

The background of the entire cover is a stylized map of Europe in shades of green and blue. Overlaid on this map are large, three-dimensional, yellowish-gold letters that spell out 'EUROPE'. The letters are arranged in a way that they appear to be floating or moving across the map, with several black silhouettes of people climbing on them. The letters 'EUROPE' are positioned in the upper right, while 'EUR' is in the lower left. The overall composition suggests a theme of building, progress, or the challenges of integration.

The Polish Institute of International Affairs
Transatlantic Leadership Network

Editors

Sławomir Dębski and Daniel S. Hamilton

EUROPE WHOLE AND FREE: VISION AND REALITY

PRAISE FOR *EUROPE WHOLE AND FREE: VISION AND REALITY*

“The goal of a Europe whole, free and at peace remains as vital today as it did in 1989. This important book brings together policymakers and experts from both sides of the Atlantic for a timely discussion of how to achieve that goal for the 21st century.”

—***Madeleine K. Albright***

Former Secretary of State between 1997–2001

“Europe is not yet Whole and Free as we dreamt it would be in the heady days of 1989. But Europe is wholer and freer than it has ever been in its history. Russia and Belarus are the only two countries whose people are denied the right to choose their own government. One day they will have that right which the rest of Europe now enjoys. This volume of essays is essential reading for those who wish to understand the last 30 years; three decades of European history which, whatever the setbacks and disappointments, have transformed our continent and the lives of those who are its citizens.”

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**served as Foreign Minister and Minister of Defence
in the United Kingdom Government between 1992–1997**

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—***Volker Rühle***

**served as Federal Minister of Defence
in German Government between 1992–1998**

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Warsaw and Washington, D.C. 2019

Sławomir Dębski and Daniel S. Hamilton (eds.), *Europe Whole and Free: Vision and Reality*

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Warsaw: The Polish Institute of International Affairs
Washington, D.C.: Transatlantic Leadership Network

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Washington, D.C. 20036-5828
www.transatlantic.org

Distributed by Brookings Institution Press

Managing editor: Andrzej Dąbrowski
Cover graphics: Dominika Majewska
Proof reader: Brien Barnett
Technical editor: Dorota Dołęgowska

ISBN 978-83-66091-39-9
e-ISBN 978-83-66091-40-5

Printing
Centrum Poligrafii Sp. z o.o.
ul. Łopuszańska 53
02-232 Warszawa

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Preface

In his May 1989 speech in Mainz, Germany, U.S. President George H.W. Bush announced that Europe and the world faced a great opportunity. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, there was a chance to end political and ideological rivalry, remove the Iron Curtain, unify Germany, and restore freedom to the peoples of Central Europe:

In Poland, at the end of World War II, the Soviet Army prevented the free elections promised by Stalin at Yalta. And today Poles are taking the first steps toward real elections, so long promised, so long deferred. (...) As President, I will continue to do all I can to help open the closed societies of the East. We seek self-determination for all of Germany and all of Eastern Europe. And we will not relax, and we must not waver. Again, the world has waited long enough.

Indeed, Europe had been waiting for this moment since the end of World War II. 1945 brought freedom and peace to the peoples of Western Europe. However, the eastern part of the continent was choked with the iciness of the Cold War, cut off from the free part of Europe by an Iron Curtain, and incorporated into the Soviet sphere of influence. As the Hungarian poet Sándor Márai wrote about Central Europe's experience:

Soviet soldiers freed our lands, but they could not give us freedom because they themselves did not have it.

Europe had been divided because of divisions about Germany; the Iron Curtain was built as an outcome of the German problem. Therefore, the future of Europe, the dreams of its unification, and the freedom of nations left in the Soviet sphere of influence after Yalta were all associated with the need to overcome the division of Germany.

On the 40th anniversary of the Yalta conference, Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote:

Yalta is unfinished business (...) Thoughtful Europeans realize that the future of Europe is intertwined with the future of Germany and of Poland. Without spanning, in some non-threatening fashion, the division of Germany, there will not be a genuine Europe, but continuing Russian domination of Poland makes Russian control over East Germany geopolitically possible. Thus the relationship between Russia on the one hand and Germany and Poland on the other must be peacefully transformed if a larger Europe is ever to emerge.¹

In May 1989, the president of the United States invited all political forces in Europe, including former rivals from across the Iron Curtain, to build a new community: *Europe whole and free ... whose creation was to guarantee peace and optimal conditions for development.*

Thirty years after presenting this vision, it is worth considering the significance of Bush's vision for the history of transatlantic relations, for Europe and for the whole world. Only from the perspective of time can we assess how prophetic it was, what it really changed and to what extent it could be realised.

The reality is that 30 years on, despite tremendous progress, Europe as a continent is not entirely whole, free, or at peace. Some parts of the continent are more secure than at any time in the previous century. Others face conflict or are war zones. European borders have once again been changed by force. Vast parts of the continent are no longer under the thumb of domestic autocrats or foreign overseers, but Europe is not fully

free. Europe is no longer divided as it had been, but new divisions have emerged, which means the continent is not entirely whole.

Is the vision of a united Europe still attractive? For whom? What else should be done to bring it closer to fruition? What does it depend on today? To address these questions, we turned to a group of several dozen outstanding American and European experts dealing with European issues, transatlantic relations, strategic problems and security. Some are practitioners, people who at various stages and in different capacities participated in attempts to implement the vision of Europe whole and free. Others constantly deal with issues that interest us and often face challenges associated with implementing Bush's vision. Some authors are rising stars, experts who may in the future be responsible for the shape of the Old Continent, may influence the policy direction of their own countries and may participate in global debates on the nature and condition of peace and the means of its defence.

The authors we invited represent very different political perspectives and viewpoints. Everyone, however, is without exception bound by the conviction that overcoming divisions in Europe is a path toward the security of the continent and one worth seeking in the name of peace.

We thank our authors for their contributions and their insights. The views and opinions they express are their own and do not reflect or represent those of any institution or government.

To assist the reader, our authors' answers have been grouped into three thematic sections: Roots, Institutions, and the Future. Citations are found in the endnotes, along with an index and short biographies of the authors. We also include as a key reference George H.W. Bush's original Mainz speech.

This project was initiated and completed with the support of The Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and the Transatlantic Leadership Network. Special thanks go to Andrzej Dąbrowski of PISM, who put a tremendous amount of work into coordinating this project. And a thank you to Dorota Dołęgowska, who heads the PISM publishing house, for watching over the publishing process.

We hope you enjoy the book.

Sławomir Dębski, Daniel S. Hamilton

Peace without Victory

When Stalin broke the Yalta Accords and “from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic” an Iron Curtain fell across Europe, the United States assumed responsibility for the fate of a free and democratic Europe. In March 1947, President Harry Truman proclaimed in Congress:

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio; fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms. I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.¹

European security and prosperity demanded American engagement to create a community capable of collective defence, to raise the

Old Continent from economic ruin, and to guarantee conditions for development. This conviction led to the Marshall Plan, the institutionalisation of mutual transatlantic defence, the creation of the North Atlantic Alliance, and initiated a process of European integration. Soon, NATO and the European community became institutional emanations of cooperation among the most developed nations of the world.

Truman borrowed the understanding of “free people” from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who, before a joint session of Congress on 26 December 1942 rhetorically asked: “What kind of people do they think we are?” Here, “they” referred to Hitler and Mussolini. By replying to his question, Churchill defined the identity of the Grand Coalition: “we” meant the free nations striving for the liberation of Europe from the bondage of German Nazism and Italian fascism.

Forty years later, President Ronald Reagan spoke before a sitting of both houses of parliament in London and intoned Churchill’s question to define “we” in the context of the Cold War. For him, it meant a community united over the goal of liberating Europe from communism: “Free people, worthy of freedom and determined to not only remain so but to help others gain their freedom as well.” Here, Reagan proclaimed the crusade for freedom—a political strategy going beyond containment of the imperial aspirations of the Soviet Union. It was no longer just about publicly expressing solidarity with the nations to the east of the Iron Curtain (John F. Kennedy, *Ich bin ein Berliner* speech, 26 June 1963). Reagan mobilised European allies and increased political pressure on the civilisation of enslavement. On the one hand, the U.S. strove to weaken communist regimes and undermine their legitimacy. On the other, they offered to cooperate with the Soviet Union for global security and Europe.

The new period of technological rivalry initiated by Reagan, along with increased political pressure and economic sanctions that cut the USSR off from advanced Western technology, led to a situation in which Soviet communism was able neither to keep pace with the U.S. in technological development nor to offer its own society an alternative to the Western way of life. It was thanks to these politics that the U.S. succeeded in reaching a series of disarmament agreements with the Soviet Union, such as the limitation of strategic weapons (START 1) or the liquidation of intermediate-

range rocket arsenals (INF); something that contributed to withdrawing them from Europe also.

Mikhail Gorbachev—as it turned out, the last leader of the Soviet Union—attempted to salvage the authority of the Communist Party and maintain its legitimacy to govern. However, the glasnost and perestroika policies he initiated led to the democratisation of social relations, first in the Soviet Union and, subsequently, with the satellite states. In this way, the communist parties in Central Europe gradually lost an important element that secured their power—the threat of Soviet intervention.

Standing before Reagan's successor in the White House was the task of setting a new aim around which a pan-European community and their interests could be shaped. And here again, the U.S., just as 40 years earlier, assumed the responsibility for fashioning a new peaceful order and defining the political “we.”

In April 1917, President Woodrow Wilson presented to Congress his vision of order intended for Europe after World War I:

Is the present war a struggle for a just and secure peace or only a new balance of power? ... Only a tranquil Europe can be a stable Europe. There must be not only a balance, but a community of power, not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace ... It must be peace without victory ... [as] only peace between equals can last; only a peace the very principle of which is equality and a common participation in a common benefit.²

In proposing an end to the Cold War, George H.W. Bush alluded to this American tradition of contemplating the European order and, in a certain sense, put forward his own vision of “peace without victory.” During his Europe Whole and Free speech, he avoided antagonising the now former Soviet adversaries by inviting them to join in commonly defining the understanding of “we” by creating a community joined in “the vision, concept of free people in North America and Europe working to protect their values.” The road to achieving this goal was through cooperation over the unification of Germany (which led to the 2+4 conference in 1990 and the ultimate reunification of the German Democratic Republic with the Federal Republic of Germany), accepting free, democratic elections as

a pan-European systemic standard, and in cooperation in technological advancement and significant restrictions on military potential.

In response to this American vision, Mikhail Gorbachev, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, announced an end to the Brezhnev Doctrine, which limited the sovereignty of Central European states, and invoked the image of “a common European home.” In his speech before the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, he accepted the American offer of “peace without victory.” He ruled out the eruption of armed conflict on the continent and “the very possibility of the use or threat of force, above all military force, by an alliance against another alliance, inside alliances, or wherever it may be.”³ This vision provided the impetus for harmonising a continent-wide developmental model and, after several years, led to the gradual enlargement of NATO and the European Union. The combined nullification of the Brezhnev Doctrine and denunciation of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact by the Soviet Congress of People’s Deputies in December 1989 were important Soviet contributions toward the newly formed European order. A new spectre was haunting Europe—the spectre of the collapse of communism, of peace without victory, without vanquished or victors but with a common triumph over the Cold War division of the continent.

Unintended Consequences of Systemic Transformations

One element of America’s policy toward dismantling the Yalta division of Europe was creating the conditions that would allow communist elites in Central Europe to peacefully relinquish and hand over power to democratic movements. Here too the notion of peace without victory was applied. The U.S. supported the democratic transformations in Central Europe and the new democratic authorities there supported American policies of overcoming the Cold War division of Europe and basing continental security on mutual cooperation. One example is Poland, whose neighbours all changed after the Cold War. To the west emerged a reunited Germany. To the south, the Czech and Slovak Republics replaced Czechoslovakia. To the east, instead of one neighbour—the Soviet Union—Poland shared its

borders with four new states: Russia, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. With all its new neighbours Poland signed treaties of friendship and cooperation and became the epicentre of political stability in the new post-Yalta Europe. Through this, Poland also became an important ally to Washington in realizing the vision of Europe whole and free.

New social, political, and economic elites were shaped under American patronage in Central Europe. In essence, these were a synthesis of former communist elites and dissidents. In many instances, the synthesis demanded America's protection for former communist authorities or members of the communist security apparatus. This was a rather standard element of American politics toward systemic transformations, but for the idea of creating a united, free and democratic Europe, it had a few important negative, unintended consequences.

First, American protection of former communist elites was, in essence, a form of external intervention in the democratisation process. Democracy is a self-regulating system of government. Every form of external interference that favours a certain political side—for example, by guaranteeing political inviolability—always threatens the possibility of the oligarchisation of social relations, limiting democratic controls and, in the long term, social tensions. The repercussion of this sort of American intervention in all Central European states severely delayed the processes of de-communisation and lustration. Without any doubt, the delays negatively impacted the quality of democratic systems in Central Europe.

Second, the American umbrella over the systemic transformations in Central Europe was incorrectly interpreted in Russia as a geopolitical action intended to expand America's sphere of influence. The misinterpretation stemmed from the old tendency to view the world in geopolitical terms. In turn, this old viewpoint often ignored the actual political aspirations of Central European societies toward integration in transatlantic and European structures. With the exception of Slovakia after 1989, no political power came to office in the other Central European states advocating an alternative to NATO and EU membership. Social aspirations were a major regional political power harmonising with the vision of Europe whole and free, which nevertheless broke with the paradigm of geopolitical rivalry.

During the Cold War, the free world proved the superiority of its development model. Russians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, and the other nations of Central and Eastern Europe who emerged from communism with aspirations of sovereignty did not feel that they had lost. Rather they rejected their developmental aberrations—communism and the Soviet command economy—and regarded this as their own success. In 1990, 90% of Russians correlated “normalcy” with accepting the Western lifestyle and 32% believed that state reformers should imitate the U.S. (32% said the same about imitating Japan). Only 17% named Germany as an example to follow, 11% cited Sweden, and 4% favoured the Chinese example.

The negative experiences associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Russia's systemic transformation under President Boris Yeltsin contributed to a change in social attitudes. Vladimir Putin exploited this situation by transforming the weak, corrupt Russian democracy he inherited into an authoritarian system. In 2005, Putin announced that the collapse of the Soviet Union was “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.” Under the influence of this and similar assessments, over half of Russians began negatively evaluating the fall of the USSR and conveying a positive attitude toward totalitarian, Soviet symbols.

Gleb Pavlovsky, one of the ideologues responsible for transforming the Russian political system into an authoritarian one, once proposed the thesis that for Russia, the Cold War ended differently than for the Western world. According to him, Francis Fukuyama's famous essay best conveyed the mood of the post-1989 era by claiming that after the end of the Cold War came “the end of history.” Liberal democracy was victorious over the communist ideology but, at the same time, the West lost its last ideological opponent. But the Russians did not consider themselves to be defeated. They saw the bankruptcy of communism as the beginning of a new era of nihilism in which no norms applied.⁴

Against this backdrop, social acceptance of the facade of democracy in Russia was born. New Russian elites convinced the society of how further democratisation threatened disintegration and how this process could only be stopped by imperialistic methods, which began re-emerging in foreign and domestic politics. At the same time, it became impossible to

collectively create a new pan-European “we” with a Russia headed toward authoritarianism.

Here, it is worthwhile to remember that even during the Gorbachev period, the vision of Europe whole and free did not apply to the territory of the Soviet Union, for no one envisioned the possibility of its disintegration. Gorbachev's attempts to forcefully contain the Soviet republics' independence aspirations, for example in Vilnius and Tbilisi, ended in fiasco and contributed to the collapse and later decision to dissolve the Soviet Union.

Geopolitics Strikes Back

The vision of Europe “whole and free” was conditional. Achievement of the idea was based on the assumption that all peoples of the new community, including Russia, would fundamentally obey the norms of international law and political obligations stemming from membership in the UN or OSCE, including the 1990 Paris Charter. This meant, first and foremost, renouncing one-sided use or the threat of force in international relations, respecting the sovereign equality of states, the inviolability of state borders, and refraining from intervening in states' internal affairs.

Only for a short period of time were Moscow's elites forced to regard these principles as also applying to the former Soviet republics and their independence aspirations. The reason for this was quite prosaic. In order to speak of an end to the Cold War through the idea of peace without victory, Russia could not feel defeated. A defeat would mean the loss of global power status as well as its legal-international attributes, especially permanent-member status in the UN Security Council. From a formal perspective, the Russian state that emerged after the dissolution of the USSR was a new entity. Whether it would be recognised internationally as the legal successor of the Soviet Union was left to the goodwill of the members of the international community. In order to gain a positive decision, Russia had to accept the existing territorial order.

If in 1991, for example, Russia had announced territorial claims against Ukraine or any of its other neighbours, it would not have been recognized

as the USSR's legal successor and would have lost its place on the UN Security Council. For Russia to assume the rights associated with the USSR in the UN, all remaining members of the UN would have to consent, including Ukraine. All that would be needed was one dissenting vote to prevent Russia from having veto power in the Security Council. It is difficult to imagine Kyiv accepting Russia's proposal while at the same time being under Russian pressure over territorial claims.

When Russia was recognised as the successor to the USSR, the imperialist tradition of viewing relations with former Soviet republics as internal Russian affairs was revived in Moscow. Consequently, the Western-supported emancipationist aspirations of new states within the post-Soviet space were seen in Russia as a violation of the principle of cooperation based on the Europe whole and free vision. Russia's political about-face began in September 1993. During his visit to Poland in August of that year, Russian President Boris Yeltsin declared his recognition of Poland's aspiration for NATO membership as understandable: "in perspective, the decision of sovereign Poland aiming for European integration is not contradictory with the interests of other states, including Russia."⁵

Three weeks later, Yeltsin issued a letter to the leaders of the United States, France, the UK, and Germany in which he rescinded his Poland position. "In general, we prefer a situation where the relations between our country and NATO are by several degrees warmer than those between the Alliance and Eastern Europe."⁶ Russia proposed also that NATO and Russia jointly extend security guarantees to the countries of the region, instead of them joining NATO. This was a critical moment. Despite Western efforts, Russia rejected the principle of sovereign state equality. At the same time, it also rejected cooperation for European political democratisation in the spirit of the "peace without victory" idea offered in the Europe whole and free vision. Instead Russia, for the first time, demanded a return to the old geopolitical, imperial schemes, reintroducing the Concert of Europe and recognising the inequality of European states.

This is how Krzysztof Skubiszewski, former Polish foreign minister and a leading architect of the post-Cold War European order, read Russia's intentions. On 4 October 1993, he commented on Russia's new postulates as such:

Poland's pursuit to join NATO is part of our policy ... It is a policy of linking with Western defence and security organisations, making them to a larger extent European through Poland's participation, instead of—as thus far—maintaining only their Western character. The division of Europe will be different. This policy corresponds to the most vital interests of Poland, to maintaining its hard-won independence—we will not give up this policy. ... Just as we will be opposed to isolating Russia, we equally reject the placement of Poland in a buffer or grey zone between West and East. The idea of Russian guarantees leads to such a zone, one of imminent dependence. There is no mention of them in the Wałęsa-Yeltsin declaration. We already had bad experiences with such guarantees—in the 18th century before the partitions, and in the 20th century in Tehran and Yalta. Our policy is an independence policy within the framework of Euro-Atlantic security.⁷

From then on, Russia has made conscientious attempts to abate the integration processes of European states by demanding differentiated membership status for new members. It demanded that NATO refrain from deploying more serious forces in new member states. It attempted to gain “compensation” from the EU in exchange for eastern expansion. It opposed the pro-European aspiration of elites in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Finally, in order to halt the aspirations of former Soviet republics from gaining the full-fledged community status of a member building Europe whole and free, Russia used military strength against Moldova in 1992, Georgia in 2008, and Ukraine in 2014. By these actions, Russia broke fundamental European peace norms agreed upon in the Helsinki Final Act of the CSCE in 1975, the 1990 Paris Charter for the New Europe, the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, and a whole series of bilateral understandings.

After the aggression against Ukraine in 2014, Putin openly declared that Russia finds itself in a war with the West. During his remarks at a 2014 conference in Valdai, he blamed the West for forcing upon Russians their values “instead of establishing a new balance of power, essential

for maintaining order and stability, they took steps that threw the system into sharp and deep imbalance.”⁸

What Kind of People Do We Think We Are?

Politics based on the vision of Europe whole and free has proved to be one of history's most effective instruments for spreading freedom and prosperity. Today, the states of Central Europe constitute the fastest-developing part of the continent. As long as Russia will continue to use its strength to contain democracy from expanding and curb freedom on the entire continent, however, European security and prosperity will remain in jeopardy. This is especially true today as Europe finds itself in a more difficult situation than in 1919 or 1989.

American leadership in the free world is not only weaker, it must also compete with autocratic developmental models in Europe—Russia—as well as in Asia. China, the largest autocratic power in the world, is competing with the democratic world not only economically but also ideologically. The West, which transgressed an ideological demobilisation after 1989, made a strategic error by accepting the Chinese developmental “one state, two systems” model as good enough to accept China into the WTO. Meanwhile, one of China's systems is based on freedom, the other on unfreedom. A synthesis of both systems is not possible since authoritarianism, supported by the power of the state, will always dominate over freedom devoid of such support. In this way, China, by assuming to be a free market economy, gains an advantage over the free world. Moreover, they are exporting their developmental model abroad.

One of the most important lessons from the fall of communism was the empirical experience of millions that showed how democracy and the free market determine successful development and prosperity. By accepting the Chinese “one state, two systems” approach, the West seriously weakened the strength of its lesson. Today, the autocratic developmental model, supported by China and Russia, is becoming more and more popular not only among developing states but also among democratic elites in many countries. To successfully counter this trend, the West must once

again reintegrate itself, redefine its political community and the term “we.” Paradoxically, this will be most easily achieved within Europe by utilising the aspirations of societies in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans to actively take part in the Europe whole and free vision. By returning to the road of NATO and EU political enlargement, free nations can regain their identity.

Europe: Whole and Free or Fractured and Anxious?

For a quarter-century following the end of the Cold War, the prevailing paradigm in the United States and much of Western and Central Europe was of a magnetic, largely unchallenged and gradually expanding Western-led order in which the U.S. would continue as an affirmative European power, where Eastern Europe and eventually Russia could potentially find a place, where military tensions and military forces would be reduced, and where growing interdependencies and open borders would lower conflict and generate greater security and prosperity.

Much was achieved during this period. A Euro-Atlantic architecture of cooperative, overlapping, and interlocking institutions enabled a host of countries to walk through the doors of NATO, the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe, the OECD, and other organisations in ways that were not at the expense of other states or institutions. Europe was not fully whole, but it was no longer divided. It was not fully free, but vast parts of the continent were no longer under the thumb of domestic autocrats or

foreign overseers. It was not fully at peace, but it was more secure than at any time in the previous century.

We have every right to be proud of these achievements. But we should have the courage to admit that we grew complacent. As time marched on, the vision of a Europe whole and free became more slogan than project; the business of knitting the continent together was left undone. And now a conflation of crises has so shaken our smug assumptions about the evolution of European order that the original vision could become a paradigm lost.

Moscow's interventions in Georgia and Ukraine jolted many—although not all—Europeans out of their dream that the future belonged to “civilian powers.” Vladimir Putin's three-fold message is clear: hard power remains important; borders can indeed be changed by force; and, Russia is not somehow “lost in transition,” it is going its own way.

European anxieties were further enhanced by the 2008 financial crisis and ensuing Great Recession. Traditional left-right divisions have splintered into new tensions between those who continue to champion open societies and open markets and those who seek to shield their societies and markets from what they perceive to be the excesses of globalisation and intrusions into their sovereignty.

The next shock wave emanated from an unlikely source: the United Kingdom. Brexit's message is two-fold. First, “ever closer Union” is not inevitable and the EU may not be forever. Second, European countries that appear to be models of stability, tolerance, and moderation can reveal themselves to be volatile, fragile, and fiercely divided.

The migration crisis made it further clear to many European citizens that the “Europe of institutions” is unprepared to tackle down-home challenges, and that the slogan “more Europe” is not a ready-made answer to every European question.

The reaction to the migration crisis, in turn, has made it clear that the remarkable quarter-century alignment of liberalism and nationalism in service to the European project is over—and not just in Central Europe.

The result is a Europe that has turned from being an exporter of stability to an importer of instability—a Europe that is less settled and more fluid, less capable and more turbulent, less Merkel and more German

at a time when more Germans are also questioning predictable answers to unpredictable challenges.

Today, the defenders of European order are either exhausted or are fighting revisionists within their own ranks who are questioning the elite bargains and social underpinnings that have sustained that order. For a quarter-century, the European agenda was about how to transform one's neighbours. Now, it is about how to avoid being transformed by those neighbours. The expansive vision of a Europe whole and free is at risk of being replaced by the narrow notion of a "Europe that protects" some Europeans from other Europeans.

Revisionist Challenges

As the post-Cold War order faces unprecedented challenges, the influence and activism of revisionist states, groups, and even individuals have grown dramatically. Europeans clinging to their quarter-century of stability are simply flummoxed by the fact that their major external protagonists—Russia, China, and even the U.S.—have each in their own way become revisionist powers.

Russia under Putin seeks to undo the post-Cold War settlement, control its neighbourhood, and disrupt Western influence. Not only has Moscow intervened with force in Georgia, invaded Ukraine, annexed its peninsula of Crimea, and has troops stationed in five of the EU's six Eastern Partnership countries, it is exploiting fissures within EU member states and other European countries to generate uncertainty about the European project itself. Moscow's direct interference in the election processes of democracies across Europe and in the U.S., efforts to intimidate European energy consumers, launch cyberattacks in Estonia, Ukraine, and other countries, proclaim a duty to protect ethnic Russians in other countries regardless of their citizenship, and conduct provocative military activities, including simulated nuclear exercises and snap conventional force alerts, as well as violate the air, land, and seascapes of a number of EU and NATO member states, are all examples of the Putin regime's challenge to the prevailing European order. Putin seeks to anchor Russia as a Great Power

pole in a multipolar world. His model is Yalta, not the Helsinki Final Act; it is Metternich, not Monnet.

European apprehensions have been enhanced by the dawning realisation that China has also now become a power in Europe. For too long, too many Europeans worried about America's supposed "pivot" to Asia while ignoring the fact that Asia—especially China—was making its own very real "pivot" to Europe. Beijing's engagement has taken various forms: strategic infrastructure investments in either poorer European countries or those afflicted by the financial crisis, from Portugal, Italy, and Greece to the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe; creating a special "17+1" mechanism with Central and East European countries and using the promise of investment deals connected to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to undermine common EU positions on issues important to Beijing; acquiring high-tech companies and stealing proprietary technological secrets; and, targeted funding for European universities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and think tanks.

Russia and China are both revisionist powers, yet each poses a different challenge. While Moscow loudly smashes the rules, Beijing quietly erodes them. China is a rising power. Its economic reach, rapid technological progress and growing military capabilities, global diplomacy geared to very different norms, and its vast resource needs render it a systemic challenger. Russia, in contrast, is a declining power. It does not have China's resources. It is, however, more desperate. This can mean that in the short- to medium-term it could also be more dangerous.

The United States: From European Power to Power in Europe?

The stakes for Europe have been rendered higher by the surprising realisation that the most unpredictable actor in this mix may in fact be the United States. The advent of the Trump administration has not only shaken European assumptions about the steadiness and reliability of their major ally, it has exposed the painful reality of their continued dependence on what many fear to be an erratic and reckless superpower. Europe's irritation

with being dependent on Donald Trump is almost as great as its fear of being abandoned by him.

Abandonment is not a likely scenario. The U.S. remains deeply engaged in European security. The Obama administration quadrupled U.S. defence spending in Europe following the Russian intervention in Ukraine. It sent U.S. troops on a rotational presence to the Baltic states, Poland, and Romania. The Trump administration has enhanced that spending, bolstered the U.S. presence on NATO's Eastern Flank, and supported a new Mobility Command and a new Atlantic Command for NATO. Moreover, recent European rhetoric about "strategic autonomy" has yet to be given any real substance despite EU efforts to develop a more robust defence identity. And in terms of ultimate security guarantees, NATO and the U.S. will remain indispensable for a long time to come.

But a more nuanced shift in U.S. approaches to Europe is underway, and it did not begin with Trump. Stated simply, the U.S. is drifting from being a European power to a power in Europe. That simple turn of phrase carries significant implications for transatlantic relations and European security.

For 70 years, the U.S. has been a European power. It has been integral to the intra-European balances and coalitions that comprised both Cold War and post-Cold War Europe. It has been actively involved in all of the continent's mechanisms and institutions, from NATO, the Partnership for Peace, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the OSCE, to the U.S.-EU relationship, the OECD and the G7/G8. It cultivated bilateral and regional partnerships, from the Northern European Initiative to the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, across the whole continent.

It did so not just out of hegemonic impulse but due to a number of fundamental understandings. The first was the realisation that Europe alone was still unable to deal with its own civil wars. The second was that Europe remained turbulent and unfinished. Advancing a Europe whole and free was deemed both important and urgent to U.S. interests. Third was the understanding that European order was a linchpin of world order. The U.S. also engaged as a European power because it realised that after two world wars in which Europeans destroyed their continent, it must play a role as Europe's pacifier. By aligning its security with its allies, it helped those allies

build their security together, rather than against each other. NATO offered an umbrella under which the European experiment could flourish.

When the Cold War ended, Americans were tempted to step back from Europe. President Bush's vision of a Europe whole and free was prescient and bold. Yet, it was not clear at the time whether the U.S. would commit to its realisation. The domestic mood was decidedly inward-looking; there was talk of a peace dividend and retrenchment from global exertions. As Cold War divisions faded, it was tempting to say that it was high time that the Europeans worked out their problems themselves while Americans turned first to problems at home.

It was only when it became clear that Europe's inability to contain the fire spreading from the Bosnian conflict in the continent's southeastern corner could endanger the broader peace in Europe that the U.S. re-engaged in a comprehensive manner. The Balkan wars returned the U.S. to its role as an affirmative stakeholder and shaper of European and Euro-Atlantic architecture. The dangers were as apparent as the opportunities were historic. The wild *mélange* of posters and placards borne by the many thousands of people who had jumped into their Skodas, Ladas, and Trabants and taken to the streets of Gdansk, Budapest, Prague, Leipzig, Bucharest, and other Central and Eastern European cities in the late 1980s essentially carried one message: "We want to return to Europe"—to be part of a Europe to which they had always belonged, and yet had been prevented from joining because of where the Red Army stopped in the summer of 1945. Their message shook the continent and its institutions. Their message was both opportunity and obligation: the opportunity to build a continent that was truly whole, free, and at peace with itself; and the obligation to see it through.

The U.S. engaged anew, working with Europeans across the continent to extend the space of stability where war simply does not happen, where democracy, freedom, and prosperity prevail. These achievements have been significant. We can be proud. But we cannot be complacent.

Today, the U.S. is once again tempted to step back from Europe. Trump personifies this shift, but the temptation to retrench is both broader and deeper than him. Most of my compatriots wonder why 500 million Europeans still depend on 330 million Americans for protection and

diplomatic initiatives that are essential for Europe's own security. As other world regions both beckon and threaten, and as problems pile up at home, Americans are tempted to ask why Europeans can't tackle their own problems, why America is still needed to the same degree it was in the past, whether Europe matters as it may have in the 20th century, and why Europe's challenges should be more relevant and pressing than problems at home or elsewhere in the world.

These are reasonable questions. The answer depends on whether one believes that in the new world rising a Europe with less America is likely to be more stable than a Europe with more America.

The New Era

Once again, Europe finds itself between strategic epochs. The post-Cold War period has come to an end. A new era has begun—more fluid, more turbulent, more open-ended. This new landscape is strange, unformed, yet forming fast. Familiar landmarks are changing before we can adjust our thinking. Revisiting those landmarks will help us better navigate this new landscape and better understand the viability of a Europe whole and free. Which markers still provide useful orientation? Which should be discarded in favour of new points of orientation more attuned to Europe's contemporary realities?

The post-Cold War paradigm posited that Europe's 20th-century earthquake had ended. Things had stopped shaking. Europe's new architecture could be built on stable ground. According to this perspective, turmoil in the Balkans, festering conflicts in Eastern Europe, and Russian interventions in Georgia and Ukraine were episodes to be resolved. Tragic, but peripheral and fixable.

These assumptions simply do not correspond to Europe's realities. Unfortunately, Europe's 20th-century earthquake did not end in 1989 or in 1991. Europe's East is less secure and less at peace than it was at the beginning of this decade. The Soviet succession remains open-ended, and it is still shaking the European landscape. Russian interventions in Georgia and Ukraine were not isolated episodes, they were symptomatic

of deeper currents. While Ukrainians bear significant responsibility for the dysfunction and turmoil that has gripped their country, their drama is only part of much broader and deeper tensions that beset the entire region.

The post-Cold War paradigm also posited that the magnetic qualities of the EU would exert an irresistible pull on countries to create conditions by which their integration into the Union could be possible—resolving bilateral disputes and ethnic tensions, engaging in true political and economic reforms, respecting human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, working together rather than standing apart.

The new reality is that for more and more Europeans both inside and outside the Union, the European experiment, while still ground-breaking and attractive in many ways, has lost its power to induce transformative change. They only want “more” Europe when it can address their problems more effectively than local or national remedies. There is also greater sensitivity to the fragility of Europe’s grand experiment at integration, and a greater caution when it comes to potential “Eurocratic” overreach.

The reality is that Europe’s vast eastern spaces will remain turbulent, and sporadically violent, for the foreseeable future. Those lands are not just challenged by Russia; their volatility derives as much from their own internal weaknesses. Corruption and crony capitalism, kleptocratic elites, and festering conflicts continue to drain resources from countries that are already fragile and poor. Moreover, vast swaths of Europe’s East are still beset with historical animosities and multiple crises, including a number of conflicts that affect the entire continent. Tensions over Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Crimea and eastern Ukraine, which some euphemistically label “frozen” conflicts, are in reality festering wounds. They inhibit the process of state-building as well as the development of democratic societies. They offer fertile ground for corruption, organised crime, trafficking, and terrorism. They foster the proliferation of arms and a climate of intimidation. They are a major source of instability within these countries and the broader region. These conflicts severely undermine future prospects for these countries, while giving Moscow major instruments for leverage on domestic policy and to question the sovereignty of these states.

The combination of Western Europe's internal preoccupations, America's retrenchment, Moscow's revisionism, and Eastern Europe's volatility is a combustible brew. Putin has openly rejected the rules of the road in European security, and in Eastern Europe, beyond the EU and NATO, there are neither rules nor roads. Broader institutions that include all post-Soviet states, like the OSCE and the Council of Europe, have been weakened by Western disinterest and by the ability of Russia and other states to undermine reforms and undercut decisions. European-wide mechanisms built up over decades to increase transparency, predictability, and de-escalation, including through arms control, have lost priority. Europe's nuclear security architecture, which has brought stability over many decades, has eroded to the point of collapse. The danger is high of accidents or miscalculation among planes in the air, ships at sea, or troops on the ground. Disruptive challenges to critical societal functions have grown across the continent.

Unfortunately, despite this deterioration in Europe's security, the new reality is also that Europe's West is less confident and prepared to reach out in any significant way to Europe's East than at any time in a generation. An EU whose societies are once again defining and delineating themselves from each other is not a Union willing or able to integrate additional societies knocking on its door. The EU's Eastern Partnership, which was launched over a decade ago as a well-meaning effort at transformative change with six East European countries, has become the very embodiment of the EU's debilitating ambivalence about its relationship to its eastern neighbours. Over time, it has become more about holding countries off than about bringing them in. Does the EU seek a compensatory regionalism intended to mollify neighbours who will never be offered membership? Or does it seek a truly transformative regionalism that would tackle the priority challenges of the region and then work to align and eventually integrate these countries into the EU and related Western institutions? It doesn't really seem to know.

If a Europe whole and free has any chance of becoming reality, the EU must change course. It must stand by the Treaty of European Union's language that any European state that respects EU values "and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union." It should

differentiate between those for whom political association, economic integration, and eventual membership is a goal (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and most of the Western Balkans) and those who are interested in cooperation short of membership (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Belarus). Economic, technical, and financial cooperation with each country should address its most urgent needs and its specific capacities. Urgent needs should be tackled vigorously on their own merits without tying them to an unwieldy mechanism that has little meaning in the countries concerned. Only when fundamental needs are addressed and capacity is built can both sides hope to address more comprehensive efforts to address all aspects of the EU's *acquis communautaire*.¹

Affirming the principle that the door to Western institutions remains open should not mean lowering standards. Those who seek to join our institutions do so because our norms and values mean something. Neither we, nor they, are served by diluting those standards. Realistically, that makes a membership perspective for the countries of wider Europe a generational challenge. The issue is not whether there can be a consensus on membership for any particular candidate today, it is whether those who are determined to take their countries into the European mainstream can create conditions in which the question of integration, while controversial today, can be posed positively tomorrow.

Ukraine is the crucible of change, not just because of its size and location in the heart of Europe but because of its meaning for the vision of a Europe whole and free. Ukraine has always been a critical strategic factor for European and Eurasian security, but today it stands at a critical crossroads between a more open society integrated increasingly into the European mainstream and serving as a positive alternative model to that of Putin for the post-Soviet space; or a failed, fractured land of grey mired in the stagnation and turbulence historically characteristic of Europe's borderlands.

Turbulent Europe

Despite the huge progress that has been achieved over the past 30 years, the hard reality is that Europe remains turbulent, dynamic, and prone to instability. History did not end with the Cold War. Some walls came down, but others remained and new ones have appeared. A more fragile Europe is both more important and more urgent for U.S. interests. Yet, American leaders fail to appreciate this.

This time, the U.S. may finally succumb to its periodic temptation to retrench from European affairs. This time, it is in real danger of drifting from being a European power to being a power in Europe. By that I mean a country that is selectively rather than comprehensively engaged in European affairs, one that is focused as much on shedding burdens as sharing them, a country that is part stakeholder and part spoiler, one that is less supportive of integration and more open to “disaggregation” by playing Europeans off against one another, a country less intuitively convinced that Europe, while important, is also urgent, or that there is any particular link between European order and global order.

That is not the America Europe needs. However, it could be the America Europe gets, unless we can again affirm that enduring American interests—a Europe that is hospitable to freedom, a Europe at peace with itself, a Europe not dominated or threatened by any power or constellation of powers hostile to the U.S., a Europe that can be America’s counterpart, not its counterweight—can be best advanced by an America that is a European power, not just a power in Europe.

America’s debate is more open-ended than Europeans realise and more susceptible to influence than they may appreciate. It could turn on the message Americans hear from Central Europe. Over many centuries, the nature of Europe has been defined by the nature of its centre—often as crossroads, often as battleground. Today, this region of shifting borders and peoples, one whose turmoil has so often rippled across the continent, is once again our frontier of opportunity and obligation—opportunity to consolidate the progress of past decades towards a continent that is truly whole, free, and at peace, and obligation to see it through.

The choice should be clear. Retrenchment means leaving tens of millions of Europeans suspended between a prosperous, democratic EU, a largely authoritarian Eurasia, and a turbulent Middle East. As we know to our sorrow, such “in-between lands” are often cockpits for violence, conflict, and geopolitical competition. Our goal still can be a Europe whole and free. But that means America must act as a European power, not simply as a power in Europe. And it means Europeans must invest their energies in addressing the realities of a new era rather than vainly trying to recapture one that has passed.

... “Our responsibility is to look ahead and grasp the promise of the future. For 40 years, the seeds of democracy in Eastern Europe lay dormant, buried under the frozen tundra of the Cold War. And for 40 years, the world has waited for the Cold War to end. And decade after decade, time after time, the flowering human spirit withered from the chill of conflict and oppression; and again, the world waited. But the passion for freedom cannot be denied forever. The world has waited long enough. The time is right. Let Europe be whole and free.”

George H.W. Bush
“A Whole Europe, A Free Europe”

* * *

“Europe is not yet Whole and Free as we dreamt it would be in the heady days of 1989. But Europe is wholer and freer than it has ever been in its history. Russia and Belarus are the only two countries whose people are denied the right to choose their own government. One day they will have that right which the rest of Europe now enjoys.

This volume of essays is essential reading for those who wish to understand the last 30 years; three decades of European history which, whatever the setbacks and disappointments, have transformed our continent and the lives of those who are its citizens.”

Sir Malcolm Rifkind
served as Foreign Minister and Minister of Defence
in the United Kingdom Government between 1992–1997

* * *

„A great book about Europe’s finest years,
a convincing but unfinished strategic architecture.“

Volker Rühe
served as Federal Minister of Defence
in German Government between 1992–1998



ISBN 978-83-66091-39-9