

**Testimony of Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger**

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**Before**

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**Towards a new Grand Bargain with Russia**

Thank you Chairman Berman and Ranking Minority Member Ros-Lehtinen inviting me to participate in this hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. It is particularly nice for me to be back in Washington, D.C., where I served both as a young diplomat in the early 1980's and where two of my children were born. More recently, I had the distinct honor of being the German Ambassador to the United States from 2001 to 2006, and developed an even greater appreciation of the vibrancy of the U.S. political system and the importance of the European-American relationship.

1. In my concluding remarks as Chairman of the Munich Security Conference in 2009, I observed that we were witnessing a "political spring". Vice President Joseph Biden had delivered a remarkable speech in Munich, indicating that the Obama Administration wanted to push the reset button in US-Russian relations. However, the global "political spring" that was in the air a year ago has not yet fully materialized – especially regarding key issues of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture.

The legacy of the post-Cold war period has hampered progress. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the former adversaries intended to create an inclusive system of common security, a security architecture that would integrate the former Soviet republics into pan-European and pan-Atlantic institutions. However, this has not been realized – resulting in a system that is in need of some repair. Most evidently, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the comprehensive security forum in Europe, has lost some of its appeal because some member states feel that their vital concerns are not sufficiently addressed.

During the debate on NATO enlargement in the 1990s, agreement was reached that such a move should be accompanied by initiatives which would address Russia's concerns about whether or not it might pose a direct threat to Russia itself. To

address this, the NATO-Russia-Council was established in 1997 and while this was the right decision, it never really lived up to its expectations.. In retrospect, this forum was never really used for discussing common threats and for searching for common solutions and too much time was spent on discussion of matters that were only of marginal importance. As a result the relationship between Russia and the West became increasingly burdened.

This manifested itself most clearly in 2008 when the NATO-Russia-Council was suspended in response to the Russian-Georgian war and marked the low point in a process of continuous deterioration. This crisis made it clear that the existing Euro-Atlantic security institutions are not adequately equipped to create the “Europe, whole, free, and united” we all wanted to pursue.

A common effort of the United States, Europe and Russia is therefore strongly needed to finally realize a sustainable Euro-Atlantic security architecture. The process of developing a New Strategic Concept for NATO provides a window of opportunity in 2010 for this and I hope that success in establishing it can be achieved.

2. In Central Europe, there is growing concern about Russia’s role. Last summer, a number of distinguished politicians from Central Europe deplored the fact that “NATO today seems weaker than when we joined. In many of our countries it is perceived as less and less relevant - and we feel it. Although we are full members, people question whether NATO would be willing and able to come to our defense in some future crises.”<sup>1</sup> Such concerns need to be taken seriously as only 20 years have passed since these nation’s emerged from the Soviet bloc and the memories of previous times remain still a strong memory.

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<sup>1</sup> Adamkus, Valdas, *et al.* 15 July 2009: An Open Letter to the Obama Administration from Central and Eastern Europe, in: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15 July 2009.

3. Russia, for its part, has perceived itself to be marginalized in Europe for quite some time, and this has been a source of considerable frustration. It does not want to be the odd man out while – as President Medvedev remarked – almost all other nations that emerged from the Soviet block have found their place in Europe. In this regard, it should be noted that the Russian proposal for a new European Security Treaty – despite legitimate concerns many in the West have raised about it – demonstrates that Russia defines itself as part of Europe and wants to belong to Europe.

NATO Secretary General Rasmussen gave a remarkable speech in Moscow about three months ago. He underlined that Russia is not a threat to NATO, nor is NATO a threat to Russia. Rather than fighting the ghosts of the past, he stressed, we should focus on our shared interests in fighting common threats to our security.

4. What is indeed needed in my view is nothing less than a *Grand Bargain* between North America, Europe, and Russia. We need out-of-the-box-thinking. This is why the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace recently decided to establish the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative (EASI), launched in December 2009 and chaired by Igor Ivanov, Sam Nunn and myself. The EASI Commission will seek to develop and promote a comprehensive approach to our common security space. During the next two years, we will provide ideas and suggestions as to how to shape our security environment, and how to promote US-European-Russian cooperation.

There is a temptation to think small and this is perhaps one of the reasons why the Russia-NATO Council has not worked. All options should remain on the table that may serve to enhance our common security and to provide for a framing of European security in win-win-terms. Unfortunately, there is still much suspicion,

disappointment, and misperception. Too many still think in zero-sum terms, in which a stronger West means a loss for Russia or vice versa. We need to rebuild trust.

One step to rebuild trust might include negotiations on the reduction or elimination of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Those who argue that such a move would mark the beginning of NATO's end, make the mistake to cling to a cold-war perception of Russia as a potential aggressor and not as a strategic partner with whom we will share common strategic interests. As we elaborate NATO's future strategic concept, we should accept the imperative that security and stability in Europe in the 21st century is only possible with Russia and not against Russia. NATO must live up to the criteria of mutual trust and partnership established in the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 if we want Russia to look at NATO and its enlargement not as a threat and security challenge, but as an opportunity.

Those who argue that a withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Europe would constitute a material change to Alliance defense commitments and would make European NATO members more vulnerable miss an important point. As early as 1987, NATO Foreign Ministers proposed significant reductions of short range nuclear weapons in their Reykjavik declaration. And when 15 years ago US-Secretary of Defense William Perry pledged that NATO would have no intention, no need, and no plan to deploy nuclear weapons to the new member states, he correctly clarified that European NATO countries would be covered by the US nuclear umbrella regardless of whether or not nuclear weapons are stationed on their territory. In other words: extended defense does not require the physical presence of nuclear weapons on the territory of the countries covered.

In addition it has to be said that the role and purpose of nuclear weapons has changed fundamentally. While nuclear weapons have deterred military conflict during

the cold war, most military experts today agree that any residual benefits of nuclear arsenals are now overshadowed by the growing risk of proliferation and the related risk of nuclear terrorism. The world is approaching a “proliferation tipping point” when nuclear weapons spread beyond the capacity of any effort to rein them in and the danger increases that they will be used by a country in conflict or by accident, or by a terrorist group. Therefore, US-Russian negotiations on the reduction or elimination of tactical nuclear weapons appear desirable, and the issue should therefore be discussed at NATO, as a first step.

With respect to the institutional relationship between NATO and Russia, a German member of the EASI Commission, former Secretary of Defense Volker Rühle, recently argued that NATO should invite Russia to join NATO.<sup>2</sup> The Atlantic Alliance, he argued, “should understand itself as a strategic brace for the three centers of power: North America, Europe, and Russia.” To be sure, he made clear that there was a still a long way to go and the Russian Federation “must be prepared to accept the rights and obligations of a NATO member, of an equal among equals.” However, it is high time to make a first step since – as he aptly put it – “it is a necessity for NATO to figure out now how Russia can find its way into the Euro-Atlantic community.”

5. At the very least, we should seek to intensify cooperation with Russia. There is no reason why NATO and Russia cannot work together much more closely in a number of areas, including Iran, the Middle East, and arms control. The same is true for the development of a common missile defense system as suggested by NATO Secretary General Rasmussen in Moscow.

The US, Europe, and Russia are confronting the same threats: the proliferation of nuclear weapons, climate change, international terrorism, failed states, migration,

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,682287,00.html>.

organized crime etc. The financial and economic crisis has only made it more obvious that cooperation is vital in times of strained budgets. Four examples may highlight the dimension of our common challenges:

- First, there is the issue of the Iranian nuclear program. We will not solve the problem if the West and Russia cannot agree on a common policy towards Iran. During the recent Munich Security Conference in 2010, Russian speakers have made it clear that they share our concern about the potential threat posed by Iran as a military nuclear power.
- Second, Afghanistan will continue to occupy the agenda of Western security policy. 2010 will be a crucial year for NATO: The stakes are high. Russia, too, has understood that a stable Afghanistan is in its vital interest. It has adopted a more and more constructive role.
- Third, we must revitalize the efforts of the Middle East Quartet and overcome the stalemate in the peace process. But a sustainable peace agreement requires a comprehensive security architecture for the whole region – including Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey, covering also Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.
- Fourth, strengthening the global non-proliferation regime is a shared high priority objective. Bilateral US-Russian and multilateral arms control initiatives can help improve the political climate, remove or reduce nuclear and non-nuclear military threats, and strengthen the non-proliferation treaty (NPT). This is why US-Russian arms control agreements are so important. Developing ballistic missile defense systems together would be a game-changing project. The vision of a world free of nuclear weapons can also contribute significantly to a strengthened global non-proliferation regime.

6. The process of formulating a new Strategic Concept for NATO provides an important window of opportunity for NATO members to open up a debate on a new grand bargain with Russia. Such a grand bargain would need to incorporate a wide range of issues of common concern. NATO's new Strategic Concept should encourage and propose determined efforts to link Russia to the West. The new Strategic Concept also offers a major opportunity to create a sustainable consensus among NATO members on the Alliance's policy towards Russia. This is, in my view, the key strategic challenge for the transatlantic community in 2010.

### **Conclusion**

I thank you again, Chairman Berman, for inviting me to participate in this forum. It is important that we make the best possible use of the strategic opportunities that lie before us to strengthen US-European cooperation across a wide spectrum of issues of common concern, including, in particular, the future of the security architecture of Europe: "Europe whole, free, and united" should remain our common objective as we continue to keep the West's door to the Russian Federation open.