

# NATO, the EU, Ukraine, Russia and Crimea: The “Reset” that was Never “Reset”

## **Introduction:**

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region was the gravest threat to European security for a generation. In response, NATO has begun to reinforce the alliance's defences in Eastern Europe and halted all civilian and military cooperation with Russia. At the Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels earlier this week, the alliance also expressed concerns over the build-up of Russian troops on Ukraine's eastern border. (For our summary of the two day meeting click [here](#) and [here](#)).

NATO planners are also beginning to look at other deterrence options including deploying permanent military forces in the Baltic states and Eastern Europe, while most 'expert commentary' is arguing for a tougher security response to the 'Russian security problem'. Voices arguing for de-escalation and engagement with Russia are thin on the ground. We are delighted therefore to publish this briefing paper by Hall Gardner, Professor and Co-Chair of International and Comparative Politics at the American University of Paris, in which he makes a strong case for a "grand compromise" between the US, Europeans and Russia.

## **Key Points:**

- The Crimea crisis reveals the complete failure of NATO, the EU and Russia to find a path toward defence and security cooperation in the post-Cold War era.
- Allied support for the “open enlargement” of NATO has continued to send the wrong signals to both Kiev and Moscow.
- Transatlantic reaction to the Russian annexation of the Crimea raises the prospects of continual, if not escalating, NATO-European-Russian tensions.
- There is a crucial need for a concerted US-EU-Russian policy to prevent Ukrainian state collapse, bankruptcy and socio-political instability.
- Two root causes of the current crisis were:
  - NATO's failure to address the regional security needs of the Black Sea and Caucasus, including legitimate Russian security concerns (as opposed to failing to expand its membership and its mission to Georgia and Ukraine, which some have argued as a root cause); and
  - The failure to sign an EU-Russia-Ukraine agreement for economic cooperation in parallel with the EU-Ukraine association agreement.
- In order to keep open communication channels with Moscow, the EU should postpone aspects of the Association Accords with Kiev that do not directly or indirectly include pro-Russian Ukrainian interests in those discussions.
- NATO needs to modify its open enlargement policy with respect to Ukraine and the Caucasus in return for the implementation of a regional “peace and development community” for the entire Black Sea and southern Caucasus region.
- It is crucial that Ukraine formally sustain its neutral, non-aligned status.
- The key challenge now is to find ways for the US, EU, Ukraine and Russia to cooperate in a Contact Group, while working with the NATO-Russia Council and NATO-Ukrainian Commission.
- A more decentralized Ukrainian federation could be achieved through the establishment of at least two International Centers of Peace and Development in Lviv and Kharkiv to serve as a bridge to help develop the eastern and western regions of Ukraine, while also linking Russia and Ukraine to Europe. A third center in Sevastopol could also help establish new forms of cooperation between Ukraine,

Europe, the United States and Russia.

- A “grand compromise” between the US, Europeans and Russia (by means of a regional system of peace and development for the entire Black Sea and Caucasus) will require truly engaged diplomacy in which US, EU and Ukrainian 'vital' interests and those of Moscow are eventually redefined and reconciled. The alternative is a period of intense geopolitical and arms rivalry that could soon prove even more dangerous than that of the Cold War.

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