

A POSSIBLE ROAD MAP FOR EUROPEAN COMPREHENSIVE COLLECTIVE SECURITY

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Abstract: The current international order is in transition, driven by the interplay of its main actors: Washington, Moscow, Beijing, and less significantly, the European Union. Other emerging powers are also challenging the present arrangement and if successful, they will eventually create a multipolar global order. The transient international order is currently characterised by chronic instability, regional and global turmoil, and a dramatic decline in its ease of governance. The two decades of the new millennium saw fundamental changes in the power constellation of international actors. Those changes affected Europe and will further determine opportunities to establish a peace and security order for the whole of Europe. The central question is whether the emerging multipolar order can provide security and welfare for the international community. Or, will we see policies based on protracted narrow definitions of national interests, undermining opportunities for trust and confidence-building among the driving forces of the transformation process? Are we bound to reawaken memories of the bipolar, Cold War era, with its proxy wars that instrumentalised domestic and regional conflicts for external purposes?

Keywords: asymmetry, multipolar world order, national interests, Europe, security.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES IN A RAPID CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

After the Cold War ended, for a few years the prospects of cooperative security seemed favorable. However, in spite of opportunities a rather strange disparity or asymmetry evolved. While political, even normative and socio-economic goals of transformation were ubiquitously accepted, the idea of a European peace order vanished from the agenda. During the 1990s a specific power constellation materialized in the international system. What's more, Russia was pushed to the side

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lines. The two rounds of eastward enlargement of NATO created an illusion of western dominance and its capability to project stability eastwards. Once the Alliance started to extend its influence in “Europe-in-between”, i.e. the sphere between the European Union and post-Soviet Russia, such plans met Russian resistance and came to a halt.

The current international order is in transition, driven by the interplay of its main actors: Washington; Moscow; Beijing; and less significantly, the European Union. Other emerging powers are also challenging the present arrangement and if successful, they will eventually create a multipolar global order. The transient international order is currently characterised by chronic instability, regional and global turmoil, and a dramatic decline in its ease of governance.

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The chances of reforming and democratising the United Nation are rather slim. Mutual trust and consensus over the essential challenges facing the world’s chief international actors are missing¹. The breakdown of trust and confidence which lasted despite severe challenges since the demise of the USSR has catapulted Europe into the middle of conflict lines which are aggravated by inherent self caused contradictions.

As indicated the two decades of the new millennium saw fundamental changes in the power constellation of international actors. Those changes affected Europe and will further determine opportunities to establish a peace and security order for the whole of Europe. Let me outline a few interlinked aspects which contributed to the present situation.

a) The hegemony of the US proved to be temporary; predictions of both CIA and NIC see the US still as a mayor militant actor in 2030 although on a weakened economic and fi-

nancial basis. In order to act in future as a global Hegemon, Washington is forced to safeguard existing alliances and/or seek new loyal alliance partners which can offer assistance and are ready for burden sharing.

b) Russia returned back in from the Cold and started to become an international player again. State authority was restored after the chaotic decade of the 1990s. Moscow formulated her foreign policy objectives based on a tripartite approach to seek balanced, pragmatic and cooperative relations with Washington, Peking and Brussels. In 2008 Moscow initiated a debate on a *Pan-European Security Architecture*, to overcome the division of Europe in different zones of security. The debate linked domestic issues with tasks of international cooperation. The then Russian president Dmitri Medwedew focused on the modernization of Russia in terms of innovation, investments, infrastructure and governance. Modernization was the catch word, and in a way it sounded like Perestroika and Glasnost of the Gorbatshev era. But the Russian initiative did not generate any positive result among Western powers. A year later, using the bilateral level with Berlin, Medwedew and chancellor Merkel agreed on a new peace and security project, formulating the *Meseberg declaration* of June 2010. The *Meseberg declaration* tried to replicate an already existing dialogue design between NATO and Russia in EU-Russia relations. Similar to Medvedev's earlier initiative NATO members refused to deal with both initiatives. Both projects were buried in commissions (Corfu) and taken off the agenda.

c) The failure to establish a conflict prevention and management center in EU-Russian relations already indicated a shift of paradigm in the Russian and Eastern policy of the EU. Somewhere about 2008 to 2010 the change in paradigm occurred in the EU's Russian policy. The Eastern/Russian policy of the EU changed from a cooperative toward a confrontational track. Twofold objectives were the essence of the paradigm shift: firstly, to isolate Russia in Europe, and secondly, to undermine the dominant position of Berlin in formulating the EU's Russia policy.

d) An anti-Russian coalition of member states was formed, and to be successful they needed to undermine Berlin's lead-

ership in EU's Russia policy. From 1991 until 2009 the EU borrowed a formula for its Eastern policy which was very much linked to Germany's Eastern policy. For nearly 20 years Berlin's economic and political predominance in nearly all aspects of EU-Russia relations compensated for Brussels lack of strategic orientation what to do with Russia. Pragmatic partnership and cooperation on all levels of economic, social, political and cultural life was the core idea. This concept even worked miraculously to defuse negative consequences of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008.

e) Reluctantly and without a solid consensus or a coherent strategy among member states the European Union was pushed into a geopolitical role by conflicts and consequences of state failures in her "near abroad", i.e. in "Europe-in-between" and in the Mediterranean area. Given the conflictive and instable conditions in the area between the two geopolitical power blocs in Europe, one may only speculate if the presence of security institutions as proposed in *Meseberg* would have contained the dangers of confrontations and stopped the war in the Ukraine.

f) As a result or reaction already before 2012 a notable shift in paradigm of Russian foreign policy slowly commenced. The Kremlin simply lost hope once being accepted as a partner by Western powers, and sought after alternatives in Asia and other emerging nations.

g) Shifts in the global economy and emerging growth centers like China, the G20, and generally the BRICS strengthened such expectations in Moscow. The policy shift toward a multipolar world order was echoed even in some EU member states.

h) An icy relation developed in EU-Russia and NATO-Russia relations since 2012. The danger of a new Cold War is written on the wall. There is no comfort in the fact that the New Cold War differs fundamentally from the old one. Reciprocal political accusations pushed aside the central issue what will be the role and position of Europe in the globalized world, and is there a chance for a pan-European Security Equation? At issue is the division of Europe again. Such division may be real or even desirable for some governments.

i) The Ukrainian conflict which haunts Europe today is multilayered: It is not only a military conflict of intervention, separatism or annexation but portrays as well signs of a societal crisis. More than two decades into transformation, the results of building a modern Ukrainian state, based on enduring economic growth, political stability, checks and balances, legitimacy, the rule of law, identity and welfare for the people, are not very convincing. Ukraine's lingering systemic crisis has been brought to light by the catastrophic consequences of war, secessionist movements, political polarization, and refugees as well by financial and economic decline. The war simply deepened and sharpened underlying trends.

DIM CHANCES FOR A BREAKTHROUGH IN EUROPEAN SOCIETY

Indeed, since 2016, several jarring game changers have troubled the international system, with consequences for European and global stability. In addition, Brexit has weakened the EU's main instrument of persuasion and soft power influence. The victory of Emmanuel Macron in the French presidential elections and the landslide success of his *En Marche!* Movement in the parliamentary elections was met with triumphant enthusiasm from political establishments in Brussels, Paris, and Berlin. But two years later such an unquestionably positive development is offset by domestic developments in France and European fatigue.

Though, a dynamic rebirth of leadership between Berlin and Paris did not materialize². Hopes of a game-changer effect to kick-start the EU restructuring process, enhance its geopolitical influence, and promote a comprehensive order for peace, security, and welfare on the continent are not in sight. However, the political unpredictability due to political fragmentation and the rise of nationalist forces in many EU member states offers little optimism for advances in EU restructuring. Nor are there grounds to expect Brussels to formulate resolute policy towards Europe's eastern neighbours independently of US objectives.

Furthermore, it remains doubtful that Brussels will influence the shape of the emerging global order, given the present state of the European Union – fragmented by uncontrollable external challenges and home-grown problems which have been eroding EU solidarity since 2009. Although there have been positive indications: amidst challenging external and internal trends, in June 2016, the European Union attempted to define its place and its responsibilities within the shifting context of the international system (Council of the European Union 2016). The *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe* strategy report is less a forecast or projection of what the future holds, and more a document of assertiveness and re-affirmation to stem the tide of draining internal cohesion and to unify the EU against external challenges.

What is missing from the report are instruments and conceptual frameworks capable of repairing internal fragmentation, regaining trust, building solid consensus for political action, and meeting external threats to the south (migration) and the east (Ukraine).

It is doubtful the global strategy will propel the EU³ along the path of sovereignty and autonomy in security. US opposition to a stronger EU component within NATO reveals the futility of attempting to reconcile the historically subtle rivalry between NATO and EU objectives. Accordingly, the formation of European foreign, security and defence activity, apart from and distinct to NATO, has been difficult to realise.

DECLINING US HEGEMONY

As *Global Trends* has repeatedly stressed, the US will operate as a recognized regional Hegemon within its sphere of influence. Brzezinski's characterization of a power block consisting of the US and the EU remains a reality, resting on a dense network of militarily, political, and economic institutions, such as NATO, notably, as well as a plethora of agencies and NGOs operating in from within and below constituent states.

Obligated by its weakening global status, the US is doomed to follow a status-quo policy that aims to prevent its position

from deteriorating further. Paradoxically, despite its unpredictability and confused foreign policy design, the Trump Administration seems to have understood the writing on the wall. Declaring that the time of the free ride for European security is over, the Trump Administration has reversed the asymmetry between economic development and security which helped Western Europe to its favorable economic status from the early 1960s. The formula was simple and worked well for both sides: Europe delegated its security needs to the US, accepting its leadership; and the US accepted unrestricted economic development for Europe. The equation was questioned when the US slid into economic and financial troubles. Ever since, the call for burden sharing has been on the agenda.

The sharing of military costs – 2 percent of GDP for defence – and trade restrictions, even a looming trade war, are the prices the EU must pay. This US-dominated power formula will work as long as the conflicts in Ukraine and Eastern Europe are not resolved. However, those conflicts are interlinked with international issues.

In this respect, they will remain unresolved as long as there is no consensus among major players about the diffusion of power and positions in the emerging new world order. For Europe, Russia and the US are the primary actors in this conflict. And due to the new hybrid form of this conflictual relationship, US-Russia relations cannot be expected to improve in the near future. If one follows Karaganov's line of argument, relations between Russia and the US "are worse than ever since the 1950s and the Cuban missile crisis" (Karaganov 2018).

Europe, and the EU, is sandwiched between the conflicting major powers, Russia and the US. Even if a major restructuring of the EU gained momentum towards the creation of a homogeneous Core Europe, able to define and project foreign and security priorities as well as to build defence capabilities, the EU would be a respected and recognized mediator of peaceful settlements rather than a major geopolitical actor, capable of globally significant power projection.

However the present situation does not allow such optimism. As the weakest link in the chain of competing great powers, the EU is not even in a position to choose its options

of security and alliances. Referring to theories of neoclassical realism the weaker player in a given power constellation generally has three options: *a)* firstly, to bandwagon with the most powerful state. This would be in our case the US; *b)* secondly, to remain neutral, this is the best option and guarantees to keep a higher profile of sovereignty; *c)* thirdly, to establish with other states a counter balance against the Hegemon. Momentarily this option is pursued in an unconvincing manner, because resistance from pro-Atlanticist minded member states in the EU is high. PESCO or the renewed debate on Core Europe and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) points into a hopeful direction, but the realization of both projects is extremely difficult and a slow process. Nevertheless Berlin should put more active efforts, approaching member states to put the PCA with Russia again on the table.

Paradoxically, the present policy of the Trump administration could speed up both projects. Unintentionally the peculiar and unpredictable behavior of the US administration opened a window of opportunity for Brussels to define “European interests” as distinctive different from the one’s of Washington. The Trump administration shies away from direct military interventions, a process which started already under Obama. Instead it uses economic sanctions combined with legal actions as potent soft power instruments to keep alliances under control. Allied partners which would cross drawn lines marking the enemy would be economically and politically punished. Such policy makes sense for a former Hegemon that cannot keep its global position any more by pure military means. However, such policy undermines the power equation which lasted since the beginning of the Cold War between the US and all stages of European integration. The US was politically and militarily the accepted and undisputed guarantor of European security: the leader of the Western block institutionalized in NATO. Given the nuclear security guarantees to the European member states, the EEC and then the EU could develop their economic soft power capabilities without major economic and political dissent from the US.

The Trump administration has dramatically changed the security for economic recovery and growth equation which

kept the Atlantic community so closely interlaced for decades. The consequences of the sanction regimes against Russia, Iran, in combination with the cancellation of treaties are affecting the core of the Atlantic relationship. Brzezinski's characterization of a power block consisting of the US and the EU is up till now still in operation but the links are getting weaker. There are chances for political emancipation of Europe from Washington, but it will be a long and difficult process. And such process needs collective leadership and a robust consensus among the main member states of the EU.

Both factors are missing. Neither Berlin nor Paris are in any condition to provide leadership and a vision of a common European security agenda. Furthermore, as long as the Ukrainian crisis is not solved in a satisfactory and face saving way for both sides any attempt to balance against US unpredictable moves in political, economic and military ways would be sternly resisted by the pro-Atlanticist camp within the EU.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RECONSTITUTION OF A COMMON SECURITY DIALOGUE

There is no illusion in Moscow that Germany will veer off the course of NATO and will hunt for a new dominant role in formulating and shaping the EU's Eastern and Russia policy. In this matter the former role of German Ostpolitik is in essence still a potent instrument of understanding and bridging gaps, but the political leadership is missing and there is no indication among the new coalition government that Berlin is willing to embark on such a risky path. Hiding behind formulas of the past that there is no security in Europe possible without or against Russia and a possible Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok would be desirable are widespread in use but without any practical meaning. As Andrey Kortunov (2018) piercingly points out: "to cut it short, there are absolutely no reasons to hope for any breakthrough in the German-Russian relations just because a new coalition government has finally arrived at Berlin". However, Kortunov addresses as well the contradiction Berlin is facing with such a policy hiding under

the slogan that there should be no special relationship between Russia and Germany. In addition, the German mantra is ubiquitous: Germany's foreign policy, especially the one directed at Russia, must be embedded in a European framework. However, Berlin cannot deny and escape from its historic relations and position hold for centuries with Russia. Even during the Cold War era, it was Bonn who started the process of normalization and undoing the division of Europe which finally ended in Germany's reunification. The OSCE was the crucial instrument to bring down the wall and end for some time the reawakening of Cold War ghosts. Given that legacy there is no other country more interested in stability, security and peace in Europe, including Russia. Moscow may have lost Germany for the moment, but the cultural, historical and political ties may prove more potent in the future to overcome the present stalemate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The central issue to promote such a development is the solution of the Ukrainian crisis. Let me propose a few ideas.

Firstly, Germany should take a more active position on the Ukraine along the lines already marked by both former foreign ministers, Steinmeier and Gabriel. It is very unlikely, given the desolate relationship between the US and Russia that any positive initiative will come from either Moscow or Washington. As long as the Ukrainian conflict is boiling, the US has enough leverage to contain and even stop any member state of the EU from leaving the sanctions regime. However, the US would not be able to act against Berlin, if Berlin would succeed in forming a coalition of member states to gradually eliminate or the regime. There is an utmost necessity that Berlin must carefully act to form such a coalition in the name of protecting "European" interests and sovereignty.

Secondly, linked with such a move Berlin should bring to bear its energy of reconstructing the defunct PCA (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement) between the EU and Russia. A starting point could be the four dimension of the 2003

agreement of Sankt Petersburg and to tackle the liberalization of the visa regime.

Thirdly, Berlin should look beyond the malfunctioning NATO-Russia Council, either work for meetings and operative cooperation on a permanent and sustainable basis and/or enhance its relevance by creating an attaché or incorporated crisis management group to deal with future possible threats and challenges. It possible closer sharing of information and on the spot cooperation between NATO and CSTO would be an objective worth striving for.

Fourthly, Berlin should throw its political weight and economic interest into the ring to establish a common basis for economic cooperation between the EU and EEU. Here again a modified PESCO related to economic cooperation of interested member states could break the ice.

Fifthly, Berlin should put its political weight behind the enforcement of the Minsk II agreement; one-sided accusations against Moscow are counterproductive; to pick up and start serious negotiations about UN peacekeeping forces in the Donbas era to protect civilians and to deescalate war actions on both sides would be a big step forward towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Berlin must use a carrot and stick policy against Kiev if necessary. In this context the role of the OSCE must be strengthened.

Sixthly, nearly lost in the debate are treaties and arrangements from the Cold War era on arms reduction. Especially noteworthy would be to block any attempts of a new arms race in Europe, and to preserve the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. The preservation of the treat is of essential interests for Europe.

Paradoxically, there is little doubt that any of the mentioned ideas are in Germany's interest and could contribute, if pursued in de-icing the apparent antagonistic narratives which block any step forward. But the crucial question is besides political leadership and consensus building activities also vision and endurance to shape Europe's security future.

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NOTES

¹ Studies by the National Intelligence Council (NIC) on how the world will change in the coming decades and how the US position will be affected have already been presented in 2009 and 2012 to the Obama administration: see National Intelligence Council 2012. In February 2017, a new *Global Trends* report was presented to the Trump Administration: see National Intelligence Council 2017.

² It is still too early to assess the relevance and possible change of Macron's political course in regard to Russia and the broader prospect of revitalizing the comprehensive European peace and stability order. During the last G7 meeting in Biarritz, Macron offered a renewal of the old dream to create a common European space from Vladivostok to Lisbon, including Russia as a relevant player and shaper of Europe's peace order in the future. Macron's motivation for such an initiative is not clear. May be he just wanted to cut out a possible move of president Trump or to gain the upper hand over Berlin in dealings with Moscow.

³ See also Brzezinski 2004: 95. Brzezinski sees no signs of a political rivalry between the US and the EU. He views the EU as too bureaucratic and too disunited, and therefore incapable of matching the military-political strength of the US. For him, the EU resembles a giant economic conglomerate and he sarcastically adds, "conglomerates do not have historic visions; they have tangible interests".

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