

ORG, Russia and NATO

Richard Reeve

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While the British vote to leave the European Union (EU) has shaken that institution, it may strengthen the other pillar of post-1945 European integration, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), on whose function and future there has been virtually no public debate in the UK. With NATO's 28 heads of government preparing to meet in [Warsaw on 8-9 July](#), the alliance's response to what it sees as Russia's increasingly assertive and aggressive military posture will be at the top of its agenda. Also under discussion may be the 'adjustment' of NATO's nuclear posture, more explicitly to counter Russia's evolving nuclear arsenal and doctrine.

Since the onset of the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, Oxford Research Group has worked to understand what drives the greatest tensions in European security

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for a generation, not least Russia's own perception of its place and interests in Europe and the wider world.

Our Sustainable Security team has worked with UK analysts, media and decision-makers to encourage a more nuanced and sustainable response to the European security crisis. Our two recent submission to the House of Commons [Defence](#) and [Foreign Affairs](#) Committees' inquiries on Russia present summaries of our analysis and recommendations to promote dialogue and de-escalation, and to avoid a new Cold War.

Paul Rogers, in his [Global Security Briefings](#), has also presented sustained analysis of Russia's increasing role in Middle Eastern geopolitics, in particular its military [intervention](#) in the Syrian war and its increasingly dangerous relationship with [Turkey](#). We have also consistently looked for opportunities to find common ground or mutual interest between Russia, the West and regional states, including over [Syria's chemical disarmament](#) and resolving the international conflicts over [Syria and Iran](#).

Indeed, the Track II diplomacy of our Oxford Process has long worked closely with Russian experts and diplomats on the [Iranian nuclear programme](#), in promoting regional reconciliation in the Middle East, as well as exploring new possibilities to engage in dialogue with states such as North Korea, where Western influence is very limited. Often there is potential for Western and Russian officials to work constructively through back-channel processes when official positions seem irreconcilable.

Since 2015 we have also looked increasingly at the issues of [nuclear deterrence](#) and [disarmament](#) and how they condition the UK's relationships with NATO and Russia. We have presented [practical options](#) on how Britain can

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move forward on its commitments to [reduce the salience](#) of nuclear weapons in its defence policy and work towards de-escalation of its relationship with Russia.

Finally, we have not been afraid to [ask questions](#) of NATO and the implications of its expansion, deployments and [spending commitments](#) for Russia's own security perceptions. These are crucial questions that we argued that the [2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) should engage with. We will continue with this work in 2016-17, including research on opening up the UK's defence decision-making and proposals on how NATO reform might serve to reassure both member states and neighbours such as Russia.

Image via [Wikimedia Commons](#).

About the Author

Richard Reeve is the Director of the Sustainable Security Programme at ORG. He has worked as a Research Fellow with King's College London, Chatham House and at Jane's Information Group.

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