

Why the Russian Proposals to NATO and the U.S. Should Not Be Rejected

by Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos, Ambassador *ad honorem*
Aigion, Greece, December 20

On December 17, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released to the public two draft agreements, one concerning measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and member-states of NATO, and the other concerning security guarantees between the United States and the Russian Federation.

Both draft agreements mention, along with many other security arrangements, that NATO should refrain from any further enlargement, including the accession of Ukraine or other states. The draft agreement with the U.S. is more specific. Article 4 mentions: “The United States of America shall undertake to prevent further eastward expansion of NATO and deny accession to the Alliance to the States of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.”

What the Russian Federation is actually proposing is what Moscow was promised by the West in 1990 in order to agree to the reunification of Germany. Let us go back and see what exactly happened then.

The Record

On January 31, 1990, the German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher made his famous speech in Tutzing, Bavaria in which he said:

[W]hatever happens to the Warsaw Pact, an expansion of NATO territory to the East, in other words, closer to the border of the Soviet Union, will not happen.

This is reported by Marc Trachtenberg, in his Nov. 25, 2020 [article](#), “The US and NATO Non-extension Assurances of 1990: New Light on an Old Problem?”

In the joint press conference on Feb. 2, 1990 after the meeting between James Baker and Genscher, the latter stated, according to the same source:

Perhaps I might add we were in full agreement that there is no intention to extend the NATO area of defense and security to the East. This holds true not only for the G.D.R., which we have no intention of simply incorporating, but that holds true for all other Eastern countries.”

In the Memorandum of Conversation between

Gorbachev and Baker of Feb. 9, 1990, Baker says to the Soviet President:

We understand the need for assurances to the countries in the East. If we maintain a presence in a Germany that is part of NATO, there would be no extension of NATO’s jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east.

This is [available](#) in U.S. Department of State, FOIA 1995045676. The same is mentioned in the Soviet transcript of the conversation that belongs to the Gorbachev Foundation.

In the Memorandum of Conversation between Gorbachev and Chancellor Kohl on Feb. 10, 1990, the latter states, “We believe that NATO should not expand its scope.” The Memorandum is [available](#) in the National Security Archive housed at George Washington University.

So, during the conversations of 1990 it was promised, by both Germany and the U.S., to Moscow that there would be no further expansion of NATO to the East. This promise of course was never kept. Moscow is now asking for the implementation of what the West had promised it in 1990. Russia accepts all the former Warsaw Pact countries that have joined NATO, remaining in NATO; but wants NATO to stop its eastward expansion. This makes sense, since in this way the encirclement of Russia by NATO will be prevented. We must also not forget how the U.S. reacted when the Soviet Union placed long-range missiles in Cuba. There was almost a nuclear holocaust.

The statements made yesterday in Lithuania by the German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht, that “We will discuss Russia’s proposals... But it cannot be that Russia dictates to NATO partners their posture,” indicate either that there is a lack of historical knowledge in this respect, or that Germany is unwilling to accept what it had proposed in 1990 to Moscow.

In either case the rejection of the Russian proposals by NATO and Washington will bring the doomsday clock forward to the detriment of humanity. One can only hope that logic, or what is left of it, prevails.