

What is the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative?

The Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative (EASI) was initiated by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 2009. EASI brought together former policymakers, diplomats, generals, and business leaders from Russia, North America, and Europe to look at options to address the region's faltering security system and to chart a roadmap of practical action that would lead to a more secure future.

Who are the members of the commission?

The first-of-its-kind, high-level, 26-member international commission is led by the three co-chairs: former German deputy foreign minister and ambassador to the United States, Wolfgang Ischinger; former Russian foreign minister, Igor Ivanov; and former United States senator and chair of the Armed Services Committee, Sam Nunn.

What are the major problems facing the Euro-Atlantic region?

Unprecedented challenges from without and within threaten to reverse the progress toward the safe, secure, undivided Euro-Atlantic world hoped for in the wake of the Cold War.

Economic malaise and a crisis of leadership and legitimacy have left the peoples of this huge region feeling disillusioned, discontented, and skeptical of politics. There has been a renationalization of decisionmaking and a weakening of traditional bonds between North America and Europe as nations turn inward. Historical enmities between Russia and the United States and among others across the region inhibit effective cooperation in meeting urgent security challenges, such as threats to peace from unresolved conflicts between and within Euro-Atlantic states, the threat of cyberwar, and the tensions generated over the critical trade in gas.

These challenges risk both overwhelming the security structures of the Euro-Atlantic region and leaving its nations incapable of global leadership in the new century. To overcome that future, a twenty-first-century problem demands a twenty-first-century solution, one that at last builds an inclusive, effective Euro-Atlantic Security Community.

What are the commission's recommendations?

The only means to assure long-term security lies in building an inclusive, undivided, functioning Euro-Atlantic Security Community—a community without barriers, in which all would expect resolution of disputes exclusively by diplomatic, legal, or other nonviolent means, without recourse to military force or the threat of its use.

Governments within the community would share a common strategy and understanding in the face of mutual threats and a commitment to the proposition that the best and most efficient way to tackle threats, both internal and external, is through cooperation. As part of this process, the security of Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and other new states must be assured and the area's frozen conflicts resolved.

Rather than relying primarily on expanding existing alliances, creating more new institutions, or drafting more treaties and declarations, nothing short of a transformation of relations among states and societies will suffice. The way forward must focus on overcoming mistrust between Russia and the United States and the security fears that perpetuate it. No less must it strive for a historical reconciliation between states whose lingering enmities plague many parts of the Euro-Atlantic region.

To begin, steps need to be taken that will foster cooperation on practical tasks, initiate new patterns of action, and open a process in which key parties work together. They in turn must be guided by ambitious goals, particularly transforming and demilitarizing strategic relations between the United States/NATO and Russia and achieving historical reconciliation where old and present enmities prevent normal relations and cooperation.

What should policymakers do to build a new security community?

The leaders of Russia, the United States, and Europe need to demonstrate their commitment to this idea by action. To begin the process, leaders can take a number of practical steps in the next eighteen months:

1. Publicly pledge support for the vision of a Euro-Atlantic Security Community in advance of the May 2012 NATO summit.
2. Adopt a two-part agenda at the NATO summit to arrest the trend toward increasing confrontation and conflict in Europe. This includes mandating senior military leaders and defense officials to explore reciprocal steps designed to lengthen warning and decision time in Europe in conventional and nuclear spheres and furthering missile defense cooperation by restoring NATO-Russia military exchanges and exercises in ballistic missile defense under the NATO-Russia Council.
3. Establish and fund a group of former heads of state/government to reenergize conflict resolution in the Euro-Atlantic region under OSCE auspices, beginning with Moldova and Armenia/Azerbaijan.
4. Promote further progress in Polish-Russian historical reconciliation and stimulate a more comprehensive effort between Russia and the Baltic states by opening archives essential for addressing difficult issues between the parties involved.
5. Establish a Russia-EU Center for Energy Innovation and Energy Efficiency.
6. Strengthen the early warning mechanism between Russia and the EU established in 2009 to deal with potential short-term disruptions in European gas supply by undertaking mutual obligations and a detailed backup plan.
7. Announce, under the auspices of the OSCE, the goal of visa-free travel across the entire region and begin the step-by-step abolition of visa regimes through action to allow multiple-entry visas to citizens of all nations.
8. Begin a formal high-level dialogue among members of the Arctic Council exchanging information on national defense planning for the Arctic and seek specific ways to coordinate initiatives.

What can be done to improve military security?

The bedrock of Euro-Atlantic security depends on eliminating the use—or threat of use—of military force to settle disputes within the region. To do this, U.S., NATO, and Russian national leaders should mandate a serious and sustained dialogue at both the military and political level to increase stability and reduce tension and cooperate on missile defense.

What would a new military and political dialogue hope to achieve?

If the Cold War nuclear postures are to be eliminated and security policies reoriented to address twenty-first-century threats, military leaders and defense officials must be charged with engaging in a comprehensive and sustained dialogue that includes all aspects of the problem: perceptions, capabilities, operational doctrines, and intentions.

The dialogue needs to address both conventional and new threats. The goal would not be a formal negotiated treaty or new security architecture but rather a dynamic confidence-building process to lengthen warning and decisionmaking time in both of Europe's military spheres—conventional and nuclear. It would unfold in a variety of forums, with some involving all Euro-Atlantic states, others at a bilateral level.

How can Russia and NATO cooperate on missile defense?

Cooperation on missile defense can be a game changer. Despite the current diplomatic impasse, cooperative missile defense offers an avenue to the larger goal of transforming the very nature of security relations between Russia and the United States/NATO.

Success must be the highest priority of governments. A shared system would remove an issue that has poisoned U.S.-Russian relations for two decades and instead turn it into an instrument of cooperation. U.S.-NATO-Russian missile defense cooperation is not only insurance against a potential intrinsic threat but also a critical component in building a larger security community, and it must not be allowed to fade from the very center of the security agenda.

How can the historical mistrust between countries be addressed?

Recent success in addressing old frictions in Polish-Russian relations, the settlement of long-standing border issues between Russia and Norway, and the long-term experience of Finnish-Russian relations indicate that leadership and commitment can yield progress toward normal relations. All countries in this region need to work on removing historical impediments to normal relations and cooperation.

Relations between Russia and the Baltic states hold a promising opportunity. Success will not come easily, but the recent Polish-Russian experience provides useful lessons. Building on steps that have already been taken, the Baltic states and Russia should intensify efforts to address the issues that continue to divide them and their societies.

How can the region's protracted conflicts be resolved?

Protracted regional conflicts poison politics, retard broader regional economic development and integration, and pose the very real risk of escalation to crisis. For too long, conflicts in Cyprus, the South Caucasus, and the Balkans have disrupted efforts at broader regional cooperation.

Together Russia, the United States, and the leaders of Europe should lead the way in reenergizing conflict resolution in the Euro-Atlantic region. The emphasis should be on developing new means to strengthen diplomacy, to supplement traditional negotiation with the use of instruments of civil society, and to build support for peace within the elite and wider publics of conflicting parties.

The situations in Moldova and between Armenia and Azerbaijan hold promise if countries implement a new civil society approach; insist that leaders on all sides work actively to make rejection of war by the population a top priority; expand traditional diplomacy to include Track II dialogue, “next generation” meetings, and the use of social media; employ former heads of state to address critical bottlenecks; make the rights of national minorities and individuals and the right to self-determination on individual and group levels—without necessarily a right to secession—central to conflict resolution; encourage intersocietal links and a culture of dialogue; and elevate the OSCE to a key role in providing the framework for a reenergized effort to resolve protracted conflicts.

What needs to be done to improve economic security?

Economic security, specifically energy security, is integral to the overall security of the Euro-Atlantic region. The commission has identified two particular areas as fundamental to advancing cooperation and economic security: natural gas and the Arctic.

How can Russia and Europe improve cooperation over natural gas?

The mutual prosperity and economic security of Russia and the European Union depend on a stable and sustainable system of production, transit, and consumption of natural gas. While energy disputes among regional actors have frequently escalated into security disputes, a stable supply of energy benefits all of the region’s economies.

To do this, cooperation on improving energy efficiency as pursued in both the U.S.-Russian Bilateral Presidential Commission and the EU-Russia Energy Dialogue needs to increase. Leaders should create formal machinery tasked with jointly advancing research and design in energy innovation and efficiency and explore specific steps to make the divergent Russian and EU energy markets more compatible.

The new EU-Russia early warning mechanism should be strengthened with defined responsibilities for all parties. And the national leadership of the EU and Russia should endorse and set about implementing the concrete steps to improve energy-related investment recommended by the bilateral business-led working group organized under the EU-Russia Energy Dialogue.

How can disputes in the Arctic be minimized?

The Arctic is where three of the twenty-first century’s greatest challenges intersect: the pressing need for hydrocarbon resources, climate change, and the tendency to securitize areas containing these resources as well as the passages to them. The Arctic should be thought of as an auspicious chance to build the groundwork for a Euro-Atlantic Security Community.

The states of the Euro-Atlantic region, and first among them the Arctic littoral states (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States) and other members of the Arctic Council (Finland, Iceland, and Sweden), must find ways to collaborate in addressing challenges. To do this, countries should strengthen the Arctic Council’s authority, develop and use technologies to safely exploit the hydrocarbons in this region, and establish ongoing multilateral dialogues to avoid military competition.