

Ukraine Must Not Become a New Berlin Wall

**By Des Browne, Wolfgang Ischinger, Igor Ivanov,
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Today Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Kerry will meet in London to discuss the Ukrainian crisis. The situation that we now see in Ukraine graphically demonstrates the inadequacies of the current Euro-Atlantic security system. More than twenty years after the end of the Cold War, the states of the Euro-Atlantic region have yet to define, agree or implement an approach to security that can ensure peace, independence, and freedom from fear of violence for all nations.

No nation benefits from this persistent inaction to find an inclusive way to ensure mutual security for all. Events around Ukraine today are the latest confirmation of this grim reality and in the long run will be detrimental to Russia, Europe, the United States, and the citizens of Ukraine.

The heart of the problem is a corrosive lack of trust among nations in the region, exacerbated by a list of persistent, difficult issues that endanger regional security. This “deficit of trust” within the Euro-Atlantic community undermines cooperation, increases tensions, raises costs, and ultimately puts our citizens at unnecessary risk.

Ukraine’s circumstances today present a grave danger and create a necessity for joint action. Ukraine must not become a new Berlin Wall in Europe. Dividing Ukraine would mean dividing Europe again. The crisis should be a lesson for us all --a call to unite our efforts to assist Ukrainians in reaching a lasting accommodation among themselves, and to lay the foundation for a new comprehensive Euro-Atlantic security community.

In the interests of overcoming the crisis in Ukraine, we support efforts by governments to form a Contact Group comprised of foreign ministers from Russia, the United States, and key European countries. This Contact Group should work to reduce tensions and prepare a detailed program of action to resolve the present crisis. That program could include the employment of international monitors in Ukraine, support for free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections, and programs and means to protect the rights and ensure the safety of all people living in Ukraine.

Any long-term settlement of the present Ukrainian crisis should include respect for Ukrainian independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, as well as respect for the rights and aspirations of all ethnic groups in Ukraine.

On the basis of these principles the Contact Group could also support plans for immediate political, economic, and social measures to assist Ukraine's recovery from its present economic and political crisis. The implementation of these plans could also be closely monitored by the Contact Group.

In addition to the Contact Group, assistance from other international and regional institutions would be welcome, including in particular the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

By working together on the immediate crisis, we will not only assist the Ukrainian people in their desperate situation but will also lay the foundation for the trust needed to build an effective, new Euro-Atlantic security community.

A much-needed new approach to security in the region must include a new dialogue among Euro-Atlantic states on building mutual security. The dialogue must be mandated by political leaders and must address core security issues through a dynamic process that directly deals with key divides. Looking ahead, such a mandate could help create the essential, positive momentum for discussions that would further boost what must be a systematic effort to deepen cooperation and mutual understanding and avoid future conflicts.

Today's leaders have a responsibility and opportunity to apply a fresh approach to Euro-Atlantic security. We believe this new approach for building mutual security can move Europe, Russia, and the United States towards a safer and more stable form of security with decreasing risks of conflict and greater cooperation, transparency, defense and stability.

The world is watching. Resolving this dramatic crisis in Ukraine could chart a new path for Euro-Atlantic relations.

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