

Chapter 21

Reflections on “The End of the Cold War?”

Joachim Bitterlich

Towards a (New) Cold War Without a Reliable Order ?

“It’s official. We lost the Cold War,” the title of a *Washington Post* column by Dana Milbank on December 21, 2018, and “A new kind of cold war,” the title and main story of *The Economist* of May 18, 2019, are just two examples of current debates nearly thirty years after October 3, 1990, the day of German reunification, that historic moment when we thought the Cold War was over. Really?

October 3, 1990 was a marvelous moment after an incredible year that saw the first rather free elections in Poland, the opening of the Iron Curtain in Hungary, peaceful protests in the GDR and intensive negotiations with regard to the reunification of Germany. It was the beginning of new era in Europe.

Veteran U.S. diplomat William Burns opens his remarkable article “The Lost Art of American Diplomacy”¹ by returning to the year 1991. The United States had just triumphed in the Cold War, overseen the reunification of Germany and handed Saddam Hussein a spectacular defeat in Iraq. Everything seemed to point to a period of prolonged U.S. dominance in a liberal order the United States had built and led after World War II. Russia was flat on its back, China was still turned inward.

Did the Cold War really end at that moment, especially in Europe? My answer at that time was clearly no. But we were hoping to reach that moment very soon.

In a conference in Harvard in January 1993 I reaffirmed that after the end of communism and the Warsaw Pact, after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall, and after the reunification Germany, Europa was in a period of “radical change.” A strategic vacuum was emerging.

After 40 years in which Europe was bound together by the East-West-conflict, we had entered into a new strategic situation that I summarized as follows: “the postwar period meant threat but hardly risks, while the post-postwar period means great risks, but less direct threats.” I spoke about “uncertainty” and the need for “control” and “step-by-step-adaptation.” Some observers were even calling it “the new world disorder.”²

We had entered into a period of transition characterized by growing volatility, uncertainty and complexity. It was a period marked by both foreseeable and unexpected crises and conflicts, by a tendency towards greater use of power —and by an accumulation of erroneous assumptions due to lack of strategy and a limited number of responsible forward-looking actors.

Today, nearly thirty years later, the situation is perhaps even more difficult and even less predictable. We may characterize current developments again as a sort of new Cold War, partly between the classical actors, partly with new ones, and partly because many have lost the capability for strategic thinking and acting.

In May 2019 I spent some days engaged in intensive talks in Moscow. Russian and European participants in an off-the-record meeting spoke openly about the return of Cold War mentalities. The cover story of *The Economist* that same week, assessing U.S.-Chinese relations, was entitled “A new kind of Cold War.”³

Today we are very far away from a reliable “world order.” It is more a certain disorder offering risks and dangers that are potentially more dangerous than during the period of the Cold War.⁴ Geopolitics are suddenly back on the agenda.

After retiring as France’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations in June 2019, Ambassador François Delattre concluded that “We are now in a new world disorder. The three main safety mechanisms are no longer functioning: no more American power willing to be the last-resort enforcer of international order; no solid system of international governance; and, most troubling, no real concert of nations able to re-establish common ground.”⁵

To understand and assess this situation we have to look at the last thirty years in a comprehensive and inclusive way. It is necessary to

consider this development as a whole, going back to its origins in the first years of transition, in those years where many of us had real hope, where some of us were dreaming of the "peace dividend."

We may distinguish two periods. The first was characterized by hope despite growing uncertainties, the second by fading hopes and the return of geopolitical risks and challenges that until now we have been unable to control and master. The appropriate slogan to describe the actual situation of the world seems to be "VUCA," a world full of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

The 1990s: First Hope, Then Growing Uncertainties

At the end of the 1980s we experienced an unexpected window of opportunity due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and of its political and economic satellite system in Central and Eastern Europe: Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and finally the GDR became the falling stars. The Soviet economic system was breaking down. The door was suddenly open to the reunification of Germany and the launch of democratic regimes in Central and Eastern Europe.

All this happened amidst a growing acceleration of events, but despite the anxiety or resistance of some politicians the people promoting the peaceful revolution of those days in East Germany, Poland, and Hungary never let things get out of control. The same was true for the rational yet visionary actions of leading authorities during that period.

It is widely forgotten but important to remember that in the crucial year 1989 President George H.W. Bush had proposed to Germany a "partnership in leadership." What appeared at first glance to be an honor for Germany was in reality at the same time a poisoned gift to Germany in this unsettled Europe. The U.S. offer was met with suspicions from France and the UK, as the main U.S. allies in Europe, as well as from smaller countries fearing an overweight Germany. The answer of Chancellor Helmut Kohl was therefore diplomatically positive, but in fact embarrassed, reluctant, and defensive. He was thinking much more in terms of further anchoring West Germany (and later reunified Germany) within reinforced structures of European integration, both via the Franco-German tandem and with the support of smaller partners, to achieve greater political acceptance of Germany's

role in Europe. Nonetheless, as the dynamic events of 1989 and 1990 unfolded, President Bush did in fact become our most important ally on the path to reunification.

In 1991 we negotiated and finalized the Maastricht Treaty, a real achievement and step forward in European integration, but the nascent European Union was still a “limping union” due to the resistance of the UK and others. The time was not yet ripe to reach a breakthrough to a common foreign and security policy and a common policy on internal security (including migration). Some even rejected Franco-German proposals on security policy for fear of weakening the Atlantic Alliance. Our American allies were among those reluctant to support the renaissance of this European idea, even though it was an attempt to re-integrate France more closely into the overall European and transatlantic security domain.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl accepted the Maastricht compromise with the European partners, being convinced that the introduction of the euro would reinforce the pressure to build a strong “Political Union.” For Kohl, the euro was the necessary “cement” to bind the EU tighter and indissolubly together. His credo was that Economic and Monetary Union—and Political Union—would make the European integration “irreversible.”⁶

This goal was one of Kohl’s guiding principles: “German policy must be clearly oriented to the principles and aims of European union. By the same token, my government’s objective is to resolutely promote the integration process and make it irreversible.”⁷ He was convinced that the common Home and Justice Policy and the common Foreign and Security Policy, for the moment still the weaker elements of the “Political Union,” would follow this path of engagement.

He said to me often: “I will sign all the initiatives you are preparing with your comrades-in-arms on Foreign and Security policy, but the completion of this area will be the very last step of European integration because of the remaining traditions and the history of some of our important partners such as France and the UK. You will have to remain flexible and use new paths to reach progress.”

He knew that European integration was among united Germany’s most important vital interests. It would enable the new Germany to be

better accepted by its partners in Europe and to help overcome finally the reflex of at least some of our partners to control Germany—Europe's historical trouble spot, the country in the middle of the continent with the greatest number of borders.

From 1991 on Western Europe took prudent, hesitant steps toward the reunification of Europe. The leading ideas and reflections were intent, on the one hand, to ensure that the future "security architecture must make allowance for the legitimate security interests of every country," and on the other hand that the "the European Community must and will remain open—open to the reformist countries of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The Community will not stop at the Elbe." These were literal extracts from Chancellor Kohl's reflections about the future development in Europe in February 1990 in Davos.⁸

The Western European nations thought that process would happen first via the EU, without saying when or how, while it was becoming clearer that some of the new democracies in Central and Eastern European that wanted to become part of the EU and NATO were focused much more on the protection offered by the Atlantic Alliance.

The EU needed three years to develop its fundamental approach with regard to its enlargement, which was agreed in Copenhagen in June 1993. We then needed four more years to prepare the phase of concrete negotiations with a first group of candidate countries, and then later with a second wave of applicants. We Germans had to be cautious, since most EU member states had not favored any enlargement. Even the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden had been more than difficult.

EU enlargement to the East was ultimately realized later in a technocratically nearly perfect way. The candidate countries merit respect for the transformation of their economic and financial systems. At the same time, however, we forgot politics. Looking at today's situation, which some observers describe as a schism between East and West, it has become clear that the new member states first had to recreate their national identities—and we had to support them much more on that path—before adding the "European idea" into their politics. The result is a European Union with less coherence and therefore in urgent need of further consolidation.

Despite the growing pressure from some of the former member states of the Warsaw Pact, NATO also only slowly opened its door. The United States was at least as hesitant as the European members of the Alliance. Until the middle of the 1990s there was not a majority in favor. Most Europeans waited for a decision in Washington. In public speeches until early 1993 I even avoided the word “enlargement,” as the situation was still extremely fragile with regard to the majority of our European partners.

Chancellor Kohl shared this view entirely. Only Defense Minister Volker Rühe was pressing for early NATO enlargement, knowing well that the Chancellery disagreed. This positioning did not enhance his credibility, but put “us” under greater pressure. The response from the Chancellery was clear: “It is the personal opinion of the minister, not that of Chancellor.” Kohl clearly reserved his right to take the necessary decisions on this crucial question once it became “mature.”

Our political priority was on the one hand to protect the former members of the Warsaw Pact by being their defender and supporter in Moscow. For the past 50 years they had been under Soviet control; especially in Poland and in the Baltic states the fear was widespread that Russia would look for ways to win back control of its “near abroad.”

Chancellor Kohl spent hours and hours with Russian leaders, in particular President Yeltsin, to ensure the freedom of the Central and Eastern European countries. At the same time we were trying to contribute to the stabilization of Russia. Political Moscow had difficulties digesting the end of the Soviet Union and its empire, and seemed to be under pressure by the military leadership, which considered developments since 1989 as a pure defeat.

In the 1990s Germany had to become the main financial contributor to the stabilization of Russia and of Central and Eastern Europe. Within the frame of the G-7 the Canadian government distributed at one point a sort of “ranking” of the assistance to Russia and to the states of the former Soviet Union. This paper underlined that Germany was paying between 1990 and 1995 ten times more than France and thirty times more than the UK.⁹ While this was a useful documentation of reality, for us it was also a double-edged sword in terms of domestic consumption and EU policy. To some extent it was even dangerous, as it could have been used by domestic critics to support their claim that

Germany had become "the paymaster of Europe." Therefore we were hesitant to use figures documenting our significant financial efforts in the public debate. I remember that in one of these papers we prepared regularly for the Chancellor's international discussions we wrote that our financial support in favor of the reform states in Central and Eastern Europe and of the successor states of the former Soviet Union between 1990 and 1994 totaled DM 146 billion (€74 billion) or DM 1,800 (920 €) per capita.¹⁰

Our problem was that that most of our partners and allies were not really interested in this complex of ultra-sensitive questions. The general feeling was "*sollen doch die Deutschen ausbaden, was sie uns da eingebracht haben*" ("the Germans should pay for what they have brewed"), and they were waiting for the United States.

We knew that the Pentagon was skeptical of NATO enlargement and that the State Department in principle was in favor, but unclear about who, how and when. In 1994 the Pentagon offered the Partnership for Peace (PfP) as a compromise formula, as cryptic reflections swirled in Washington about various possibilities, for instance enlargement without Article 5 guarantees or a possible neutral status for the Baltic states or Romania. Taking into consideration the U.S. political calendar and developments in Russia, the Clinton administration preferred to take decisions on enlargement in 1997 or 1998.

After returning from one of the regular trips to Washington in early October 1994, I was sufficiently alarmed by the inconsistencies and of the various approaches that I recommended to the Chancellor to intensify his contacts with President Clinton so that they together could develop the appropriate concept. We Germans were not against expansion to the East, but we insisted that we should not destabilize the fragile situation in Russia.

The Chancellor agreed. He was convinced that it was important to address these questions with circumspection and under no time pressure. He also thought we should first develop the Partnership for Peace program with all interested countries in Central, Eastern and Southaastern Europe, thereby contributing toward necessary confidence-building in Europe, not least with regard to Russia. At the same time he believed we should avoid a public or semi-public debate about

NATO expansion due to the sensitivity of these questions. In his letter to President Clinton of mid-October 1994 he added that

as enlargement of NATO is intended to contribute towards security and stability in the whole of Europe, we must also discuss this issue quite frankly with Russia. An important element will be Russia's greater integration into the European security structures.¹¹

More than one year later and having met and agreed with President Clinton on the general orientation, Chancellor Kohl, opening the traditional Munich security conference in February 1996, continued to insist publicly on this political line:

It is only right that our Eastern neighbors should want to join the Alliance... We must approach NATO's enlargement with care and political discretion since this is a matter of fundamental importance to the Alliance itself and to Europe's future security. It is vital to us Germans and Europeans that NATO should retain its stability and scope for action. It is also essential for us to develop a good relationship based on partnership with Russia and Ukraine.¹²

When we arrived at the NATO summit in Madrid in July 1997, there was not yet an agreement on the concrete design of enlargement. President Clinton, President Chirac and the Chancellor tasked their national security/diplomatic advisors—Sandy Berger, Jean-David Levitte, and me—to resolve the question in the night before the discussion of potential summit conclusions. The compromise we achieved in the early morning consisted in proposing an enlargement in two phases in order not to destabilize Russia. First we would invite three countries—Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Later, in a second stage, we would invite the Baltic countries, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania.

The Baltic countries, particularly Estonia, had difficulties understanding the German position and especially Chancellor Kohl's strategy. They felt left alone with their large Russian neighbor. They were more sensitive and anxious than others about Russia's unstable development. They took note of but had limited confidence in our deliberate actions in Moscow. Years later, during my short period as NATO Ambassador in Brussels, I had an intense personal exchange with the first President of Estonia, Lennart Meri, trying to explain to him that our actions in Moscow, as in Washington, had been in their vital interest.

The Russians had agreed to German reunification, the end of the Warsaw Pact, and the independence of the Baltic states and the republics of the former Soviet Union. But they did not expect that the West would expand NATO to the east. In 1990/91 this question was not on our agenda. In 1991/92 then the idea of a "European Confederation" launched by the French further accelerated the reflex of the Central and Eastern European nations to request to the Western world security reassurance against Russia and any risk from that side by asking for their integration into the Atlantic Alliance.

In that period relations with the former Soviet Union and its successors were characterized by a real uncertainty about how to deal with Russia. Efforts on the Western side did not go far enough. Our U.S. friends were convinced of the need to reach out to the Russians, but at the same time kept on the brake. Presidents Bush and Clinton understood the challenges and the risks and were helpful as far as possible—but American neo-cons were trumpeting the "final victory" over Russia. That left the Germans once again to try to help, much more than others, to stabilize the fragile situation in Russia and its neighbors.

To us it was becoming clear in the 1990s that Russia's red line was not the Baltic area, it was Ukraine—and the stationing of nuclear weapons and troops at their border.

In these years I traveled regularly not only to Moscow, but also to Kyiv, leading a German delegation with the instruction to do our best to stabilize Ukraine. It was slowly becoming clear that we were faced with "mission impossible." Diplomatically expressed, we discovered a country with limited "statehood." We slowly began to believe we were all underestimating Leonid Kuchma's successes in constructing a deeply corrupt oligarchic system. During my missions to Ukraine I met the Russian Ambassador in Kyiv, Viktor Chernomyrdin, he explained several times to us Russia's highly paranoid sensitivities, particularly their fear that the United States could take over this delicate relationship.

During these negotiations we discovered the AN 70 project, a nearly ready military transport aircraft, a project that would have helped to stabilize the armament industry in eastern Ukraine. The German government supported the project, but it failed due to the lack of interest of our successors and to resistance from Airbus and our friends on the other side of the Atlantic.

After Yeltsin's departure the attention of the West towards the situation in Russia was slowly diminishing, September 11, the interventions in Afghanistan and in the Middle East changed the compass. Moscow—and the blessed soul of the Russians by the end of the Soviet-Union and the difficult transition years - did not seem to be any more in the centre of our preoccupations.

The United States and other Western allies were driving steadily towards Russia's red line: the offer of the George W. Bush administration to invite Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO at the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest. This initiative was stopped in a common effort by Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel, at least by postponing for some time any decision.

The same development characterized attitudes within the G-7. While Germany sought to integrate Russia, the United States hesitated until 1994. During these years we even were reflecting with Chancellor Kohl about the usefulness to integrate in the longer run China as well as other representatives from Asia, Africa and Latin America in this frame of informal worldwide coordination.

During the 1990s Germany provided considerable international assistance to Russia, to the CIS and the Central and Eastern European countries. These efforts were—with regard to Russia—only partly due to German reunification, the real charges went clearly beyond those commitments, their aim was to contribute actively to the stabilization of Russia and of the neighbors in the East in a phase of critical development of all these countries.

The civil war in Yugoslavia constituted a critical moment within the Western alliance—and with regard to Russia. The United States hesitated, hinting to the Europeans they should settle this conflict on their doorstep. During this period Serbia stuck to its aggressive position. It was convinced that its former allies—France, Britain, the United States and Russia—would recognize its indispensable role in the Balkans. Serbia therefore agreed only to a limited solution to the conflict in Bosnia, an agreement *a minima*, through the Dayton Agreement.¹³

Chancellor Kohl had doubts of the viability of this agreement, but, in loyalty to his Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, who had been among the driving forces of that agreement, tried to help

to stabilize the fragile result with regard to Bosnia. At the same time he maintained his distance from Franjo Tuđman's Croatia.

In autumn 1997 Serbia tried through confidential channels to establish a direct contact to Chancellor Kohl. He asked me to sound out confidentially with the Serbian leadership ways and means to stabilize the Balkans, in particular Bosnia, and especially to avoid the nascent Kosovo conflict. Our offer consisted in integrating Serbia and the whole Balkans in the longer run in a specific way to be developed into the EU. Despite several intense meetings we failed. Serbia felt too much on the "safe side" and indirectly protected by its former "friends and allies" in Russia. Milošević and his people did not feel the political necessity to renounce their goals in Kosovo.

The Kosovo conflict and the NATO intervention in Serbia was then the hard core of my year as German Ambassador to NATO in 1998/99. With regard to this conflict, I was more than surprised in Spring 1999 to get to know the Kosovo separatist leader Hashim Thaçi in the U.S. NATO compound in Brussels.

During the second half of the 1990s the political regime in Moscow had become weaker and proved unable to join the main Western allies to resolve the growing Kosovo conflict. Western intervention in Serbia—and probably even more the recognition of Kosovo—constituted a setback in efforts to integrate Russia in the evolving European security architecture.

Nonetheless, even if the end of this first decade was overshadowed by growing divergences and conflicts, at the end of the 1990s the situation was still characterized by hope and a sense that we had a certain control over evolving dynamics. We still seemed on track toward a final end to the Cold War and the beginning of a new order.

The Second Decade Had to Be Worse: The Return of Geopolitics

How should we best characterize the second decade? More than a decade of permanent crisis management followed that first period. Are Europe and the world on their way out of the tunnel or back into the Cold War?

Europe and the Western world succeeded to some degree in pragmatically mastering the financial and economic crisis that swept down upon a liberal and increasingly unregulated globalized system. Yet this was done without any clear common view or vision for the longer-term sustainability of the system.

With regard to foreign and security policy, however, the assessment must be far more critical, including geopolitics. Hubert Védrine underlined often that during these years the West—Europe and the United States—had lost its capacity for statecraft and statemanship in foreign and security policy. He called the current state of affairs in Syria a prime example of how the West has lost its hegemony and ability to steer events because of policies guided by moralism rather than vital interests. Europe today is surrounded by crises rather than friends.

The turning point probably came with the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 (9/11), which prompted a major change in the policies of many critical actors and which uncovered some real misunderstandings regarding a number of geopolitical issues. Why did this come about?

Looking at the arc of crisis, especially in our near neighborhood, we have to begin with Afghanistan. Today we know that the Americans hesitated about whether they should respond to the 9/11 attacks with an intelligence operation backed by special forces or a classical military intervention. But the United States and the West did not listen to those, like the British or the Russians, who had solid experience with this country. The Allies did not even include Pakistan in their evaluation.

The Germans made their very special experience. The government of Gerhard Schröder and Joschka Fischer felt obliged to support the United States and decided to participate in the military intervention, after the Balkans for Germany the second active experience in a military intervention. Still today I have some doubts whether it has been reasonable for Germany to engage in an underestimated “learning corner” in Kundus in northwest Afghanistan instead of reinforcing Western troops in different areas. The German intervention has been met with divided views among our allies and friends, with some allies believing the German effort has been partially successful, although loaded with too many caveats, and other allies thinking it has been a certain setback.

We began an unwinnable war with a contestable strategy. How do we view the future of this country, the condition of which has direct consequences for the regional neighborhood?

Looking eastward, Russia and Ukraine are the other showcase(s) for the future of our foreign policy. The alienation between Russia and the West began in the 1990s. It was ignited by the Kosovo war, but was sparked by two other events. The first was European Commission President Romano Prodi's decision not to conclude and to sign the EU-Russia agreement in 2003/2004, despite a clear mandate to do so. Some sensitive questions, such as visas, still had to be settled, but seemed solvable. Who prevented him from signing? Two West European heads of government asked me desperately in the last years, who phoned him? The second spark was the U.S. push to integrate Ukraine and Georgia into NATO and the unfortunate positioning of the EU.

The Russians woke up and reacted negatively. Why did the West fail to react either to Medvedev or to Putin's mixture of a last warning/call for help in his Munich speech of February 10, 2007? Even with regard to Cold War this speech constitutes a reference:

Only two decades ago the world was ideologically and economically divided and it was the huge strategic potential of two superpowers that ensured global security. This global stand-off pushed the sharpest economic and social problems to the margins of the international community's and the world's agenda. And, just like any war, the Cold War left us with live ammunition, figuratively speaking. I am referring to ideological stereotypes, double standards and other typical aspects of Cold War bloc thinking.¹⁴

Why did the West make these fundamental errors in assessing Russia, the state and the place of Georgia and even more that of Ukraine? And where is our common assessment of current Russian foreign policy? Is Moscow just a "bad cop" pursuing aggressive policies, or is it just trying to be recognized on the same level as Washington and thus in reality conducting defensive policies? The relationship with Russia seems to me too important to leave it in the sorry state it is in today¹⁵

A key case for the Europeans and the Americans has become again the relationship with Turkey. After forty years of hesitation the EU in 2003 launched accession negotiations with Ankara, but with no

real conviction and in the knowledge that the time was not ripe for Turkish membership in the EU. Was this hypocrisy or *realpolitik*? It is astonishing that we did not express our doubts, starting in 2005-2006, about the real background of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's approach to the EU—did he really seek membership or did he use Europe as a tool to advance his efforts to replace Turkey's secular governance a la Atatürk by a fundamentally different regime, as well as a re-ordering of Turkey's relations in its region? We understood rather well Turkish sensitivities regarding the Kurdish question, but it is rather incomprehensible that the United States and the EU did not have any feeling from the beginning about the sensitivity and risks of the "Gülen"-case, Erdoğan's former ally who fled to the US. During these years Turkey failed partly in its attempts to assert a leading role in the Middle East. Other contenders—Iran, Saudi-Arabia, Egypt, Israel—treated Turkey with a certain mistrust. Another sensitive question of Turkey's foreign policy has always been its relationship with Russia—Erdoğan seems at least to have stepped back from Washington while looking for common ground, perhaps even a partial realignment, with Russia.

Under these circumstances EU leaders, at the latest by 2010, should have been re-examining the entire relationship with Turkey and put at least as a first step an alternative offer to accession on the table, for instance membership in the Single Market.

The U.S. intervention in Iraq and its consequences has been the other critical leading subject in the last two decades. Looking backwards at the development of the region it is more than astonishing that the United States and Europe supported Saddam Hussein's ugly war against Khomeini's Iran.

The two misled U.S.-interventions had three consequences: a failed state, the rise of the IS, and the re-opening of the unsettled Kurdish question, which is explosive for Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria.

With regard to the civil war in Syria I remain convinced that the United States and Russia could together have stopped Bashar al-Assad in the first phase of unrest. I am not the only one to suspect that the Israelis were involved in this assessment.

The Europeans have largely been spectators of these developments, and have been targets of terrorism and refugees. In those years in par-

particular France missed different opportunities for a real comeback in the region. Twice it proved unable to respond to the call from Damascus asking for stronger cooperation to relaunch its influence in the region. In fact, Paris and its leading politicians felt blocked by the situation in Lebanon and the strong implication of Syria in the killing of Hariri in 2005. Today only the involvement of Russia and the United States, seconded by the regional powers, may help us find a way out of the highly risky situation in the Middle East with its various conflicts that could easily lead to an open war.

In the second half of the 1990s the last real attempt was made to reach a solution to the Israeli/Palestine-conflict. In 1999 the last serious U.S. attempt failed in the aftermath of Rabin's assassination. Since then, it seems to be even more insoluble.

In that period there was for the first time strong coordination between the United States and Germany—and through Germany with the EU—in which Europe actively supported the U.S. lead in attempting to reach a breakthrough in the peace process. In Chancellor Kohl's regular contacts with Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians, discretely supported by the European Commission, the idea of a regional community for water, natural resources and infrastructures had been developed, outlined and accepted by the partners in the region. To our regret this project ended abruptly soon after the assassination of Itzhak Rabin because of the growing mistrust between the parties involved.

Many today are waiting anxiously for the peace plan the Trump administration has announced that it is developing. Some first elements have been leaked, but what will be the concrete content and goals? The decisive question is whether President Trump will take the risk to present the plan in a moment where the political situation is unstable in Israel. As far as is known, one of the elements of the plan would consist in the "exchange of areas" ("huge real estate exchange plan"), but what are the other elements necessary to form a viable concept? Jordanian friends have expressed to me the fear that such a plan would only destabilize Jordan. And there is another open question: would there be any coordination with or at least implications for the other guarantor of Israel, Russia?

With regard to Egypt the Europeans and the West have committed major errors. One of these fundamental errors was to support the Mus-

lim brotherhood as a democratic force while giving up on Mubarak. The result is a Arab winter, not an Arab spring.

The same diagnosis applies to Libya and North Africa. The West seemed to have made an unenthusiastic yet rational peace with the Ghaddafi regime, only to see France (and Britain) push this country back to its former tribal state. In my view this was a huge Western error with risks and consequences for the neighborhood, in particular for Tunisia, which does not receive enough support from us at a crucial time. Tunisia tried to reach an Arab spring by ousting its dictator. Today the country feels left alone. And in the Maghreb, Algeria and even Morocco have become unstable. These countries have numerous links to Europe and instability there means serious risks for Europe.

The other key case in our Middle Eastern neighborhood is the relationship with Saudi Arabia and the Arab Peninsula. The case and the country which divides us most from the United States is Saudi Arabia, which has become a more visible active regional power over the last decade.

Concentrating on its oil exports, Saudi Arabia has in reality never been neutral. The kingdom has been the main supporter of groups and movements close to or at least compatible with Saudi Salafist religious convictions. The expansion of one of the sources of terrorism in Europe is a consequence of the Saudi presence in Belgium, which has grown due to invitation of the Belgian government to promote the training of Imams by salafists. The 2015 attacks in France were directly linked to this; Molenbeek, a suburb of Brussels, was the terrorists' base of operations. This development has been underestimated by European security authorities for too long. In addition, Saudi Arabia has been financing Islamist groups in Algeria (FIS) and Palestine (Hamas—before Qatar), and is active in the war between two groups close to Iran and themselves in Yemen. The murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul seems forgotten and without our side imposing any consequences.¹⁶

Saudi Arabia, one of the strongest U.S. allies in the region and one of the most important oil suppliers, and at the same time a threat to our security, has become under the U.S. umbrella one of the new regional powers in the Middle East. For the moment Saudi Arabia has even developed new and strong cooperation with Israel. Together they seem

to have become the U.S. deputies in the region. Two open questions remain: will Saudi Arabia step back from its extreme behavior through internal reforms? Can Saudi Arabia achieve a sustainable model of development given that the importance of oil is diminishing?

Iran is in many ways the "bad cop" in the game, but part of a sort of "G-4" of the Middle East. Four leading nations or four plus one who would like to be the leading force(s): Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran—and Israel. Until now there is no winner. In this open political game, Israel occupies a special place in the policies of all of these actors and those of its two guarantee powers, the United States and Russia.

Iran is a highly complex regime marked by internal divisions and partly dangerous autonomous groups. But it would be a real political mistake to refuse dialogue or avoid efforts to integrate the oldest civilization in the region into the "concert of nations," however difficult that may be. Its nuclear aspirations are not new; they have existed since the time of the Shah, who at that time was supported by Israel, France, Germany and the United States.

What Europe and the Western world lack is a real permanent dialogue with the leading forces of the region and a common assessment and policy towards the region and its main actors as a way to attain some degree of "strategic influence" in this potential powder keg.

Invoking our southern neighborhood we have to integrate in our assessment the Sahel zone and Africa. It is strange that we are beginning to reflect now on this region, and not thirty years earlier. Africa seems to be a deep mixture between failed states and astonishing developments, it is not black and white, it is not a clear picture, but China is everywhere, and where are we? The EU is trying to set up a new strategy of partnership, but these are only first steps.

How to evaluate China? It is a stabilizer, a commercial partner, and at the same time a competitor. It seeks to advance its vital interests through a strategy of conquest through the Silk Road concept by acquiring strategic assets in the European neighborhood and in Europe itself. China seems to follow a long term strategy consisting of four vectors: achieving a predominant role in Asia; establishing a relationship on equal footing with the United States; building ties to Europe as a supplier of technology; and developing relations in Africa/Middle East

as critical suppliers of natural resources. At first glance this is a brilliant strategic concept. It still to prove its sustainability and coherence, however, with regard to domestic Chinese developments.

Asia as a whole has a prominent place in European reflections, but do we have a real Asian strategy? I fear we do not. What is our assessment of the role and potential of Japan, India and Indonesia, the evaluation of cooperation bodies in the region and their relations with China, the United States, Russia and Europe?

The United States and Europe

During the period of East-West-conflict following World War II, the United States was Europe's protector, perhaps "controller," even promoter of European integration as long as it did not bother U.S. influence and interests. At the same time the United States remains until today the easiest and best possible scapegoat of all.

In the last decade, however, we have been observing two major changes in U.S. perceptions and tendencies with regard to the orientation of its foreign and security policies.

Over the last decade the American *leitmotiv* has become "Asia first." For some Europeans the United States seemed on track towards an unpredictable "G-2" with China, which some thought might lead to a clash of civilizations. Others speak now about a new type of "cold war," or a bilateral truce at European expense, or a bit of both. This struggle has to do with more than trade hostilities. It is about predominance and control.

President Trump has added to this first goal a second: "America first." This is not a new American policy goal—Ronald Reagan pursued comparable objectives in the early 1980s. What is new, at least for some Europeans, is that the United States has become a more unreliable and unpredictable partner than was the case under Reagan.

Europe's limited international role

In 2003 the EU in its first strategic review fully subscribed to the idea of being surrounded by a peaceful and friendly neighborhood. It charted a bright future for an effective multilateral system. These were

the years of the "peace dividend," a description that we would consider today as a romantic illusion as the EU faces an arc of crises both to the east and to the south. On the other hand the EU has been able to manage and consolidate the banking, financial and economic crisis. While the EU still seems to be working in "crisis management mode," it also looks to be on track on its way out of the tunnel.

During these years Europe has looked more inward, as classic differences between north and south loomed. What is new is the growing rift between east and west; eastern EU member states do not feel that their western neighbors understand them. EU achievements also seem much weaker with respect to its Neighborhood Policy and its Foreign and Security Policy. More than ever we are far away from the goal of a common policy.

Consequences and Perspectives: Who Are The Winners?

It is astonishing that the European Union has been relatively stable in recent years. The threats to its financial and economic stability and the Brexit challenge even been helpful in some ways, particularly by reinforcing EU cohesion. The EU, in fact, seems to be in a better shape than the majority of its member states, but this does not mean at all that Europeans can feel reassured. The EU faces a number of key challenges, including internal security and migration, security and defense, and the self-assertion of its economy. The slogan "A Europe that protects" seems to be the common denominator in order to consolidate the EU's role and future.

Europe is facing a growing vacuum in its neighborhood. The dissolution of previous structures that provided a certain degree of order is generating serious dangers for stability, peace and progress. One consequence is the risk and reality of greater migration flows and the resulting need to identify and implement ways to regulate such flows. A second consequence is the challenge of terrorism being imported from the neighborhood, which in part is also due to the lack of comprehensive immigration and integration policies.

While the European record of the last fifty years has been remarkable, its performance during the last two decades has been much weaker. Europe is not (yet) in dangerous waters, but it must address these

challenges if it is to retain its sense of security and prosperity and its place in the world.

China has emerged as the primary winner of developments over recent decades. At least in Europe its importance has still been recognized only by a minority. The question remains whether China's extraordinary development of the last forty years is sustainable.

Russia is not a winner. It has been losing its place as one of the two superpowers in the world. Russia remains the second nuclear superpower, but it has lost ground in most other areas of endeavor. Since the middle of the first decade of this new century having lost any belief in a cooperation with the West on the basis of equal footing, the Russians are trying to win back its former position, at least with the aim of being respected as an equal player to the US. Their actions seem to be at first sight for a Western observer assertive, but in reality the Russians try to defend their positions with regard to positions they consider as strategic (Ukraine, Syria). Furthermore part of this strategy consists in disturbing Western cohesion wherever possible.

The winner is not the United States. The Trump reflex—"America first"—is not a new one in recent U.S. history; remember Ronald Reagan's policies in the early 1980s. The difference seems to be that Reagan was at the same time a reliable partner, whereas Trump seems to be much more difficult and unpredictable.

The Necessary European Action

There is strategic urgency for European reflection and action—without, but not against the United States, and not without the UK, even after a possible Brexit.

The answer until now seems to be only Macron—with a "modernized" French approach to Europe and the world, especially in European foreign and security policy. But nothing decisive has been achieved until now, although basic cornerstones exist.

The problem more than ever is Germany—the necessary partner, the reluctant economic hegemon, but a country without any strategy or consensus in foreign and security policy. Germany has become characterized as "a dangerous pacifist" or NATO's biggest "freeloader."

Germany's weakness, its contradictions and its lack of any strategy have become serious problems for its partners.

It is true Angela Merkel has been a pragmatic leader, and effectively managed the European response to the financial crisis, but she has no clear medium-term compass or vision. Germany needs a real national debate about its role in foreign and security policy and with regard to its European and international responsibilities. Until now the Germans are reluctant to accept fully the expectations of their partners, who ask them to accept more concrete international responsibilities even if linked to real risk. In the eyes of its partners German policy seems to pay a certain lip-service, a permanent "yes, but" to the demands of its European partners.

France and Germany remain the fundamental partners in Europe, but there are still essential cultural differences between them, especially concerning the military, security and defense. Germany needs assistance in order to reach a really compatible approach—Paul Taylor in his study says Germany needs to "jump over its own shadow."¹⁷ A must for France and Germany is therefore a frank discussion of such fundamentals as cooperation in intelligence, planning, transport and logistics, equipment, procurement (and control), export of armament, common units, specialization of forces and ensuring a strong technological basis for of armament industries.

We are at the beginning. The real difficulties are ahead of us. But there is urgency and no alternative. For the first time there is a real chance.

Cold War II: The Way Out

Fareed Zakaria has stated that "we find ourselves in a post-American world order, the United States is withdrawing from a world it has dominated economically and by power over the last hundred years—and no one is taking its place."¹⁸ This seems clear, but the situation seems to me a bit more complex.

In the spring of 2019 I took part in a seminar of the "Club of Three" - a Franco-German-British brainstorming launched more than twenty years ago by Lord George Weidenfeld—in Moscow. The central agen-

da should have been the question how to overcome current “non-relations” between Moscow and the West, how to launch the renaissance of the relationship between Russia and the EU despite of all the obstacles.

The concordant view of the European “operating actors” in Moscow was clear: “we are farther away than ever from a common policy; we must develop such a policy.” The same applies to the relations between Europe and the United States. Different attempts have been made but none has been successful.

Bearing in mind the growing uncertainties and risks it is a vital necessity to act. It is not up to me to advise the United States, but the main elements of a European answer to get out of Cold War II could be made up of the following.

First, the EU should concentrate on “essentials“ and main challenges.

This means on the one hand a comprehensive approach to greater European “self-assertion,” the long term survival of the European economy in the face of its main global competitors, the United States and China. This has to include the completion of the internal market, including the review of the tools at our disposal to defend our vital interests in international trade and investment and a radical new approach to innovation and research, including using the methods of the DARPA-model. The last elections to the European Parliament have underlined the importance of a holistic and engaged approach to climate change.

The 19 members of the eurozone are called to enhance and complete the euro: this includes in particular the question of a specific eurozone budget where finance ministers have reached a common orientation still be worked out in detail, and furthermore the transformation of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) towards a sort of European Monetary Fund.¹⁹

Another major subject has to be a common policy on internal security and migration. Such a program—as the necessary counterpart to the opening of the internal borders by the Schengen system—was proposed by Chancellor Kohl in 1991 (!), but member states seem only to have taken it seriously since the 2015 terrorist attacks and the migra-

tion waves. Until now we have reached only about 40 percent of what is really necessary; this is alarming.

A specific challenge will be a “reset” towards a totally rebuilt common foreign and security policy, including defense and development policy. If we are honest with ourselves we have to admit that we are far away from a common policy; progress reached in the last decades has only scratched the surface. I argue therefore in favor of a radically new approach including establishment of priorities and especially real cooperation between national capitals and “Brussels,” including joint actions led by a lead nation and reflections about a EU “security council.” Part of a sound review will have to be EU development policy, which for instance is unfolding in Africa without any clear coordination among EU member states and the Commission. The review of the Cotonou Agreement with the ACP-countries in 2020 should offer opportunity for a thorough reform, introducing a serious coordination effort with clear priorities.

Last but not least we should not forget the reinforcement of the European framework. This includes a new reflection about improved legitimacy by integrating national parliaments more in the decision-making and oversight. Furthermore there is a need to actually apply the principle of subsidiarity when it comes to the role of “Brussels.” Our citizens want our major problems to be solved; they do not want endless declarations and poorly applied directives. We should be guided by what is possible and efficient, rather than waste time hunting for the ideal approach. If intergovernmental approaches are feasible, we should engage in this way, and not wait for the implementation of the classical communitarian approach.

And we should try to improve EU governance. Europe has to be led by the tandem—Commission and European Council—but we should reflect whether a “EU Security Council” could be a useful instrument in order to enhance decision-making.

Second, we have to rebuild a sustainable transatlantic and in particular EU-U.S. relationship.

Our first reflection should deal with a renewed transatlantic Alliance, a “new NATO” in which the Europeans take greater and more

visible responsibility²⁰. This should be based on a common structure and on a European (EU plus?) caucus.

At the same time the U.S.-EU relationship and dialogue will have to be adapted to a situation which has deeply changed. The aim has to remain a modern TTIP-or CETA-type agreement with regular high- level consultations of major issues of common interest. The U.S. Congress and the European Parliament should be involved, perhaps by setting up a small permanent U.S.-EU committee.

Third, we need a deep “reset” of the relationship with Russia.

The very first step has to be the settlement of a core question—the future of Ukraine. I do not think it is too late for a negotiated solution. We have to be aware that the independence of Ukraine has been from the outset an “agreement to disagree” with the Russians, for whom Ukraine due to history has always been a specific case. I agree with Dimiti Trenin, who is right to push in favor of a face-saving compromise asking for the withdrawal of Russia from the East while maintaining the Crimea. This could be a first step towards developing again a common agenda.²¹

In parallel a discussion should take place regarding the relaunch of a common European security architecture, a development that has stalled since the 1990s. These discussions should integrate in particular the future of the OSCE or that of the relationship between NATO and Russia and of the NATO-Russia Council, which never found a real place in the heart of the relationship. I understood well Russian NATO Ambassador Sergei Kislyak expressing to me his feeling being alone, isolated, not at home in a circle where the other 19 members had coordinated their positions before hand and no real discussion was possible. A parallel process should focus on EU-Russia relations.

In this overall context it could be helpful to set up common lines to develop a permanent discussion about subjects of common interest such as economy, migration, extremism, cyber, Middle East, Black Sea, de-conflicting of areas of tension.

Fourth, the relationship with China.

This should be based on a broader, permanent dialogue with the aim of a more balanced relationship including a permanent structure and regular high-level consultations. At the same time the EU should reflect how to reinforce our relationship with India, Japan and Indonesia at the bilateral as the multilateral level (review of the ASEM-concept).

Fifth, improvement of worldwide cooperation.

Last but not least, the EU and U.S. should examine major common issues: A "G 2" or a "G 4" (U.S., China, Russia, EU) seem to be unrealistic. The G-7 is a structure of the past, reflections should favour a sustainable "G 16+1" bringing together the major nations as future core beyond the UN-Security Council.²²

Instead of a Conclusion

Neither the EU nor the Western world as a whole have been following the compass opened in the transition in the 1990s with the aim of overcoming definitely the period of Cold War. After hopeful beginnings and attempts in the 1990s we have been leaving this line and entering into a period of conflicts and unforced errors. Only under crisis management auspices has it been possible to avoid the worse. But today's general situation is more than ever characterized by a volatile, uncertain, and risky environment worldwide. Therefore the justified thesis has arisen about a (new) cold war or a fallback into the cold war which we had not seriously overcome. Therefore it has become today much more difficult and complex to reach the necessary turn and reset towards a safer and cooperative world where Europe and the U.S. are natural allies, where Europe and Russia need a good neighbourhood, where Europe and China and Asia can be strong partners. This goal is certainly very ambitious, but it seems still possible with political courage and a certain vision bearing in mind our mutual dependance and responsibilities.

Notes

1. William J. Burns, “The Lost Art of American Diplomacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 27, 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-03-27/lost-art-american-diplomacy>.
2. Speech at the Minda de Günzburg Centre for European Studies January 31, 1993.
3. *The Economist*, May 17, 2019.
4. The aim of this outline is not a new theory on the order of the world (see the excellent article of Hanns Maull, “The Once and Future Liberal Order, in *Survival*, Vol. 61, No. 2, p. 7-32).
5. See François Delattre “The world grows more dangerous by the day“, *New York Times* June 13, 2019 (Delattre is the future Secretary General of the French Foreign Ministry, the Quai d’Orsay).
6. See for example his speech in Madrid on May 21, 2002.
7. Extract from his speech in Munich on February 3, 1996.
8. Statement (“Europe—Every German’s Future“) of Chancellor Kohl, 3 February 1990, Davos (German Information Center NY, Statements & Speeches, Volume XIII No 4).
9. Personal archives of the author.
10. Personal archives of the author.
11. Translation of the letter of mid-october 1994 to President Clinton, personal archives of the author.
12. Translation of Chancellor Kohl’s speech of 3 February 1996.
13. See the remarks of Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Random House, 1998), p. 361 ff.
14. Text following *Washington Post*, December 12, 2007.
15. See the interview of Horst Teltschik in *Der Spiegel* Nr. 11/2019, pages 24-26.
16. See the Report of UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions Agnes Callamard of 19 June 2019 (A/HRC/41/CRP1).
17. See Paul Taylor’s outstanding studies of the future of France, Germany, Poland and Italy in the European defense and security scene (edited by Friends of Europe, Brussels).
18. Zakaria in Bulletin Crédit Suisse 1/2019, Page 15 ss.

19. See in detail Miranda Xafa, Euro-area Governance Reform, The Unfinished Agenda, CIGI-Papers No 203, November 2018.

20. See among many other contributions to “NATO at 70” Experts view in *Politico*, April 3, 2019.

21. Dmitri Trenin, “It’s Time to Rethink Russia’s Foreign Policy Strategy,” Carnegie Moscow Center, April 25, 2019; see William H. Hill, “Russia’s Search for a Place in Europe,” *Survival* Vol. 61, No. 3 (2019), p. 93.

22. G16+1= (1) America: U.S., Canada, Mexico, Brazil; (2) Asia : China, Japan, India, Indonesia; (3) Europe: France, Britain, Germany, the EU-Commission; (4) Turkey, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa; plus the UN Secretary General.

