions with immigrants are those countries in Western Europe that have taken in much higher numbers of immigrants.⁵²

The reasons for this rebellion against immigration are partly economic and partly cultural. Societies with higher unemployment and perceived less opportunity for themselves will tend to resent those who come into a community and compete for those same opportunities. Yet many of these countries are those whose own national identity has historically been repressed and only now find themselves with their own state. These same countries also tend to have issues with domestic minorities, who may be different ethnically, culturally, linguistically, or religiously. Both economic and cultural factors reinforce each other and feed the political narrative of those who seek to advance a populist and nativist agenda.

As native-born European populations continue to decline and immigration pressures persist from adjacent continents, Europe will inevitably become more demographically diverse. This is a longer-term reality, but, in the short term, there are significant cultural and economic challenges that generate political pressures to slow, if not reverse, this process. Populist movements such as the pro-Brexit movement in the UK, as well as populist political parties across Europe, prefer to deflect the problem to others and resent being told by the EU that they have to carry a certain share of Europe's immigrant resettlement burden. This has been the fuel not only for Brexit, but also for similar "exit" movements from populist political parties from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the borders of the former Soviet Union.

Too often, membership in NATO and the EU is conflated, especially among many in the newer member countries. Membership in both represents being part of the "West," but—for many of the reasons cited above—that has not generated many of the anticipated benefits. In some new member countries, resentment of Russia runs high, and NATO remains popular, whereas in other newer member, there is greater dependency on Russian energy and investment and a greater tendency to favor a geopolitical posture "between" East and West. While there is a clear preference for being part of the "West" instead of the "East" among all Central and East European countries, "neutrality"—especially among respondents in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia—is an appealing alternative, often equated with the preservation of their own sovereignty and national identity.⁵³

⁵² See "Europeans remain welcoming to immigrants—particularly if they live in countries that host some," *The Economist*, 19 April 2018, www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2018/04/19/europeans-remain-welcoming-to-immigrants.

⁵³ Compare *GLOBSEC Trends 2018: Central Europe: One Region, Different Perspectives* and *GLOBSEC Trends 2017: Mixed Messages and Signs of Hope from Central and Eastern Europe*, GLOBSEC Policy Institute, www.globsec.org.

Faced with these domestic political, economic, and social challenges, the commitment to representative democracy in Europe is becoming uneven.⁵⁴ Recent Pew Research polls suggest a “shallow commitment to representative democracy globally, with declining levels of trust in national governments. In Europe and North America, the commitment to representative democracy is well above the global average, but even there it is mixed, with Hungary and Poland registering lowest among European survey respondents; Sweden and Germany both registered higher than the U.S.”⁵⁵

These are disturbing trends within Europe, since they have the potential for undermining the cohesion of the Western alliance system. The EU, for example, expects candidates for membership to adhere to an *acquis* of norms and democratic practices as part of its process of joining the EU, but there is no provision for ejecting a member who violates those norms. Now, the EU is struggling with whether and how to sanction Poland and Hungary for domestic political actions that threaten democracy and the rule of law. Some argue that failure to take action only weakens the EU; others counter that this would be a heavy-handed approach that would only encourage other “exit” movements and likewise weaken the EU. In NATO, a similar debate relates to Turkey, which has taken a more authoritarian turn since the 2016 failed coup attempt against President Recep Erdogan but has sought to buy Russian air defense systems that would not be compatible with NATO systems.⁵⁶

Fragmentation of either NATO or the EU would be a critical blow to the West and undercut seven decades of cooperation and successful balance of power against security challenges by the Soviet Union and, now, Russia. The notion that “going it alone” gives a state greater freedom of action is illusory: it has never been a formula for stability and security in Europe. Historically, those who have kept themselves separate from alliance systems and maintain a tradition of neutrality are also states—notably Switzerland and Sweden—that have significant geographic and economic advantages and which have invested heavily in their own defense, beyond the average investment of NATO allies. Nonetheless, the temptation is considered a real possibility by a significant minority, and the notion resonates in populist political movements.

Fourth, during the tenure of this research effort, the Trump Administration’s equivocation regarding the United States’ commitment to transatlantic security has raised serious doubts among European Allies about the durability of that commitment, which only exacerbates already centrifugal forces that challenge Alliance cohesion.

As a candidate for president, Donald Trump suggested that NATO had become “obsolete,” a charge he repeated in an interview with Germany’s *Bild* and the *Times* of London shortly before

⁵⁴ See, for example, Ivan Krastev, “Eastern Europe’s Illiberal Revolution: The Long Road to Democratic Decline,” in *Foreign Affairs* (97/3, May/June 2018), pp. 49-59.

⁵⁵ Richard Wike, Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes, & Janell Fetterolf, *Globally, Broad Support for Representative and Direct Democracy—But many also endorse nondemocratic alternatives*, Per Research Center, 16 October 2017, http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/10/17102729/Pew-Research-Center_Democracy-Report_2017.10.16.pdf.

⁵⁶ “Pompeo presses Turkey on S-400 missiles purchase from Russia,” *Reuters*, 27 April 2018, www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-foreign-usa-turkey/pompeo-presses-turkey-on-s-400-missiles-purchase-from-russia-idUSKBN1HY2A6.

his inauguration.⁵⁷ Then, at his first NATO Summit meeting in May 2017, he declined to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to Article 5 of the NATO treaty, something every president since Harry Truman had done.⁵⁸ A year later, at the July 2018 Brussels NATO Summit, President Trump again questioned the value of NATO before heading off to Helsinki to meet with Russian President Putin in a one-on-one meeting with no note-takers or subsequent read-out.⁵⁹

Against the backdrop of ongoing investigations into Russian meddling in U.S. elections and trade wars with allies in North America and the EU, these actions and omissions have provided an unprecedented shadow over the credibility of America's commitment to the Alliance. Since the 2017 inauguration, the vice president and secretaries of state and defense have consistently reassured the Allies of the continuing U.S. commitment. Even the U.S. Senate found it necessary in advance of the 2018 NATO Summit to pass a bipartisan, nearly-unanimous resolution "regarding the strategic importance of NATO to the collective defense of the transatlantic region."⁶⁰ Since then, several Senators have proposed bipartisan legislation that would prevent the president from pulling the U.S. out of NATO without Senate approval.⁶¹

In the author's conversations with officials and experts in NATO headquarters and capitals, no one expressed a belief that the U.S. would actually withdraw from the Alliance, but all expressed grave concern about the anxiety this was generating within the Alliance. There is a widespread sense in Europe that President Trump's rhetoric is not to be taken seriously, and they are reassured that U.S. political leaders within the Trump Administration have been adamant about the continuing U.S. commitment. Along with the other factors identified above, however, even this rhetorical posture plays into a public narrative that the Alliance is in decline, and that—if enough pressure is placed on it—it could actually fold.

In sum, the four factors identified above reflect substantial sources of instability in contemporary Europe. Russia has identified and effectively implemented a strategy that can advance its political interests at the expense of NATO—at relatively low cost and low risk—while the political, socioeconomic, and cultural dynamics within Europe play into the Russian narrative and offer fertile ground and ample targets for Russian disinformation operations.

Strengthening Strategic Stability in 21st Century Europe

For almost four centuries, strategic stability in Europe rested on the Westphalian principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of other sovereign states and balance of power. These two

⁵⁷ Rainer Buerger & Toluse Olorunnipa, "Trump Slams NATO, Floats Russia Nuke Deal in European Interview," *Bloomberg Politics*, 15 January 2017, www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-01-15/trump-calls-nato-obsolete-and-dismisses-eu-in-german-interview.

⁵⁸ Robbie Gramer, "Trump Hands Putin a Win at First NATO Meeting," *Foreign Policy*, 25 May 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/05/25/trump-nato-meeting-brussels-defense-spending-transatlantic-alliance/>.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Lemire & Jill Colvin, "President Donald Trump Unsettles U.S. Allies by Openly Questioning the Value of NATO," *Time*, 12 July 2018, <http://time.com/5336416/trump-nato-summit-putin-russia-germany/>.

⁶⁰ Avery Anapol, "Senate votes to support NATO ahead of Trump summit," *The Hill*, 10 July 2018, <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/396399-senate-overwhelmingly-passes-resolution-supporting-nato-as-trump>.

⁶¹ Karoun Demirjian, "Bipartisan bill would prevent Trump from exiting NATO without Senate consent," *The Washington Post*, 26 July 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/bipartisan-bill-would-prevent-trump-from-exiting-nato-without-senate-consent/2018/07/26/4ca1b206-9106-11e8-bcd5-9d911c784c38_story.html?utm_term=.c6713edc6caa.

principles work together when major powers agree, first, that the existing system preserves their interests; second, that they are willing to refrain from imposing their values on other states; and, third, that they are willing to go to war if that balance is challenged by others. When the system broke down, it was because one power sought to usurp that balance and impose its political preferences on others, or because the major powers themselves found themselves challenged internally by revolutionary ideas that undercut their own ability to govern.

These principles operated differently during the Cold War and its aftermath: the superpowers did indeed “balance” each other, but not because they both viewed the international order as legitimate. Balance of power succeeded because both sides shared a desire to survive nuclear extinction and because NATO maintained its own cohesion—grounded in a shared vision of a liberal world order—sufficient to block the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.

Once the Cold War was over, however, the assumption that the liberal world order could and should be expanded, both in Europe and globally, has proven to be, at best, premature.⁶² Although most of its critics point to Western (especially U.S.) policy failures in the Middle East and South Asia, this assumption is clearly not justified with respect to Russia or even, more recently, with many members of NATO and the EU. With respect to Europe, we have seen that there are substantial domestic political, economic, and social challenges to the shared norms that sustained the cohesion of both NATO and the EU over the past several decades.

In an earlier section, we posited a core strategic dilemma for Europe: if preservation of the *status quo* provided a basis for strategic stability in the Cold War, does revision of the *status quo* in Europe—which enlargement represents—enhance or challenge stability? The answer is, “it depends.” Enlargement of both NATO and the EU was possible as long as Russia was willing to accommodate it, or at least was not in a position to block it. If the former, then there is a basis for strategic stability on the assumption that Russia believed enlargement posed no threat to its core interests. If the latter, then that stability is decidedly more tenuous: resentment would inevitably grow as Russian saw its interests increasingly threatened, and this resentment would be compounded by the frustration that they were not yet able to do anything about it. The result is an intensifying determination to reverse this process. We have since discovered that Russia is no longer willing to accommodate such a revision of the *status quo* against its own geopolitical interests, and they have, in recent years, found ways to respond that are within their capabilities, are effective, and do not incur unacceptable risk to themselves.

Given these challenges to strategic stability in Europe, therefore, how should the West—specifically NATO and the EU—respond? There is no simple answer to this, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a detailed blueprint. Nonetheless, the analysis of this paper suggests the following ten principles to guide such a response.

⁶² This has been a popular assumption, stimulating “democracy promotion” programs in both U.S. and European policies in subsequent decades, but it was always a controversial assumption. Francis Fukuyama’s prognosis in *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992) of an inevitable consensus on democracy, capitalism, and liberalization found substantial criticism in Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996) and John Mearsheimer’s *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001). For a concise summary of this debate, see Richard K. Betts, “Conflict or Cooperation? Three Visions Revisited, in *The Clash at 20, Foreign Affairs Collection*, 31 July 2013, pp. 69-80.

1. This is neither simply a “NATO problem” nor an “EU problem.” It is a transatlantic and European problem, which will require the focus and coordination of both NATO and the EU as key international institutions and of their respective memberships.
2. Sustaining a stable strategic environment in Europe will require a comprehensive political, economic, social, diplomatic, and military strategy by the United States and its European Allies designed to achieve that end. Such a strategy will have to adapt to rapidly changing geopolitical, economic, and demographic realities, not just in Europe but globally, since the global trends defining the rest of this century will directly impact Europe.
3. A significant element of this strategy must be active public diplomacy and civic education programs throughout NATO and EU member countries. In both “new” and “old” members, generations have begun to take for granted the benefits brought by these institutions, and the competing narratives from disruptive domestic and foreign sources are loud and persistent.
4. As a foundation for its own security, NATO must maintain a credible capability for defense and deterrence, including nuclear and conventional forces that demonstrate the link between European security and U.S. strategic nuclear forces. Preserving the balance of power is still a necessary element to preserve one’s place in the international order. While this is an established principle for NATO, this is not the only instrument that NATO needs to defend the “territorial integrity, political independence, and security”⁶³ of its Members and Partners.
5. NATO should establish a more even balance between its two main functions—defense through military strength and political solidarity to deter aggression, and a search for a more stable political environment. This principle paraphrases NATO’s 1967 Harmel Report, which famously argued, “military security and a policy of détente are not contradictory but complementary.”⁶⁴ Such a strategy could incorporate a wide range of arms control and collaborative security measures designed to enhance stability in the nuclear and conventional military domains; it could also incorporate broader issues, including discussions on managing potentially destabilizing future weapons technologies, standing conflicts (*e.g.*, Georgia and Ukraine), rules of the road regarding cyber and information warfare, non-interference in domestic affairs, human rights, and economic and energy security.
6. NATO and the EU must find a way to integrate Russia into a European security architecture. This does not mean that NATO and the EU shed their identity as important European institutions. Nor should this be a “concession” to Russia. Rather, it is based on the reality that a security framework in Europe that is illegitimate in Russia’s eyes will be a constant source of strategic instability and an incentive for Russia to continue its low cost, low risk, and highly disruptive and divisive attacks on Western institutions and assets. Stability cannot be a “zero-sum” relationship among competing powers.
7. In that regard, NATO and the EU should reassess and coordinate their respective enlargement strategies. As a practical matter, enlargement, especially to the east, may have already reached its limit, at least for the foreseeable future. For NATO, this is not only true because of Russian objections; it also reflects the reality that NATO’s current strategy of

⁶³ Language from Article 4 of the NATO Treaty: www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm.

⁶⁴ *The Future Tasks of the Alliance*, December 1967, www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_26700.htm.

extended deterrence cannot be reasonably sustained if NATO were to include any more states from the former Soviet Union.⁶⁵

8. NATO should integrate more specifically into its strategic concept the requirements for defending societies against information and cyber warfare and for improvements in border and homeland security and civilian defense. Although NATO recognizes in its rhetoric the need to defend against so-called “hybrid warfare” tactics, NATO should incentivize investment in these typically non-military defense measures, which are normally the exclusive responsibility of nations rather than the Alliance.⁶⁶ To that end, NATO should reexamine its commitment to increase defense spending to at least two percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP).⁶⁷
9. As an extension of the previous principle, NATO and the EU should strengthen their cooperation in defending against the full range of hybrid threats and developing resilience within their members’ societies. Although NATO, at its 2016 Warsaw Summit, declared its “commitment to enhance resilience,”⁶⁸ its focus was on military responses, noting that “civil preparedness is above all a national responsibility.” Almost every aspect of contemporary societies is vulnerable to significant disruption, infiltration, and disinformation campaigns; the antidotes are rarely military, are only partly technological, and—to a large extent—rely on the ability of civil society to discern threats and respond appropriately. These are national responsibilities, but the most vulnerable NATO and EU states are precisely those with the least capacity to address them. This must be incorporated into collective defense.
10. The U.S. should clearly and unequivocally reaffirm its collective defense commitment to NATO and its support for European integration through the EU. As noted earlier, neither institution would have been possible or enduring without the U.S. While that U.S. role has changed from one of singular dominance and Europe’s dependency, the partnership and continued commitment and engagement between the U.S. and Europe remains an indispensable element to strategic stability, and not just in Europe. As we have seen, this commitment has been called into doubt, not only in the minds of some Americans but also in the minds of Europeans who—with or without justification—have decided they need to hedge against U.S. disengagement.⁶⁹ Such hedging strategies are themselves destabilizing.

⁶⁵ This author argues this point in greater detail in, Schuyler Foerster, “NATO’s Return: Implications for Extended Deterrence,” in Rebecca Moore & Damon Coletta (eds), *NATO’s Return to Europe: Engaging Ukraine, Russia, and Beyond* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2017, pp. 45-70.

⁶⁶ Finland’s establishment of a European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats is a useful start (www.hybridcoe.fi). It complements NATO’s Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (<https://ccdcoe.org>) but is neither a NATO nor an EU organization: their members are invited to join. It remains to be seen to what extent these organizations provide any operational contribution to NATO and EU activities.

⁶⁷ The commitment provided a goal that Allies would work to achieve “within a decade.” See NATO Wales Summit Declaration, 2016, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm. As it stands, few of these non-military investments are counted, whereas some of those countries that are in excess of 2% in their defense spending meet that goal only by virtue of substantial pension payouts. See *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011-2018)*, www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/news_156770.htm.

⁶⁸ North Atlantic Council, *Commitment to enhance resilience*, Issued by the Heads of State and Government, Warsaw, 8-9 July 2016, www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/official_texts_133180.htm.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Constanze Stelzenmüller, *Normal is Over*, Brookings Institution, February 2018, www.brookings.edu/research/normal-is-over/.

Conclusion

Strategic stability is “resistance to sudden change, such that a security relationship is unlikely to shift quickly from peace to war even under pressure of a crisis. It does not connote absence of change, only that, to the extent possible, change will be measured and deliberate, evolutionary, predictable, and manageable.”

In the Cold War, stability was a concept developed specifically to address the existential threat associated with nuclear weapons in a superpower standoff. Yet, that was only one element of strategic stability: the broader East-West geopolitical stalemate provided a stable framework in which this military dimension could be managed. By the end of the Cold War, that concept was extended to conventional military force levels and transparency about force deployments, but it subsequently became less relevant as the geopolitical framework changed.

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union and its empire refocused the question of stability in terms of the changing political relationships in Europe, as states from the former Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union sought to join the “West.” In both NATO and the EU, statesmen concluded that enlarging Europe would simply expand the stability enjoyed in the West during the Cold War to the rest of Europe, making it “whole and free.”

That assumption proved illusory. Strategic stability, as we saw from history, traditionally depended on a respect for Westphalian principles of sovereignty and non-interference, conditions that did not exist even in the Cold War, when stability depended more on the cohesion of the West preserving a balance of power alongside a nuclear age balance of terror.

Ultimately, we discovered that, when forces believe the existing order no longer serves their interests, when they are able to mobilize the instruments that would give them advantage in battle, and when they can envision—whether rationally or not—a political outcome that is achievable and worth the risk, then the system has repeatedly proven itself unstable and prone to violent conflict. This appears to have been the case by the beginning of the 21st century, as Russia began to assert its challenge to a system that it believed illegitimately encroached on its core national interests.

The political, economic, demographic, and technological changes evident in the 21st century have created many of the conditions for instability around the world, as well as opportunities for those political leaders seeking to revise the *status quo* to attack vulnerable societies with effective non-military instruments that are relatively low cost and—significantly different than in the Cold War—much lower risk. These are the roots of strategic instability in our time.

Both NATO and the EU—as institutions and among their members—are vulnerable to these attacks and to the strategic instability that accompany them. They need a coordinated and integrated strategy that addresses them. NATO cannot be simply the “hard power” institution, while the EU tends to “soft power.” The West needs to affirm—even to its own populations—and defend its core values, recognizing that these values need to compete in a diverse and volatile world, and accommodating others’ interests while protecting our own in a positive-sum game. The West needs to shore up the legitimacy of its own institutions and then use them—national and international, public and private—to address the real dislocations and sources of instability, both at home and abroad, which threaten our societies.

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Whatever shortcomings and errors may exist in this paper are my own.

Schuyler Foerster
Colorado Springs, CO
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