

The Trans-Atlantic relations need to be strengthened

By Urban Ahlin and Richard G. Lugar

Sixty years after the end of World War II, the Trans-Atlantic relationship is once again in flux. There has been a great deal of hand-wringing, in national capitals and in international conferences too numerous to count, on whether the mutual cooperation and security built over the years can survive in a new era. We believe the relationship can not only survive, but indeed thrive, providing both sides seek together new opportunities for mutual cooperation and security. The terror bombings of London makes it clear that the Trans-Atlantic relations need to be strengthened in order to fight terrorism and make the world a safer place to live in.

The Cold War was an unconventional war that forged new concepts of Trans-Atlantic cooperation. The security threats we together face from terrorism are also unconventional, and require new forms of international cooperation. No matter how effective our combined diplomatic and military efforts to eliminate terrorism, they will not be sufficient alone to defend our countries' national interests. We can, however, develop the international practices and norms to deal with unsecured weapons and materials worldwide that will make it much more difficult for terrorists to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

Together we served as election observers during the flawed second round of presidential elections in Ukraine in late November last year. We and many other observers called foul. The response of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, who peacefully demonstrated in the streets to stand up for democracy and their basic human rights, gave birth to the Orange Revolution.

The eventual triumph of democracy in Ukraine, with a subsequent free and fair election, was historic not just for Ukraine, but also for the Trans-Atlantic relationship. Continued and concerted assistance to Ukraine provides a real and tangible program on which to build, and further strengthen, cooperation between the United States and Europe.

In many ways, Ukraine started this process more than ten years ago when it became an independent nation after the break-up of the Soviet Union. At that time Ukraine found itself with one of the largest nuclear weapons arsenal in the world. Ukrainian leaders took the bold step to rid themselves of these weapons, and with the assistance of the Nunn-

Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program Ukraine became nuclear weapons free.

But even without the burden of nuclear weapons, Ukraine's nascent democracy struggled. Critical democratic institutions and the rule of law were not strong enough to counter corruption that encouraged smuggling, not just in women and children, but also in weapons, and in money laundering. These are problems that have implications far beyond Ukraine's borders, for they are the illicit means by which terrorist and criminal organizations threaten the both American and European security.

At the same time, we need to develop the international practices and norms to continue to support democracy and economic development in Ukraine and countries like it. This is where our mutual interests in national security intersect with our shared values in human rights and democracy. Promoting economic development, democracy and human rights is an essential component of the larger global effort against terrorism, and a necessary complement to the task of halting the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Nations that are prosperous, free and ruled by law are far less likely to harbour terrorists or foster terrorist ideologies. By the same token, countries that have achieved a secure place in the community of nations are far more willing, and able, to eliminate and control dangerous weapons and materials.

More also needs to be done to encourage Russia's democratic development, rule of law, and human rights. This requires deeper US and EU cooperation on issues related to Russia. We need to continue to work with Russia to contain, control and eliminate weapons of mass destruction. That work, along with the ability of Russia to compete on the global economic arena and the development of energy resources, is in our mutual national security interests.

Both Ukraine and Russia provide the opportunity for a strengthened Trans-Atlantic relationship. And this new relationship will not just benefit the cooperation and security of America and Europe, but all of Europe, including Russia and Ukraine, and the world.

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