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Common Security: Can It Be Reinvented?¹

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In 2021 it is impossible to neglect the fact that our world is moving in a totally wrong direction. Differences between the United States and China are becoming one of the fundamental elements of major powers' competition. Some experts believe that confrontation between the US and China will result in a new edition of bipolarity. Others maintain that the rivalry between the world's two leading economies is a bilateral conflict and cannot evolve into a bipolar world order similar to that of the Cold War. In any case, US-China military tensions are a major risk. These tensions are a time bomb. There is a real risk of a dangerous escalation over Taiwan.

International mechanisms are working less and less effectively. Instead, nations tend to rely on regional projects, regional cooperation, localisation. We observe not only strategic decoupling between the United States and its European allies. In addition, Washington now wants to decouple itself economically and technologically from China.

Multilateral institutions are stagnant or in crisis. Having just marked 75 years since its creation, the United Nations, this universally recognised organisation, is struggling with all the negative effects of confrontation among its members.

The entire architecture of international security is almost destroyed.

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¹ The piece is based on the speech by Dr. Alexey Gromyko at the World Peace Congress, Barcelona, 15-17 October 2021.

Environmental issues and climate change deserve massive attention and action. But the threats of militarisation, a new arms race, risks of an unintentional military conflict between nuclear powers are disproportionately neglected.

Many expectations, connected to the end of the Cold War, were dashed. The bitter fact is that the world since then has not become a safer place. There is a widespread impression that now the world is a more dangerous place than in the 70s and 80s.

Still there is hope. The United Nations has survived. The climate change and green agenda are reverberating across the planet. There are more and more people realising that arms control and disarmament are not less important. In fact it is more important because it deals with immediate existential threats.

Therefore, it is of tantamount importance to think about what big ideas can help to mitigate this situation. One of them is the concept of Common Security in the best traditions of the Pugwash movement². Initially it was elaborated in the Olof Palme Commission Report back in 1982. Nowadays the task is to preserve the essence of the Palme commission Report on Common Security and to build upon it³. The core of its philosophy should be kept intact while a range of recommendations should be modernised to carry forward the Commission's mission⁴.

Common Security is a comprehensive phenomenon which embraces in equal manner the spheres of economy, social life and security as such. Security should be treated as equal and indivisible common good. Security at the expense of others is not achievable. Common security is one of the most important strategies, responsible for the well-being of humankind. The basis of Common Security rests on the fundamental right to life. Therefore it should be treated as a responsibility not a privilege of governments to act in the interests of Common Security.

International and interstate relations will never be free from competition and even rivalry. Therefore, Common Security should be underpinned by strong and viable international mechanisms, in the centre of which should stay the United Nations. Any enforcement in international relations, including military enforcement, should be strictly guided by Chapter VII of the UN Charter⁵.

Arms control and disarmament policy are crucial components of Common Security. Robust support should be given to the Gorbachev-Reagan statement of 1985 and the Putin-Biden statement of 2021 that a nuclear war cannot be won and should never be fought⁶. To fight a nuclear war is suicidal. One day, nuclear deterrence should be replaced by the concept of Common Security.

The politics of nuclear deterrence will last for quite a while. Nevertheless, Common Security to a large extent can be achieved already in the age of nuclear deterrence. The concept and

² <https://pugwash.org>

³ <https://www.equaltimes.org/why-common-security-is-back-on-the>

⁴ <https://commonsecurity.org/>

⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>

⁶ <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5658>

practice of Common Security will play a substantial role in phasing out the policy of nuclear deterrence. Meanwhile the extension of New Start Treaty for 5 years, as well as negotiations of all P5 states on the future of strategic stability, should be fully supported. A multilateral and verifiable moratorium, proposed by Russia, on the deployment of Intermediate Nuclear Forces in Europe should also be supported.

Common Security means enhancing stability by increasing transparency, avoiding dangerous military activities, and providing dedicated political and military-to-military communication channels that would avoid escalation of incidents that might occur. Goodwill and confidence-building measures are indispensable elements of Common Security.

All nations should exert their efforts to achieve ratification of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and to make it judicially enforceable. The development and deployment of weapons in outer space or weapons directed against objects in outer space should be prohibited. The Non-Proliferation Treaty is further jeopardised by the intention of the US and the UK to transfer nuclear technologies to Australia for military purposes⁷.

Russian scientists continue to exert efforts to re-establish arms control agenda and to stop brinkmanship in Europe. For more than a year now the Institute of Europe and the Institute for the US and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences have been working with the European Leadership Network and many other colleagues from Europe and the United States on de-escalation of relations between Russia and NATO. Last December a report on Military Risk Reduction in Europe was published⁸. Since then the project has been moving ahead.

Common Security remains an indispensable condition for the salvation of humanity from extinction.

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⁷ <https://www.cpdcs.org/peace-movements-perspectives-on-the-aucus-military-pact/>

⁸ <http://en.instituteofeurope.ru/images/stories/structura/gromyko/publications/rden.pdf>