

TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY SYMPOSIUM 2016

European Security Governance and Transatlantic Relations

Concept

Accustomed to over twenty years of living in what they perceived as a low threat environment, European countries and the US are struggling to adapt to a dramatically deteriorated security predicament in Europe.

To the east, Russia poses a complex and multifaceted challenge. The Kremlin has increasingly worked towards undermining the security order set up after the end of the Cold War, which it sees as invariably imbalanced against its security interests and foreign policy room for manoeuvre. Russia has not hesitated to resort to the use of force and even land grabs – the 2014 annexation of Crimea broke a taboo that had been in place in Europe since 1945 – in order to prevent countries such as Georgia and Ukraine from moving closer to Euro-Atlantic frameworks. Geopolitics has increasingly mixed with politics and ideology, as Russia's leadership apparently considers control of the near abroad as vital not only to the national interest but also to its own survival and the preservation of Russia's supposedly cultural and value exceptionalism.

To the south, civil wars, collapse of state structures, interstate rivalries and the proliferation of an extremely violent variant of Islamic fundamentalism have resulted in massive migration flows towards Europe and an increase in terrorist and criminal activities in European states. The magnitude of the migration flows has created deep anxieties in European societies and strained the capacity of governments to regulate the phenomenon, painfully laying bare the difficulty of EU governments to forge effective intra-European cooperation. Jihadist groups, most notably the self-styled Islamic State (IS), have shown both the intention and the capacity to carry out deadly attacks on European soil, forcing national governments to face difficult trade-offs between security and freedom as well as between national action and multilateral cooperation.

Europe's troubles ultimately reflect the absence of effective security governance. The fact that Russia is no longer willing to support the post-Cold War security architecture does not dispense Western leaders with figuring out how they can re-build a functioning order in Europe. The process might involve a renegotiation with Moscow of arms control arrangements, security architectures and the status of former Soviet republics. The alternative could be a strategy of pragmatic management of competition

combining diplomatic pressure, targeted sanctions, support for former Soviet republics with Western-Russian mechanisms for avoiding incidents and containing risks and address emergencies. In the Mediterranean area, the task is to tackle the most urgent threats – including the capacity of IS and other jihadist groups to direct or inspire attacks on European soil. At the same time, it is necessary to work on longer-term policies of stabilization through, first, an effort at recreating local governance systems in countries where state apparatuses have ceased to exist or have become dysfunctional and, second, laying the ground for an embryonic system of regional governance.

A changed threat environment warrants a re-adjustment of national and above all multilateral security governance instruments. NATO, as the main security provider in Europe, has a massive stake in the process. Against the backdrop of a severely deteriorated security environment in the East, the Alliance has to re-think and upgrade its defence and deterrence assets so that it is better able to confront nuclear, conventional, cyber and hybrid warfare challenges from Russia. NATO's partnerships with former Soviet republics will also have to be re-organized in line with the principles guiding the quest for a functioning security governance in Europe. North Africa and the Middle East present a quite different set of challenges. The collapse of state security structures make it necessary to somehow 'fill the gap' through, for instance, forms of limited military engagement and assistance in the reconstruction of the capabilities needed to re-centralize the monopoly of violence, re-establish control of the territory and secure the borders. IS's control of large swathes of Iraq and Syria's territory raises the question of whether NATO has a role to play in those theatres too.

This worsening landscape gives Europe a new strategic relevance for the United States, still the main guarantor of the continent's security through NATO and a dense web of bilateral and EU-US partnerships and initiatives. Faced with other pressing challenges in the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, the Obama administration has attempted to balance recommitment to Europe with greater reliance on its European partners. It has coordinated its response to Russia's actions in Ukraine with key EU member states, notably Germany, and encouraged the Europeans to take greater responsibility for handling issues in the Mediterranean, particularly Libya. To an extent, this approach has served the purpose of spurring the Europeans into taking the initiative. Yet it has also caused some concerns about a lack of willingness on the US side to provide sustained and decisive leadership. Uncertainty surrounds the next US president's policies towards Europe's security, as it remains unclear whether he or she will be more inclined to follow Obama's line of limited engagement, opt for a more robust involvement, or disengage altogether.

The question of how to re-build security governance in Europe and what steps should be taken to diminish insecurity (and the related risks) in the Mediterranean are intertwined with the direction the next US president will give to America's cooperation with the Europeans on a bilateral, EU-US and NATO level. In the next months, American and European experts and policymakers will engage in exchanges of views and analyses in the attempt to give a preliminary answer to this overarching question. Bringing together a select group of experts and policymakers from the US, Europe and other countries, the Transatlantic Security Symposium 2016 is part of the Istituto Affari Internazionali's contribution to this debate.

Annex 1

Transatlantic Security Symposium

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The Transatlantic Security Symposium is a policy-oriented project first launched by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in 2007-08 to establish a regular annual forum in Italy for a debate on the major topics of the transatlantic security agenda.

The project has two main goals:

- providing analysis and assessment of the evolution of the transatlantic security partnership;
- working out a set of policy recommendations for more effective cooperation between the United States and Europe.

The project also aims at stimulating the debate in Italy on security and defence issues, facilitating the interaction between the Italian security community and its counterparts in the United States and Europe, and helping to build a bridge between research and policy-makers.

Participants comprise **experts** from Europe and the United States, international organizations such as NATO and the EU, and third countries. A number of Italian analysts, officials, and representatives from the private sector are regularly invited to the events.

IAI has so far organized **eight editions** of the Transatlantic Security Symposium, while the **ninth edition** is going to take place in the fall 2016:

- the first edition focused on different aspects of the *US-European security partnership* such as stability-oriented operations, counter-terrorism, and defence industry cooperation;
- the second Symposium delved deep into the *relationships of the US and Europe with Russia*;
- the third edition explored the *nexus between European security and the transatlantic relationship*;
- the fourth edition attempted an assessment of the *West's policy response to the wave of Arab uprisings* which have been shaking a number of countries in North Africa, the Middle East, and the Gulf;
- the fifth edition concentrated on the *Potential and Challenges of EU-US relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council*;
- the sixth edition was dedicated to *Transatlantic Security in the Sabel and the Horn of Africa*;
- the seventh edition focused on *West-Russia Relations in Light of the Ukraine Crisis*;
- the eight edition discussed *The Challenges to European Security* from a transatlantic perspective.

All conferences recorded a broad participation of senior experts from the US, Europe, Italy and other countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Ghana, Ethiopia, etc. and succeeded in stimulating an open, frank, and intense debate.

The Transatlantic Security Symposium has relied on various **sources of funding**. The Compagnia di San Paolo and Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs have generously sponsored *all editions* of the Symposium.

Among regular contributors are also NATO Public Diplomacy Division and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Rome office), which have sponsored all but one edition of the Symposium each, the Robert

Bosch Stiftung (2011 and 2012 editions) and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) (2008 and 2009 edition).

Other institutions that have at least once supported the initiative include the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung (2010 edition); Italy's Ministry of Defence and the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) (2008 edition).

The Center on the United States and Europe of the Brookings Institution in Washington co-organised the 2014 edition. The Johns Hopkins University's School for Advanced International Studies Bologna Center (SAIS-Bologna Center) joined IAI in co-organising the 2010 edition of the Symposium. The EU Institute of Security Studies (EUISS) gave a contribution to the organisation of the first two editions of the Symposium.