



[\(https://www.thenation.com/login/\)](https://www.thenation.com/login/)

**WAR AND PEACE** **ARMED CONFLICTS** **RUSSIA**

# Détente Now: A New Call for Peace, Security, and Cooperation

*Civic and religious leaders in Germany are spearheading a new initiative to avoid war between Russia and the West.*

*By Gilbert Doctorow, Ute Finckh-Krämer, Ludger Volmer, Rolf Ekéus and Noam Chomsky*

**DECEMBER 6, 2016**



Russian President Vladimir Putin meeting with Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, in St. Petersburg on June 16, 2016. (AP Photo/Sergey Guneev)

**A** transatlantic appeal for a new policy of détente with Russia has been launched. The declaration's authors invite the general public to join leading political figures and social activists who have publicly rallied to support the call.

The initiative was born in Berlin several months ago in the days of deepest gloom engendered by confrontation with Russia over Ukraine, the Baltic countries, and Syria, with major war exercises held around Russia's borders and bellicose language from both sides that suggested imminent hot war. As German Minister of Foreign Affairs Frank Walter Steinmeier (SPD) said in an interview with *Bild* newspaper on October 8, present times are more dangerous even than during the Cold War that ended in 1990: "Previously, the world was divided, but Moscow and Washington knew each other's red lines and respected them. In a world with many regional conflicts and dwindling influence of the great powers, the world becomes more unpredictable."

The roll-out of the initiative called Détente Now aims at bringing civil society on two continents into play both to enforce and to support approaches to pursue dialogue and compromise with Russian counterparts, e.g., on confidence- and security-building measures between Russia and its neighbors. Détente Now will be a powerful voice for change of direction in foreign policy within Europe, and within Germany in particular, as it and several other key EU countries have their national elections in the course of 2017.

In the United States, the word “détente” brings to mind the efforts of former presidents and secretaries of state to control and reduce strategic weapons and to find ways of cooperation instead of confrontation. In Germany, the equivalent policy, *Entspannungspolitik*, was crafted in the 1970s by Chancellor Willy Brandt and his close adviser Egon Bahr. Their “Eastern Policy” promoted rapprochement as a means of gradually changing the behavior and views of the opposing side. It is widely believed to have facilitated the eventual fall of the Berlin Wall and end of the original Cold War.

The Détente Now declaration specifically seeks implementation of the twin objectives of a “Europe whole and free” and a common space of peace and security extending from Lisbon to Vladivostok. That vision of all-European security set out in the Charter of Paris signed in 1990 by all European states and the institutionalization of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Budapest in 1994, was predicated upon respect for human rights and liberties, and upon equal security provisions for all. Regrettably, in the 1990s this grand vision was replaced by political and security schemes that left Russia out in the cold: the greater European Union and an expanded NATO. The result has been nearly calamitous, the authors of Détente Now believe.

The declaration was initiated by a few concerned citizens of civil society, churches, and science, including Wolfgang Biermann (former adviser to Egon

Bahr), Peter Brandt (historian), Konrad Raiser (former secretary general of the World Council of Churches), Reiner Hoffmann (chairman of the German Trade Unions Federation), and Horst Teltschik, (former head of Chancellor Kohl's office and 1999–2008 director of the Munich Security Conference), as well as, from the United States, Daniel Ellsberg (longtime advocate for an informed citizenry).

Many people from the United States, Germany, and other countries support the declaration in the wake of the American presidential election as a transatlantic appeal for a new policy of détente. Among the key first signatories in Germany are well-known Bundestag members from the SPD party, recently joined by a growing number of Green deputies, as well as city mayors, scientists, artists, and journalists. In the United States, the declaration has won the support of several board members of the American Committee for East West Accord, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, the Association of International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War, Veteran Intelligence Officials for Sanity, and of celebrities from the film and music industries, among them Roger Waters (founding member of Pink Floyd) or David Kasper (an Academy Award–winning filmmaker).

Starting this month, the declaration will be published on various homepages, and public collection of more signatures of support will start. A German version can be found [here](#), with an English version [here](#).

The Initiative “neue Entspannungspolitik jetzt!” / “DetenteNOW!” will open a German- and English-language portal to make available literature relevant to the cause. Supporters of the declaration also propose to organize round-table discussions both in Europe and in the United States, and to set up direct US-German-Russian and other exchanges of civil society activists who support the initiative. ●

## **0 COMMENTS**

---

**GILBERT DOCTOROW** Gilbert Doctorow is a professional Russia watcher going back to 1965. He is a board member and European Coordinator of the American Committee for East-West Accord.

**UTE FINCKH-KRÄMER** Ute Finckh-Krämer, Member of the German Bundestag, SPD, is Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Deputy Chairperson of the Subcommittee on Arms Control and Disarmament in the German Bundestag.

**LUDGER VOLMER** Ludger Volmer was a member of the German Bundestag from 1985 to 1990 and 1994 to 2005. He was undersecretary of state from 1998 to 2002.

**ROLF EKÉUS** Rolf Ekéus of Sweden was executive chairman of the UN Special Commission on Disarming Iraq from 1991 to 1997. He chaired the drafting of the principles of the Charter of Paris in 1990, a founding

document of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

**NOAM CHOMSKY** Noam Chomsky, Institute Professor emeritus at MIT, has written many books and articles on international affairs, in particular on Israel and Palestine. His latest book is *Who Rules the World?*

To submit a correction for our consideration, click *here*.  
For Reprints and Permissions, click *here*.

Jobs auf **MONSTER**

<a href="#">Teamassistentz (m/w) Büroadmin..., Zirndorf (b...</a>	<a href="#">Key Account Manager (m/w), Offenbach, ...</a>	<a href="#">PROCESS &amp; ENGINEERING CAREER ... Euskirchen</a>	<a href="#">Projekt Berater (m/w) Umsetzu..., Berlin, Ber...</a>
---	---	---	--

**FOREIGN POLICY CHINA DONALD TRUMP**

## Was Trump's Taiwan 'Gaffe' Really All That Bad?

*There are extremely legitimate reasons to be fearful of the president-elect's foreign policy. Is taking a call from Taiwan one of them?*

By Ken Miller

**DECEMBER 9, 2016**



A man reads a newspaper with the headline “U.S. President-elect Donald Trump delivers a mighty shock to America,” Beijing, China, on November 10, 2016. (AP Photo / Andy Wong)

**W**hen President-elect Trump took a phone call from Tsai Ing-Wen, the president of Taiwan, it seemed a gaffe confirming our worst fears: Here came precisely the impulsive egomaniac we had energetically opposed as temperamentally unfit to be our president.

According to an article that appeared in *The Atlantic* shortly after the call, Evan Medeiros, former Asia director at the White House National Security Council, said “The Chinese leadership will see this as a highly provocative action, of historic proportions.... With this kind of move, Trump is setting a foundation of enduring mistrust and strategic competition for U.S.-China relations.” And Connecticut’s Democratic Senator Chris Murphy was quoted as saying “That’s how wars start.”

This master of misdirection who is able to change the subject from a \$25 million settlement for defrauding

the victims of Trump University to his bogus dispute with the cast of the Broadway show *Hamilton*, this man who has little respect for truth and science and none for consistency of position is soon to be the guy with the finger on the nuclear button, and out of the box he, what, picks a fight with the other nuclear superpower on their core foreign-policy issue?

In 1979, as part of President Jimmy Carter's One China deal, we had reestablished diplomatic relations with the Peoples Republic and withdrawn recognition of Taiwan. Beijing became our counterparty in what is often called the world's most important bilateral relationship. The patience of the Chinese government regarding their objective of reuniting this island of 22 million people with the mainland has waxed and waned with our Taiwan arms sales and the rhetoric of various Taiwan governments over the years. But the one thing China will not abide is any suggestion that this haven for their former enemies could in any way speak for the Chinese nation.

So the fears of sinologists and others who monitor these matters that Trump was on a path to undermining the decades-long work of Republican and Democratic administrations in integrating China as a stakeholder in the international order were well founded. But, as it happens, Beijing took a calmer, more measured, position than might have been expected. China's Foreign Ministry lodged a "solemn representation" and blamed the Taiwan government for "a shenanigan." And

then, pouring oil on the waters he himself had troubled, Trump proceeded to name Iowa Governor Terry Branstad, a man the Chinese quickly labelled an “old friend,” as our next ambassador to China.

It is tempting, based on some of his deplorable initial appointments to senior administration positions, such as Flynn, Bannon, and Sessions, to label as a disaster everything this about-to-become-God-help-us-president of the United States does. But it is far from clear that it was a bad move for Trump to have taken that call from Taiwan. Initially, it seemed as if the call was impulsive, but as the facts emerged, it appeared to have been well planned.

What Trump accomplished with that one act was to remind the Chinese that he is the dealer in a new poker game... and that there is a new chip on the board. One can only hope he understands that, having made the point, he must now be careful to respect the reality that Xi Jinping and other leaders of the Chinese Communist Party cannot tolerate a public loss of face. The fact that our country could project enough power into the South China Sea to overwhelm China in a conventional hot conflict would be scant consolation in the event of escalation.

If Trump plays with the possibility of revisiting the 37-year-old diminution of Taiwan’s status, one hopes he will appreciate that the contradictions the Communist Party is addressing on the mainland are creating potentially volatile issues for the leadership. A

weakening economy with a huge debt overhang, an anti-corruption campaign still firing on all cylinders, and a growing clampdown on domestic civil society could militate in favor of welcoming a foreign conflict.

But, in principle, it is possible to see a new emerging *modus vivendi* with China that would ratify some presence for them in Asian waters while reaffirming a mutual commitment to freedom of the seas. It is conceivable that a dialogue with the new Trump administration could reduce the already considerable risk of a naval conflict that the Obama administration has been managing. Trump had already signaled an intention to move the United States toward a more nationalist, less Beijing-friendly economic policy, and the creation of the Taiwan chip underscores for the Xi regime that a mandatory reset is in the works.

So, for progressives, the lesson here should be that what is needed now is more of *The Nation's* approach: Scrutinize, don't normalize. Don't accept the Trump administration as the new normal. But if we jump on every Trump action as a screw-up, we just waste firepower. The job now is to follow very closely his decisions and call them out for what they are. This does not mean we wait for a nuclear war, an actual end to environmental protection, or the registration of our fellow citizens based on their religion. But it does mean a studied ranking of the battles we are going to wage as opposed to shooting from the hip. ●

## **2 COMMENTS**

---

**KEN MILLER** Ken Miller is a financier who has served as a member of the board of directors of several public corporations.

To submit a correction for our consideration, click *here*.  
For Reprints and Permissions, click *here*.



