



STATEMENT BY THE EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY LEADERSHIP GROUP (EASLG)

Prepared for Presidents, Prime Ministers, Parliamentarians, and Publics

Shrinking the Zone of Confrontation and Competition: Principles for Euro-Atlantic Security and the Global Nuclear Order

The vision of mutual security in the Euro-Atlantic region—a geographic and political space that includes the European community of nations, Russia, and the United States—appears more distant today than at any time in the past 30 years. The consensus now in much of Europe is that convergence with Russia does not work; hence, the West is now decoupling from Russia, and Russia from the West. The war in Ukraine has undermined security for all nations in the Euro-Atlantic area and leaders face risks of miscalculation, compounded by the potential for the use of nuclear weapons, where millions could be killed in minutes. **The heart of the problem is a complete lack of trust among nations stemming from the war and resulting inability of leaders and nations to engage collectively and comprehensively on an extremely difficult menu of issues relating to regional security.** This has led to the polar opposite of mutual security: an expanding zone of confrontation and competition between states, raising the risk of escalation.

No nation benefits from a persistent and deadly war and threats of an even more devastating conflict. Governments that are openly adversarial today cannot indefinitely avoid their shared responsibility to work together to mitigate global risks arising from today's security environment, for the present generation and for generations to come. Nations still have existential common interests in areas relating to climate change, nuclear and biological threats, as well as managing new disruptive technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and preserving freedom of navigation. **Thus, re-establishing basic principles relating to security and nuclear order is essential.** Mutual security is the best guidepost—and must be made resilient to big shocks.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY AND THE GLOBAL NUCLEAR ORDER

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. The challenge of doing so in the midst of a war at the center of Europe resulting in a half a million deaths and injuries to Ukrainian and Russian troops,¹ and 28,500 civilian deaths and injuries,² is daunting. To some, it may seem impossible. But **history teaches us that even in the midst of great loss and sorrow, we must continue to think forward.** Agreed principles can provide a foundation for officials and experts to re-engage and eventually make progress toward shrinking the zone of confrontation and competition, reducing nuclear risks, and building mutual security. These principles could include the following:

1 Restore communication and dialogue to manage instability and build mutual security.

The absence of communication and dialogue erodes trust necessary for building mutual security. This lack of contact hinders our ability to understand the perspective of others, sharpens mistrust, and increases risks. Across the region, restoring communication and dialogue now between leaders remains essential to creating the political space for civilian and military officials to engage on a range of issues.

In the near-term, communication and dialogue should be focused on managing instability. Crisis management dialogue was an essential tool throughout the Cold War—used for the day-to-day managing of potentially dangerous military activities, not for sending political signals. Leaders should not deprive themselves of this essential tool today. We do not want communication simply to reinforce the status quo; rather in the long term, states need dialogue to define where they would like to be in, for example, 10 years and identify the tools and actions necessary to get there.

2 Identify and advance areas of existential common interests.

States have existential common interests where they can and must work together across the Euro-Atlantic space. These include preventing the use of nuclear weapons, reversing the erosion of arms control agreements that for decades have reduced nuclear risks, stopping the further spread of nuclear weapons, and refraining from any resumption of explosive nuclear testing. To the extent possible, nations in the Euro-Atlantic region should seek to compartmentalize nuclear risk reduction from toxic geopolitical confrontation.

3 Recognize non-Euro-Atlantic perspectives on security.

Global interconnectedness and cross-regional security loom larger than they did 10 years ago. It is getting harder to compartmentalize Europe, and harder to frame a solely European approach to security. Nations in the Euro-Atlantic space must be more ambitious and global in their perspective, understanding impacts and perspectives from Asia, the Middle East, and the Global South.

¹ Helene Cooper, Thomas Gibbons-Neff, Eric Schmitt and Julian E. Barnes, “Troop Deaths and Injuries in Ukraine War Near 500,000, U.S. Officials Say,” *New York Times*, August 18, 2023.

² Krzysztof Janowski, “Civilian Deaths in Ukraine War Top 10,000, UN Says,” *United Nations Ukraine*, November 21, 2023.

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4 Adopt a “multi-basket” approach to security.

Mutual security must integrate practical concrete steps that holistically address security, humanitarian, economic, and political concerns of nations in the Euro-Atlantic space and beyond.

5 Increase leadership decision time.

Creating robust and accepted methods to increase decision time for leaders, especially during heightened tensions and extreme situations when leaders fear their nations may be under threat of attack, could be a common conceptual goal that links both near- and long-term steps for managing instability and working toward mutual security.

6 Manage and control emerging threats and technologies.

The risks and challenges to Euro-Atlantic and global security today engage increased numbers of players including constellations of nation-states and the private sector. Risks have changed and are higher in today’s world, including the challenges that come with emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and cyber and hypersonic capabilities, which can dangerously compress decision time and complicate the safe management of highly lethal weapons and military capabilities. Nations in the Euro-Atlantic region must be more sensitive to technology as a catalyst to adapt their thinking.

7 Increase accountability, transparency, and predictability.

Steps that increase accountability, transparency, and predictability are essential to reduce near-term risks and, over the long term, restore cooperation and trust between nations.

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