

# HELSINKI REVISITED: EUROPE'S SECURITY DEFICIT

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**Camiel Hamans<sup>1</sup>** –

Doctor, Professor,

University of Amsterdam,

Amsterdam, Netherlands;

Visiting Professor at Adam Mickiewicz University,

Poznań, Poland

ORCID: 0000-0002-1568-4703

**Jan Marinus Wiersma<sup>2</sup>** –

Drs., Senior Associate Fellow,

Netherlands Institute of International Relations

(Clingendael Institute),

The Hague, Netherlands



**This paper** discusses the failures of the European security agenda against Putin's Russia. It describes how after WWII the world believed in and worked on multilateral cooperation and consultation and how Europe in particular was therefore convinced that peace and security policies should be conducted with soft powers. The remainder of the article then proposes the two pillars on which a new security agenda should be based: multilateralism combined with a deterrent defense. The contribution ends with an epilogue explaining how Russian restitution payments to Ukraine can be made possible.

**Keywords:** European security strategy, multilateralism, Russian colonial empire, new security arrangements, restitution payments.

**Каміль Гаманс, Ян Марінус Вірсма**

**ДО ПИТАННЯ ПЕРЕГЛЯДУ ГЕЛЬСІНСЬКИХ ДОМОВЛЕНОСТЕЙ:  
БРАК БЕЗПЕКИ У ЄВРОПІ**



**Статтю** присвячено обговоренню невдач, яких зазнала програма європейської безпеки стосовно путінської Росії. Розглянуто, як після Другої світової війни світ вірив у силу багатосто-

<sup>1</sup> Prof., Dr. Camiel Hamans is a linguist, journalist and political adviser.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Jan Marinus Wiersma is a historian. Both have been active in the European Parliament representing the Dutch Labour Party. Both are fellow of the Wiardi Beckman Stichting, WBS, the thinktank of the Dutch Labour party.

ронньої співпраці й консультацій та працював у цих напрямках, а також як, зокрема, Європа була переконана в тому, що політику миру та безпеки треба проводити за допомогою «м'якої» сили. Запропоновано засади, на яких має базуватися нова безпекова програма: багатосторонність у поєднанні зі стримуванням з метою оборони. У заключній частині статті роз'яснено, як уможливити відшкодування збитків, заподіяних Україні Російською Федерацією.

**Ключові слова:** стратегія європейської безпеки, багатосторонність, Російська колоніальна імперія, нові заходи безпеки, реституційні виплати.

## Introduction

In the last fifteen years, Europe has been confronted in a dramatic way with Russia's capacity to generate major security crises on the continent. The recent attack on Ukraine is by far the worst one. This article explores the reasons behind this massive security failure and the consequences thereof for the future of (West-) European security policy.

The major question is why the other European nations were not able to contain Putin's Russia. Why did the Russian president think he could risk an attack on Ukraine breaking almost every rule of the European and global (UN) security books? The Russian Federation signed the post-Cold war European security arrangements building upon the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, better known as the Helsinki Accords. One of its basic elements was the principle of the inviolability of borders and, thus, respect for the sovereignty of the parties to the agreement. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was established to help implement and guarantee this. The new Russia, however, was from the beginning not a trustworthy partner. It ignored the OSCE charter with its support for separatist movements in Georgia and Moldova, thus helping to create frozen conflicts that to this day put a mortgage on the future of these two countries. Ukraine was added to the list in 2014 with the Russian intervention in East Ukraine in support of two regions taken over by separatists. Another serious breach of confidence was Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008. Each time, Moscow wanted to give the signal that it had the right to interfere with post-Soviet countries. Or to put it in less politically correct terms: Russia appeared to be having problems with the partial disintegration and dissolution of its former colonial empire. Just as Western colonial powers were still trying to impose their will on their former overseas colonies in the 1960s and 1970s, Moscow tried to do the same with the colonized areas over which they had to give up power from 1991.

The commemoration of 40 years of the Helsinki Accords in 2015 was not a very happy moment. The recent annexation of the Crimea and the Russian intervention

in East Ukraine cast a dark shadow over the anniversary. Many politicians and analysts criticized the weak role of the OSCE and wondered what could be done to restore its effectiveness (Wiersma, 2014). Shouldn't more attention have been paid to Moscow's proposals on European security such as the 2008 Medvedev plan? (Medvedev, 2009). It fell on deaf ears in the West which by then had lost all confidence in the Russian government especially after Putin's infamous speech at the 2007 Munich Security Conference in which he heavily attacked the US and its allies ("A speech delivered," 2019).

## Doing and doing nothing

In what follows we will try to analyze from our North-western European perspective what went wrong in the relationship of the West with Russia: after 1991 – the dissolution of the USSR – and after the rise of Putin to power.

As is often the case in international relations, it is a story of doing and doing nothing. Since the mid-nineties, the West has been heavily involved in expanding Euro-Atlantic structures. The EU focused on enlargement to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). It also put a lot of energy into deepening its own integration. President Clinton gave the green light to allow countries that previously belonged to the disintegrated Warsaw Pact to join NATO. Russian concerns were ignored, as were the complaints about promise-breaking (McCarthy, 2022).

One of the main reasons why the West was not overly concerned about possible Russian objections was the presumed weakness of the Russian Federation. The new statehood completely lacked the powerful military image of the former USSR since it suffered from major internal problems.

It was generally assumed that with the eastward expansion of NATO, the Russians would not oppose the changed contours of the European security system. The sovereignty of the post-communist countries over their security preferences was considered key.



In the meantime, the EU cashed the peace dividend and developed a common security and defense policy that was heavily based on soft power instruments without serious investments in defense cooperation. In 2004, the new security strategy of effective multilateralism was presented. This was not the first time that multilateral consultation, and where possible cooperation, had been presented as a better alternative to force of arms, containment and other defensive (or offensive) measures. After virtually all major 20th century international events, multilateralism has been suggested as the better alternative. Examples include the League of Nations (1919), the United Nations (1951) and the European Coal and Steel Community (1952). While multilateralism was not very successful on a global scale, as the Cold War showed, it became a formula for success in Western Europe, as the EU proved. Hence, after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the symbol of the Cold War, belief in multilateralism soared to the point that no one in the West could imagine a 'relapse' to military violence. With the presentation by Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU in 2003 of his European Security Strategy, *A Secure Europe in a better World* (Council of the European Union, 2009), Kant had returned to Brussels. It was ignored, however, that Hobbes had meanwhile made in his entry into Putin's world. As later became clear from his 2007 Munich speech, it was never the intention of the Russian president to play the rules-based game of the West. Instead of cooperation, he chose confrontation and built considerable financial and military power which he did not hesitate to use in Syria and elsewhere. His intention was not to talk but to restore the prestige of the former Soviet Union. It looks as if he abused the multilateral frameworks such as the OSCE and the UN to mislead others and to cover up his intentions.

In the current debate over the Russian invasion of Ukraine, realists are trying to convince us that this is the world we live in. That raw power ultimately defines what is possible and therefore must be accepted. That countries attacking others is part of the global reality. Therefore, it is always better to invest in proper defense than in toothless 'paper' constructions such as the OSCE, or the UN for that matter. We do not believe that the Russian invasion of Ukraine signals the end of the liberal internationalist approach in Europe. In fact, the fierce reaction of the West shows the opposite (cf. Tooze, 2022).

### Europe's security future in the balance

At the moment of writing this article it is impossible to predict the outcome of the war in Ukraine. However, it becomes increasingly clear that the war will not end

as the Russians planned and expected. Moscow totally miscalculated its own strength and organizational abilities. In addition, they were completely surprised by the fierce Ukrainian resistance. Rather than an easy Blitzkrieg victory by the Russian army, the invasion appears to be turning into a protracted regional conflict, which finally may turn into a frozen conflict.

With the outcome of the war still so unclear, several scenarios should be taken into account when considering future options for European security. Hopefully, the war will be relatively short but major consequences will be long term for Ukraine, for Russia, and for Europe. But what we can ascertain is that Europe's security hangs in the balance, even more so than during the Cold War.

And whatever fault lines one might discover in the European security architecture, this in no way justifies or legitimizes the suffering of the Ukrainian people caused by the Russian onslaught.

Maybe one should apologize for the inability to properly understand the signals of 2008 (Georgia) and 2014 (Ukraine), since we had not seen or had underestimated the growing revisionism in Russia and the nostalgia regarding the past of the Soviet Union and the tsarist Empire. The present crisis has deep historical roots, as evidenced by the debates about Eurasian Exceptionalism (cf. Burbank, 2022).

However, where to begin? Which were the defining moments in Russia's relation to the West? Should we start with Russia's expansion under Catharine II (and Potemkin's colonization of eastern and southern Ukraine), Napoleon Bonaparte's wars, the 1917 Lenin Coup d'état, the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the USSR's victory of the Great Patriotic War, the end of the wartime alliance, NATO and the Warsaw Pact (the Cold War), the uprisings in Budapest and Prague, détente and the 1975 Helsinki Accords, the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, the 1994 Budapest declaration, Yeltsin and Putin, the NATO summit in Bucharest 2008, Georgia 2008, Ukraine 2014 and 2022. More often than not there was controversy but also moments of (cold) peace and communality. In any case, Western policy makers in the last years of the last century and the first decade of this one believed that their ideas about multilateralism and soft power were shared or at least respected by the other side. We were hoping that communality would define the post-Soviet world. When Russia nevertheless went in a different direction towards an autocratic regime, the West settled for targeted cooperation in areas of common interest such as climate change and nuclear non-proliferation. With regard to democracy and human rights, the reactions

have been particularly vociferous. Of course, the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 caused a real rift leading to Western sanctions, but doors remained open. A Dutch Foreign Minister described it as stretching out an open hand but also being prepared to put a fist on the table (Koenders, 2016).

We have already referred to a certain period of the Cold War when, through *détente*, East and West sought accommodation which led to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Many saw that as a basis for the peaceful transition to post-communist Europe. This was also the case for a few years with the establishment of the OSCE and the Paris Charter of 1990, which was meant to transform the OSCE from a forum of discussion and dialogue into an instrument of active operations. But this optimism did not last long. At the turn of the century relations began to sour, getting worse year after year. This change of atmosphere coincided with the rise of Vladimir Putin. It all culminated in the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine. There is no excuse for this. But what were the main drivers or causes of the growing rift between Russia and the West? What mistakes did Western countries make and what can be learned from them? What were important national drivers, such as the internal dynamics in the post-Soviet space?

### Lack of sensitivity from the West

Many failed to see, or did not want to see, the growing tension between Russia and the West as a result of NATO's and the EU's eastern enlargements. Only when president Putin sounded the alarm bell in his 2005 state of the nation address with a remark about the collapse of the USSR as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe in Russian history, awareness of this grew but by then most of the relevant decisions had already been taken. Aside, one wonders whether consultations with Russia would have led to a different outcome. Ultimately, these decisions were the result of sovereign, democratically legitimate processes by now independent states. Perhaps however, president Putin would have been more reserved with his condemnations of NATO enlargement in particular.

In addition, early discussions about a European security alternative to the Warsaw Pact and NATO were soon forgotten.<sup>1</sup> Most of the former communist countries

simply wanted the security umbrella of the Euro-Atlantic structures since they did not trust the Russian Federation and its leadership. Giving up the links with the US was anathema. As for EU enlargement, Moscow seemed to have had fewer objections at first – Putin's predecessor Boris Yeltsin even toyed with the idea of Russia's membership (Martin, 1997). But this also changed when Russia tried to block Ukraine's association with the EU in 2013. Ultimately, Moscow's objections to Ukraine's entry into the Euro-Atlantic structures turn out to be merely pretexts, an alibi to defend its self-constructed, neo-colonial sphere of influence.

### Moscow's support to separatists in post-Soviet space

We have already mentioned Russia's interventions in the first half of the 1990's in support of separatist movements in Moldova and Georgia that exploited the post-independence chaos in these countries. Moscow's excuse was the need to protect Russian or Russian language minorities in the countries.<sup>2</sup> Despite OSCE efforts to achieve peace and conciliation, these conflicts became frozen and thus served Moscow's interest in making it very difficult for these countries to join the EU or NATO, which would probably be unwilling to incorporate countries with such 'unfinished business'.

Russia's attitude cannot be blamed on the West. It was an early indication of its policy of irredentism and of its possessive, colonial approach towards former Soviet countries. In Georgia and even more in Moldova people are now afraid to be drawn into the Ukraine conflict. After all, Russian troops are still deployed within their international borders. Therefore, both seek protection from the West. Consequently, the EU and individual NATO countries should offer them what is now being considered for Ukraine in terms of security support and stronger ties with the EU. Any more definitive European security arrangement should ensure that internal divisions are finally resolved peacefully and with respect for territorial sovereignty. Moldova's and Georgia's problems should thus be on the future agenda. The question is, how high? Frankly, the West has not been too concerned about these frozen conflicts during the past decades.

<sup>1</sup> After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, leading voices in the SPD, the Social Democratic Party of the Federal Republic of Germany, proposed to replace both NATO and the Warsaw Pact with a pan-European security organisation under the supervision of the CSCE, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the predecessor of the OSCE (Ramsbotham, 1991, pp. 24–26; Wiersma & Hamans, 2020, p. 16).

<sup>2</sup> This idea that language and nation coincide goes back to early 19th century Romantic ideas as first put forward by the German philosophers Herder and especially Fichte (Patten, 2010). By referring to the situation in Switzerland, the French historian Ernest Renan was able to conclusively refute this view in his 1882 Sorbonne lecture *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*





## Failure of the Helsinki system

A basic feature of the 1975 Helsinki Accords is the recognition of existing European borders. To this end, the OSCE was given important responsibilities regarding the internal security of its members and for conflict resolution in its geographical area. It was involved in solving problems in the former Yugoslavia and in Central Asia. However, the OSCE soon reached its limits being unable to overcome the controversy between Russia and the Western members over the Russian military presence in Moldova and Georgia. In other crisis areas such as Ukraine or Nagorno-Karabakh, the organization played a marginal role. The fundamental weakness of these days is, of course, the huge gulf between Russia and the Western members who cannot agree on most issues and stand in each other's way because of the consensus rule. But could it nevertheless be a model for the future?

## End of arms control

In the 1980's and 1990's major advances were made in arms control, both nuclear and conventional. The agreements on conventional arms, however, have become derelict. The treaty limiting the deployment of conventional arms was respected for a time but was never ratified.<sup>1</sup> Had this been the case, the Russian military build-up around Ukraine would have been a serious violation. The monitoring and verification arrangements of the Treaty on Open Skies have been cancelled by Moscow. The West offered Russia to return to the negotiating table and to see if Russia's concerns in this area can be allayed (Erlanger, 2022). After February 24, however, this is not a realistic option for the time being. It might be, however, part of a future settlement that will end the war in Ukraine.

The reduced threat from conventional arms was actually the motive for reducing the number and type of tactical nuclear weapons. Russia has now not only increased its conventional capacity, but has also incorporated the actual use of small nuclear weapons into its military doctrine. It has even suggested doing so in the context of the Ukraine invasion, warning that the

West should be careful not to provoke a nuclear power (Boffey, 2022). This is taken seriously by NATO and its members who have repeated time and again that they will not intervene directly. For Ukraine, this has all been very unfair since it agreed in 1994 to transfer all its nuclear weapons in exchange for security guarantees that have now been blatantly breached by Putin. If Ukraine will be eventually asked to accept neutral status, it will need guarantees against future blackmail by Russia.

## Lack of Western engagement with post-Soviet states

While the West engaged deeply with CEE countries, it instead left most post-Soviet states to run their own affairs themselves, their own economies, the development of their societies and the consolidation of their democracies. Only later did the EU develop strategies and programs for this region, culminating in the Eastern Partnerships and the 2013 Association Treaties with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Why was enlargement of the EU never considered seriously for these states? Were they too far away? Was it too complicated? Were they too close to Moscow? No historic links? Too busy enlarging with CEE countries? A combination of these and other such questions provoked the negative response from Brussels. Could it have been different? Did we miss opportunities there? Or was our influence limited? What lessons can we learn from this? In 2001, we published a book in which we already argued that although Warsaw had come much closer to Brussels, Kyiv seemed farther away (Lagendijk & Wiersma, 2001).

Three of the Eastern Partnership countries have now applied for EU membership, which should be assessed on its own merits – their state of preparedness, for example. In the current situation however, the EU is considering to go beyond that by offering an accelerated pathway to candidate status. Objections from Moscow appear no longer relevant. It is not too late to help create a ring of resilient, modern and democratic states around Russia. This is what Putin fears most of all, since democratic feelings can spill over to his own side and thus threaten his power base.

## And Russia?

Has the West done enough to help Russia in the transition from communist rule to democracy and from a planned to a market economy? If not, why? Western countries, notably Germany, intervened several times

<sup>1</sup> The Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) was signed in 1990. NATO and the Warsaw Pact agreed on limits on conventional armaments and the destruction of excess weaponry. The Treaty was later amended: the collective ceilings were replaced by national ones since the Warsaw Pact had ceased to exist. NATO countries refused to ratify CFE II demanding that the Russian Federation should first withdraw its troops from the territories of Moldova and Georgia. In 2007, Russia responded by withdrawing from the treaty also citing US intentions concerning missile defence.

with financial support to Yeltsin's regime.<sup>1</sup> However, the chaotic situation in the newly independent Russia spiraled out of control. Fearing that more radical elements would take over the country, the West supported the very weak government of Yeltsin, which was seen as a partner in the initial phase. The way in which he won the 1996 election, however, should have been a warning. His corrupt entourage used it for a major theft. In 1998, Russia defaulted. In 1999, Yeltsin was forced to hand over power to the unknown Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, first as prime minister and in 2000 as president.

It is, however, hard to imagine how, for example, the EU could have changed the internal dynamics of Russia. It was a Wild West. Rules were made or forgotten on the spot. Many got superrich with shady deals and the average Russian was hit hard. Putin's answer was not the creation of an open and democratic society with a social market economy but a return to control and autocracy. The EU has never opted for the economic integration of Russia since it is a country too big to handle. Unlike Ukraine or Georgia, an uprising after rigged elections has not taken place in Russia. Putin seems to have full control of the situation. Yet many are convinced that a fair portion of the Russian president's moves is actually motivated by fear of an uprising.

This brings us to the human dimension, which is one of the pillars of the Helsinki Accords. It is essentially about respecting human rights and guaranteeing proper democratic processes such as elections. Before 1989, dissidents often referred to Helsinki. Election observation later became an important OSCE task. But lately, these OSCE instruments have become blunt in relation to Russia. Human rights are violated daily and elections have become a farce. Putin-led democracy still has popular support because it brought stability and economic prosperity. It is not just the propaganda machine that keeps him in power, although it has become a major instrument to sell the war in Ukraine to the Russian population fed with information in a way that reminds us of North Korea or even Nazi Germany. It will be a major challenge to change the national narrative and bring it into line with what is considered the truth in the West. In the meantime, the EU should not stop clamoring for Russian human rights defenders.

<sup>1</sup> As a follow-up to Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, the Federal Republic of Germany established good relations with Russia. The idea prevailed that good economic relations and mutual economic dependence should almost automatically lead to political liberalization ('Wandel durch Handel'). This conviction has characterized the German policy towards Russia until recently and led to a large number of German politicians, the so-called 'Putin Versteher', covering all the flaws of present-day Russia with the cloak of love for a long time.

## It's the economy

In the 1990's, there was hope that Russia's post-communist economy would integrate with the economies of the EU through trade and otherwise. This actually only happened in the energy sector. Russia never adopted the open market economy cherished in the West. Instead, oligarchic structures, state intervention and one-sided reliance on the export of natural resources shape the economy. Russia doesn't have much to sell other than gas, oil, and wheat. Putin never believed in an economic partnership with the EU, but created his own alternative to the EU, the EEU, which operates a trade regime that is incompatible with the EU's internal market. Attempts at a dialogue between these two economic blocs have failed so far, but since Belarus, Armenia and Kazakhstan are also part of the EEU, maybe an attempt should eventually be made. Most EU countries want a rapid cut-off from Russian energy resources, because of the invasion of Ukraine. Such a step was already foreseen now that the EU is switching to non-fossil energy sources. But one would like this transition to be a negotiated one, given the interests of both Russia and the EU in tackling climate change.

## EU's deficits

The EU's own agenda of the past decennia has focused on strengthening internal economic and political cohesion and on its enlargement with 16 countries since 1989. Starting with the Maastricht Treaty of 1991, the EU gradually developed its Common Security and Foreign Policy (CFSP), which later became the Common Defence and Security Policy (CSDP). It deployed civil-military operations in Macedonia, Bosnia and Kosovo, however relying heavily on NATO's military capacities. Its operational capacity remains limited with no responsibility for the defense of its member states, most of whom rely on NATO for this. The capacity available is intended for operations outside the area, such as in the Western Balkans. In addition, more and more attention is being paid to joint arms production.

The EU follows most of the time and is not very strong in terms of strategy and power politics. With 28 and now 27 Members States with very different traditions, it is not easy to find effective common positions. This was certainly the case in relation to Putin's Russia. Reactions to Moscow were uneven from very friendly (Hungary) to hostile (Poland), with others falling somewhere in between. While Moscow saw many moves of the West as encroaching on its sphere of in-



fluence, Brussels denied that it was. Moscow versus Brussels was an abomination until 2014. Geopolitics came late to Brussels and the EU capitals. The Russian invasion of Ukraine accelerated a shift towards more power politics (cf. Hoekstra, 2022).

## The Rest against the West

Finally, there is the issue of the Rest against the West. While direct international support to Russia is limited, some key countries refuse to condemn Russia, while many do so without any consequences.

What does this mean for the future of the rules-based system that came out of World War II? Should we adopt a more realistic approach to a new peace and security policy or should we stick to certain principles such as those enshrined in the UN Charter, for example?

## Ukraine's European future

In the current situation, the first question to be addressed in defining a new security strategy is that of Ukraine's NATO membership. Related to this is that of EU membership. As mentioned before, offering NATO's MAP (Membership Action Plan) to a country is a politically very difficult decision. However once taken, it can be implemented in a few years. To offer EU membership to a country is less controversial but its execution is complex and time consuming. Offering the MAP to Ukraine (and Georgia for that matter) in the current situation would interfere with the Ukrainian president's suggestions about guaranteed neutrality of the country. Speeding up the process of becoming a candidate-member of the EU is an important signal and is not so controversial. While Moscow may not like it, this is not a compelling argument. On this point, however, the EU member states disagree, with Poland being an enthusiastic supporter of Ukraine's membership, while France, for example, offers something quite different in the form of a European Political Community that would include Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries as an alternative to EU membership. President Macron argued that the lack of progress in the talks with the Western Balkan countries is reason to offer Ukraine something else (French Presidency, 2022).<sup>1</sup>

Because obtaining candidate status for Ukraine is proof that the EU countries really count this neighboring country as part of the European family and because such a gesture can only be interpreted as support for the Ukrainian struggle for sovereignty, democracy and against autocratic takeover of power, the EU should admit Ukraine, and thus also Georgia and Moldova, as a candidate member as soon as possible.

It is clear that these three countries are a long way from meeting the Copenhagen criteria for membership, but these conditions only apply upon actual accession and not upon granting candidate membership status.

## The security agenda 2.0: some preliminary conclusions

Have we entered an ice age in Europe with totally frozen EU–Russia relations? Much will depend on the outcome of the current war in Ukraine. It is unclear when that will be, and whether that will be just a cease-fire or a definite end and moreover who will have the best papers at the end. However, it is highly likely that it will take years for normal relations between the West and Moscow to be restored.

Geography, however, dictates that Russia cannot be ignored forever. The war must not end in total chaos. Some kind of understanding will have to be achieved. What is acceptable as an outcome is now hard to define. When President Zelenskyy says he may be willing to agree to a neutral status of his country, he rightly also demands security guarantees to be provided by NATO and EU countries, including respect for Ukraine's international borders. This could be some kind of Helsinki-esque arrangement which must also include arms control measures, conventional and nuclear, in order to rule out renewed aggression from Russia.

Ukraine's membership of the EU would provide the country with additional security, as the Treaty includes an article on mutual assistance. For the foreseeable future, however, this would have no real significance – assuming the EU Council will grant the country candidate status – as any membership negotiations will take a long time to complete.

Moldova and Georgia should not be excluded from an accelerated path to candidate status if that would be offered to Kyiv. Given the long lead-time to EU accession, the association agreements need to be upgraded so that a program can be implemented to increase the resilience of the three countries. The Russian invasion of Ukraine should be considered a game changer in

<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing of this contribution the avis of the European Commission was not yet available nor the outcome of the June 2022 EU summit where it will be on the agenda. Probably the EU will come with something bridging the gap between Poland and France.

the EU's attitude towards possible membership of these states. They must be given a European perspective. At the same time, its realization will take time. The offer of future membership is unfortunately not a panacea.

Under the leadership of President Biden, NATO provided a united response to the growing threat at its eastern borders. NATO did not hesitate to expand its military presence in this area. In this context, the overwhelmingly positive response from the Finnish and Swedish population to NATO membership application represents a dramatic, and by Putin unforeseen, change in the peace and security situation on NATO's eastern border. The overwhelmingly positive welcome of these two countries to the NATO family can only be seen as a strengthening of the alliance. Once a decision is made, the two countries will join soon, signifying a significant strengthening of the alliance. However, US leadership is not guaranteed. Much depends on who is in the White House and that remains to be seen in the coming years. The EU and the European NATO members must be prepared for such a possibility.

They must adapt to the new European reality by adding a strong defense component to their considerable soft power, entailing a significant increase of defense expenditure. This will contribute to the autonomous strategic capacity of the EU, which would also benefit from more effective decision-making. When there are major security problems in Europe, one should not always be forced to look to Washington. Brussels should be the most logical choice.

The EU's strategic autonomy also depends on economic factors such as the internal development of the Eurozone and the internal market and on a successful energy transition leading to less dependence on one major energy supplier. This should preferably not be a unilateral process but involve Russia in a way that contributes to the common fight against climate change. In general, the EU should strive for more market integration of Russia, while not excluding cooperation between the EU and the EEU.

### Summing up

Unlike in recent years, a new EU security policy towards Russia must be based on two pillars. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the emphasis was unilaterally on multilateralism. Now multilateralism must be combined with a recognizable and deterrent defense policy. In addition to consultation, containment must also form the basis for a new policy. So, no longer relying solely on soft powers, but just as much, if necessary,

on hard powers. Strengthening our own Western defenses will be just as important as trying to reactivate organizations like the OSCE and striving for new arms control treaties.

Although all talks on arms control and disarmament have stalled and ceased after February 24, 2022, this does not mean that efforts should not be made to resume them in the long run. In the spirit of Helsinki 1975, as soon as this is possible, we must work again on an agenda of arms control and disarmament, both nuclear and conventional. This also with a view to Russian security needs. In addition, such security arrangements and effective monitoring of compliance are also in Ukraine's interest.

The starting point of the new security agenda is the right to self-determination and the sovereignty of countries. The idea that neighboring countries can make demands on their neighbors and make unjustified claims on the policies of these countries and on their potential alliances must be vigorously opposed. In the case of Ukraine, and Georgia and Moldova, this means that they can decide for themselves whether they can join partnerships such as NATO and the EU. This of course does not affect the fact that NATO and the EU can and will impose requirements on possible new members. In concrete terms, now that the Ukrainian president does not rule out a possible neutral future for his country, this only implies a prospect of accelerated candidate EU membership.

The fact that the three countries mentioned are involved in frozen conflicts at the hands of neighboring Russia, can no longer be used as an obstacle to a candidate membership and therefore to reinforced cooperation already to be started, in view of an increased security need. Incidentally, this does mean that the EU and NATO must use all their soft powers to find a solution to these conflicts. In addition, arms reinforcement for these countries should perhaps not be ruled out in advance.

### Epilogue

Part of the new security agenda must also be to win the hearts and minds of the Russian people for democracy and for respect for the views of others, especially those of their neighbors. In concrete terms, this means support where possible for dissident figures and movements, but also targeted information campaigns.

Should there be a regime change in Moscow in the near future and should this lead to more openness and





more multilateral cooperation, it would be advisable to set up and implement a program similar to what the Western Allies have actually done in the German Federal Republic after 1945. Against earlier ideas of superiority and a claim for 'Lebensraum' based on it, ideas for human equality and respect for others have been propagated. Against the current Russian prejudices of cultural superiority and a natural right to a Russian World, *Russkiy Mir*, again views of human equality and respect for the life and ideas of others must be set.

Not only is a new security agenda required for the future after the Russian war in Ukraine, a recovery and rebuilding agenda is just as much needed. Large parts of Ukraine have been reduced to ruins due to the completely inhumane way of warfare used by the Putin regime. Not only economic life, but also social and cultural life must be restored in these cities, villages, industrial and agricultural areas. This will cost hundreds of billions of euros. This damage cannot be suffered by Ukraine alone. If the West is serious about

the now pronounced solidarity with Ukraine, then the West must set up a program similar to the Marshall Plan granted after WWII.

However, it would be foolish to leave the costs of rebuilding Ukraine solely for the Western allies. It is Russia, and especially the power-hungry, kleptocratic Putin regime, that is responsible for this war and the damage done. Unfortunately, human damage cannot be repaired, but material damage can. Those responsible will have to contribute to this. No doubt they will not be willing to do so of their own accord. It must also be prevented that an imposed obligation to pay reparations à la Versailles mainly affects the Russian population and not those responsible at the top. That is why it is now necessary to investigate whether it is legally possible to seize the assets of the Russian central bank and those of the collaborating Russian klepto-oligarchs, which are now blocked in the West, and to use them to rebuild Ukraine.

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