

Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung  
Center for European Integration Studies  
Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität Bonn



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**Neighbors and other  
realities: The Atlantic  
civilization and its enemies**

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*Ludger Kühnhardt*

## **Neighbors and other realities: The Atlantic civilization and its enemies**

### ***I. EU: From neighborhood policy to a global perspective***

Between 2014 and 2019, EU policies for enlargement and neighborhood are managed by Johannes Hahn. The Austrian EU Commissioner will know from the history of his own country that the European Union can offer only one real incentive towards those it tries to link to its norms, values and interests: EU membership. Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has stated that any further enlargement is off the table until 2019 – bad news for Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and, of course, Turkey. The good news: This leaves room to re-assess the very idea of the European Neighborhood Policy.

Its objectives are noble: to extend the European set of norms, values and, as much as possible, instruments related to the development of a common market, in order to promote stability, peace and prosperity. The more these objectives are realized in the EU's neighborhood, the better it is for the stability and hence for the interests of the European Union and its citizens. So goes the argument. A lot of bureaucratic efforts have been put into this idea since the creation of the EU Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in 2004. From 2014 until 2020, the European Union will spend €15.4 billion through its European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI), managed by 'DG Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid' as if this were a non-political charity operation. The Treaty of Lisbon (TEU), in force since 2009, has given Neighborhood Policy an almost constitutional character (Article 8 TEU). Here begins the paradox: no single constitution on earth and no

single document of any regional grouping on earth offer an explicit article on neighborhood. Every country and every region has neighbors, but neighborhood policy is the copyright, prerogative and phantasy of the European Union. It has had some success in a technocratic sense since its inception in 2004. But since 2014, and with all due respect to the pro-European forces in Ukraine or in Tunisia, who deserve support, we should know better: Most of those controlling Europe's neighbors, and the strategic and ideological realities behind them, are no longer in the mode of transforming along EU lines. The new EU Commissioner would be well advised to reconsider whether this unique, but artificial, concept of a genuine neighborhood policy can still be reformed or not, in order to provide any reasonable incentives. Without providing convincing incentives, the European Neighborhood Policy can no longer promote its noble goals. Instead it produces the opposite, namely increasing frustration within the EU and mounting disrespect from Europe's neighborhoods and the destabilizing power centers behind them, be they in the Kremlin or somewhere in Qatar.

The planned ring of friends around the EU has turned into a burning and permeated zone of chaos and uncertainty. The reason does not lie in the EU Neighborhood Policy per se. The main reason lies in the fact that outside the EU, other concepts of politics prevail and dominate. First of all, the neighborhood is much broader than the EU would like to admit – the Sahel, Russia, the Caucasus, piracy and terror in Eastern Africa and even the kidnapping of Europeans in South East Asia are part of the world which the EU has to deal with. Things become even more confusing when the usual perspective is broadened: Mayotte, a French overseas department and part of the jointly financed ultra-periphery of the EU, is sort of a second Lampedusa for refugees (and pregnant women who want their child to become an EU citizen) from Comoros and Mozambique. French-Guyana, an overseas department and region of France, has made the EU a neighbor of Brazil. And St. Eustatius – from which the thirteen New England colonies obtained most of their weapons and ammunition for their rebellion against Great Britain in spite of an embargo – was the first place on earth to recognize US sovereignty, when on November 16, 1776 St. Eustatius'

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canons shot the first salute honoring the incoming “Andrew Doria” flying the US flag, this scene is brilliantly narrated by Barbara Tuchman (“The First Salute”). This very St. Eustatius became a special municipality of the Netherlands in October 2010, together with Saba and Bonaire. This was the first truly westward enlargement of the European Union, probably as little noticed in the US as in the EU itself. More than structurally limited neighborhood policies, the EU needs a global perspective for projecting its values and interests. Worst of all: in the meantime, burning neighborhoods strike back and penetrate EU normalcies and the enshrined European sense of stability. One hundred years after World War I, Europe is no longer exporting stability around the globe, but for the first time it is importing instability (think of terror-tourism, illegal migration, cyber-crime and untapped risks like the possible instrumentalization of Kaliningrad Oblast by Russia or, God forbid, suicide bombers in European cities).

Neighborhood policy, by definition, is a paternalistic concept. Its objectives have been reasonable and without alternative during its first phase, a time of global relaxation and cooperation. But today, neighborhood policy has turned out to be incapable of sufficiently delivering under the conditions of revolutionary turmoil which currently dominate European neighborhoods in the South and in the East. EU neighbors have turned from consumers of European ideas, norms and policies into agents of change in their own right. Ukraine may be drawn more toward the EU than any other place east of the EU borders; Tunisia may be more promising than any other country south of the EU borders. But even these two countries will not realistically receive the trophy of EU membership in return for their achievements under the European Neighborhood Policy. Their struggle shows what the EU should truly learn from the current period of uncertainty: to focus on individual neighboring countries instead of pursuing wrong incentives through collectivized neighborhoods; to include the relevant content of many neighborhood strategies – especially those aimed at improving norms, values and regulatory issues in neighboring countries (from phytosanitary standards to tax statistics and anti-trust regulations) – into regular EU policies across the board; to politicize policies toward neighbors and thus reconnect its bureaucratic language to the domestic

agenda of its own citizens; and to become strategic in its understanding of the world Europe is living in. The EU needs neighborhood-specific tools in each of its policy areas, but it does not require a bureaucratic superstructure of bombastic neighborhood policies that do not work. The new Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policies should strive for the successful elimination of his portfolio by prioritizing complete and early Balkan enlargement and by simultaneously abandoning abstract neighborhood illusions.

## ***II. Ukraine: Survival as a human right***

The Ukraine crisis does not lead us back into the Cold War. Rather, it moves Europe forward into a clear-cut new constellation, defined by different notions of politics and different concepts of state-society relations. The Cold War was the product of two antagonistic totalitarian ideologies, radicalized by Nazi Germany into a war of annihilation. It ended with the destruction of much of Europe and the occupation and division of Germany. The surviving totalitarian ideology held countries in Central Europe hostage which were forced to join the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence until its breakdown in 1990. The constellation today is defined by a neo-imperial Russia which has brought back war to Europe. Putin's Russia considers violence the continuation of politics by other means. It considers rule of law and effective democratic participation as useless ways of weakening state centralism. And finally, in Putin's Russia, coercion, lies and intimidation are legitimate instruments to exercise state power over its own citizens.

The Ukraine crisis does not include the danger of "falling back" into the logic of the Cold War. It does, however, include the danger of missing the point about what this new conflict is essentially about. It is about subtle and overt actions against the Atlantic notion of an open society, of freedom, self-determination and liberty. Its objectives are cast in the abstract language and behavior of geopolitical expansion and notions of spheres of influence. The Ukrainian people are torn between their tradition – largely Soviet influenced – and their hopes for the future. For the majority, these

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hopes are linked to joining the West, especially the European Union. The most important thing the West can do at this point in history is to support the right of self-determination of those parts of Ukraine that still fall under the sovereignty of the government in Kiev. Therefore, the elections to the new parliament in Ukraine in the autumn of 2014 were essential. But they hardly passed without Russia trying to influence them by means of subtle and overt coercion, intimidation and fraud, and a hybrid war that continuous in spite of an armistice. The West must continue to support all those social forces who try to move Ukraine toward an open, pluralistic, reformist and corruption-free society – aimed at anchoring itself in the Atlantic space.

Factually, the Ukraine is divided; so are Georgia and Moldova. Mostly, citizens in these countries who want to join the space of Western structures offer economic arguments. They want to improve life chances for themselves, their fellow citizens and their children. In the end, they want to join a reality that is based on Western political thought, no matter how insufficient the ideals of the West may be. Those who think in imperial categories and intend to expand and consolidate Russian spheres of influence argue through the lens of state power. They do not care about individuals' opportunities and life prospects. Their currency is distinctly one of 19th century pride and national heroism.

The crisis is a moment of truth for Ukraine. Will the country – or what is left of it – survive as a sovereign, pluralistic, self-determined state? Will it be prepared for the long march out of Soviet legacies and the cycle of corruption and mismanagement under its own different failed leaders of the past two decades? Or will Ukraine render itself paralyzed, and hence become a pawn in the hand of Russian imperialism whose ultimate aim may well be Kiev? Human rights are rights of individual human beings, of course. But sometimes, the right of a state to survive in order to guarantee its citizens their free existence is a human right, too.

### ***III. Eurasian Heartland or Atlantic Civilization: The Ukrainian War of Cultures***

Over many years the West did not sufficiently support the pro-western oriented social forces in Ukraine, Armenia, Belarus, Moldova and Georgia. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the EU (as well as the US) was focusing on Central Europe and the Baltic republics – rightly so – without admitting that the differences between these regions and the other Western republics of the former Soviet Union were fundamental. The West simply believed in the gradual and natural permeation of ideas and norms from West to East. In reality, political cultures were – and mostly still are – different between the societies in the “the East of the West” and those who are struggling with their identity, whether Atlantic or Eurasian.

Over the years, the West simply forgot the division of Moldova as a consequence of the factual secession of Transnistria in the period 1990-1992. Today the West must realize that this still ongoing constellation in Moldova may well be the blueprint for Putin’s neo imperialism toward Ukraine. The West also forgot that a similar separation followed from the Russia-Georgia War in 2008, ending with the factual occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, thus rendering Georgia factually incapable of exercising its internal self-determination and international sovereignty. The Ukraine-Russia crisis will come to end – at best – after President Putin has achieved a similar factual separation of the Ukraine by bringing a large part of eastern and southern Ukraine into his sphere of influence – whether directly or indirectly does not really matter.

Putin’s strategy is a modernization and reactivation of the Russian Empire by coercion and, if necessary, by force. Former empires used secret services as a tool to advance their glory. In Putin’s Russia, the secret services and their weird methods are both tool and objective at the same time. In fact, the Russian secret services and their methods are the only guarantee for Putin to maintain power and dominance over the system. This is why the global propaganda war Russia has started on many fronts is as important as the real confrontation on the ground in Ukraine.

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The current conflict is about the boundaries between the West – that is, the Atlantic world, defined by individual human dignity, respect for diversity and rule of law – and Eurasia, based on coercion, intimidation, state primacy over the individual, national/ethnic cohesion, and centralized decision making. Putin understands a renewed Russian Empire as his contribution to modernization. Russia's current leadership is revisionist and does not accept the results of history. Most importantly, for Putin and his supporters, the use of force is politics by other means while for the Atlantic civilization the use of force is understood as the ultimate failure and hence the end of politics.

Ukraine has become the new battlefield of a clash between the Atlantic view of the world and the Eurasian notion of world order and social evolution. Similar cultural conflicts have happened also in other parts of Europe and elsewhere. Germany, for instance, was struggling between a Western notion of its political culture and an anti-Western notion of society and politics (autochthonous, ethnic, nationalistic) between the late nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century. Only Hitler's defeat opened the door for the Germans to fully embrace Western political culture.

Ukraine, in this sense, is the “new Germany”: culturally divided, economically weak, socially split and strategically more subject than object. In the German case of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the inability of German elites and German society to exercise self-determination in line with the Western political culture eventually led to two world wars of aggression, to full defeat and the formal split of the country, turning its capital into a city with four zones dominated by external forces, as elsewhere in the age of colonialism (think of the European “possessions” in Shanghai or the different zones for different external settlers struggling for dominance in a city such as Stone Town in Zanzibar under the Omani sultan).

Will Ukraine end up being controlled by different national and foreign powers, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) or EU or UN peacekeepers, in carefully split zones? May this

affect even the city of Kiev? Has the old East-West divide, in terms of a clash of political cultures, moved from Germany to Ukraine? And how long will this situation last? One thing is sure: the quest for freedom, which is the promise of the Western political culture, is based in anthropological truth. It is man's nature wanting to be free. Therefore, Ukraine in times of Putinism might end up being split, paralyzed, semi-occupied, and incapable of acting as a self-determined player – but this stage of history will not last forever. In fact, it will always be questioned by the many friends of freedom and eventually be overcome by even more friends of freedom. Maybe at some point, a Euro-Maidan will also take place on Moscow's Red Square to truly challenge the domestic root causes of the emerging second Russian empire, the Putin Empire.

For now, Western policy makers can only draw one conclusion in light of this situation: Get priorities straight and act coherently, consistently, and honestly; be self-critical and humble as far as the alleged superiority of Western values is concerned; expect a long and dire confrontation as long as Russia resorts to a secret-police driven imperialism; support the Ukrainian people's right to define their own social and political system and their foreign policy orientation; do not provoke Russia unnecessarily, keep channels of diplomacy open and continue to explore, for the time being at least, the option of a neutralized but territorially coherent Ukraine (including Crimea); and defend the Ukrainian right to internal self-determination and its exclusive right to choose its foreign policy orientation.

The Atlantic civilization has to find appropriate answers for the new ideological and geopolitical confrontation a secret-police driven Russian imperialism is imposing on its neighbors. NATO is revitalized and EU foreign and security policies will get sharpened. But most importantly for the Atlantic civilization, it must remain a credible magnetic power – in a sociological and cultural sense – for all those individuals and social forces in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, and Armenia which want to join the Atlantic sphere of political culture – a political culture of individual dignity, respect and choice, of justice and rule of law.

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For the time being, the idea of “Europe whole and free” has been replaced by a split between an Atlantic Europe and Eurasian imperialism. Coercion, violence and state primacy, ethno-nationalism, and hegemonic autocracy are not genetic attitudes anywhere in the world. Therefore it is true in a universal sense: wherever people have to live under such a system, they are enslaved. Yet their time to rise will come. Now, the world is witnessing the quest for freedom in Kiev and elsewhere in Ukraine. At some point in time, the world will witness it in Moscow, too. Change must come from within, especially in empires whose time has come to disappear in the archives of history. For the West, that is the EU and the US, the main challenge is to remain credible and to stand together as one Atlantic civilization.

### ***IV. The roots of the Atlantic Civilization***

When the term “Atlantic civilization” was coined in the 18th century, the underlying idea was meant to combine the values of the French and the American Revolutions. They were seen as the two indispensable pillars of a single, yet divided approach to social modernization. The values of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as well as those of liberty, equality and fraternity may sound hollow today. Yet, they have not yet lost any of their resounding power when looking at their impact.

The Atlantic civilization remains based on the primacy of individual dignity, property and rule of law, a strict separation between state and society, with freedom of religion (to practice it as well as to renounce it) and the freedom to travel. The ability to engage in self-criticism remains an essential quality of the Atlantic civilization. While hoping for the universalization of our understanding of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness remains an inherent driving force of our culture, the West need to re-evaluate the world as it stands. It is imperative for the future of the Atlantic civilization to realize the root causes of the conflicts which have taken us like a hurricane in 2014. The time has come to count the dead due to a series of acts of political violence which have happened since the end of the Cold War.

Undeclared wars (such as in the Ukraine), gruesome and barbarous acts of terrorism (as in Iraq and Syria), and residual states which cannot really “fail” because they never worked in the first place (such as Somalia), states which can no longer prevent the outbreak of mass epidemics with global consequences (such as Liberia, Sierra Leone or Guinea) have to be taken into account. The West may be keen to promote the rule of law and democratic participation, but for the time being the West is confronted with upheavals in its borderlands that follow a different, if not altogether confrontational logic or as at least based on a monopoly of the legitimate use of force and coherent governance.

Russia is projecting its imperial glory, if only out of weakness. The Arab and Muslim world is undergoing a transformation with cultural, political and economic tensions of the highest order. While often clad in religious language, these tensions reflect age-old geopolitical controversies and rifts. While usually Westerners are ambivalent about the use of military power, knowing too well its limits and the curse of Pandora’s box which comes with the use of military power, the West can no longer escape a global tide that changes the way of our thinking.

Aren’t we very scared of “foreign” fighters returning from Iraq or Syria, whether with an EU or US passport? And what is the answer to self-declared “Sharia police” gangs patrolling the streets of London or Bonn, trying to prevent Muslim youth to enter “sinful” places such as discotheques and casinos? The Atlantic civilization is united these days in fear and their policies of sanctions. In reality, Western nations are divided in their perception of, and proximity to, current hotspots. Whether the West is engaged in sanctions against Russia or in organizing a military coalition against the barbaric terror of the self-declared “Islamic State caliphate,” the truth of the matter is this: Nobody has a good answer, and no strategy seems to work the way anybody thought these things would happen in the past. Sanctions are no substitute for foreign policy.

What’s happening in Russia is about re-establishing spheres of influence, territorial and ethnic. The shift from Arab spring to a Caliphate winter represents almost the opposite: the individualized, decentralized and

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excessively violent, cruel and unpredictable use of force. Understood properly, Eurasian imperialism and Arab radicalism are two sides of the same coin. They both reek of obvious helplessness and long-term self-defeat. They represent deep inferiority complexes to which the West has not developed any serious response beyond the usual policies of carrots and sticks.

The Atlantic civilization has to learn that political ideologies and violent conflicts which are no longer relevant in the West have found willing repetition outside its sphere. The Arab world may well have entered its genuine Thirty-Year War, while nobody knows how long Russian imperialism may last. But as Russia's and the Arab world's inner tribulations have begun to penetrate the cohesion and stability of the West, they pose a threat to the Atlantic civilization that goes beyond the reaction of concerned neighbors. That is why it is time to reinforce the foundation of this unique experiment in the history of man's search for freedom without coercion. It is against this backdrop that the success or failure of the 'Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership' (TTIP) takes on a new dimension. These trade negotiations between the EU and the US are about far more than a trans-Atlantic trade and investment partnership. It is an investment into a common future of liberal democracy and it is about a partnership that cannot be traded on the altar of petty populism and myopic trends on either side of the Atlantic Ocean.

### ***V. The Achilles heel of the West***

"The open society and its enemies", Karl Popper titled his most famous book, written in his New Zealand exile during the totalitarian horror of Nazi Europe. Strangely and sadly, that topic, even quite recently thought to become the stuff of historical reminiscence, is as relevant and virulent today as it was back then. Yes, Western countries have learned to live in harmony with each other. The Western world has been conditioned to continuously believe in social progress. The West has also assumed that turmoil elsewhere is not for the Western world to truly be concerned about. That's what was consensus until 2014. By now, most people know better.

The hubris to assume that the West has answers to any global threat, that the West can manage any global pressure at its doorsteps or that the West would even remain invulnerable has been replaced by intellectual shock and awe: Syria, Crimea, Ebola and ISIS are just a few of the recent incidences that have shaken a widespread Western belief in the manageability of everything and anything.

When societies are overwhelmed by events, it is especially important to stay cool-headed. Mass media means mass information – but potentially also mass hysteria. Pictures produce images, but they also become petrified symbols. The borderlines between what people truly know and what people genuinely should be concerned about are getting thinner and thinner. Little wonder then that disinformation has become the strongest weapon against the West with the biggest possible effect inside Western societies. Lies are used by the contemporary enemies of open societies to cover up their contrasting understanding of political norms and values. Putin's propaganda machine has already somewhat succeeded in advancing Russia's case behind the shades of the grey of disinformation. In order to make people around the globe forget to talk about the annexation of Crimea, Russia nourished violence in Donetsk and Luhansk, all the while talking about an armistice with Kiev. Russia blames the West for breaking international law, while bombing ISIS positions in Syria – thus making people forget who has helped the Assad regime in Damascus to survive the past years.

Disinformation and propaganda is also what radical and criminal Salafists know to handle well. Videos with the beheading of innocent hostages are meant to provoke hysteria in Western societies. The point is to use this trigger mechanism to justify the (wrong) complaint that the West is against all Muslims. Salafists systematically blur the borderline between information, disinformation and propaganda. The concept of "friend and foe" is the starting point of radical Salafists to attack open societies. Once ordinary life gives in to fear, the battle is lost. This is why Western societies are as strong (and as vulnerable) as they avoid falling into the mindset and rhetoric of thinking in terms of "friend and foe". Commitment to truth is noble, but shall not undermine liberty. Tolerance is no purpose in

itself, but a precondition for reconciling truth and liberty. Therefore, any regressive kind of thinking in Western countries is a threat to the community of open societies-at large.

This, not so coincidentally, is also the reason why the European Union is so sensitive to any increase in nationalistic and xenophobic thinking. It is not the issue as such, but the method of thinking which causes the real problem. Unfortunately, a case in point can be studied currently in Hungary.

Once the most successful (and open) country in the Eastern bloc (the most happy barracks during the Soviet era), it has become almost the least successful country of post-communist transformation. This decline manifests itself most clearly in the political culture of Hungary. Antagonistic language and misleading terminology – such as the plea of Prime Minister Victor Orban for an “illiberal democracy”, whatever that may mean – are pointing at the weakest entrance point of the spear of Paris into the Achilles’s heel of Western societies. The Hungarian leader’s goal is to undermine trust by deliberately relying on a misleading language of ambivalence. Soviet apparatchiks, those that are still alive, must love the perverted sense of dialectics that this Hungarian “conservative” relies on to execute his political machinations. The core not just of the Western credo – but any civilization’s creed – is this: The flip side of individual human dignity is individual responsibility. That leaves no room for any reasoning in the categories of “friend and foe” – only for a language of right and wrong. And that, in turn, requires nothing more and nothing less than a language without lies. Standing up for that simple rule is the essence for anybody wanting Karl Popper’s legacy to prevail.

## ***VI. Not Cold War II but Word War III?***

Russia’s leadership has returned to its traditional political thinking – imperial, nationalistic, aggressive. It is not pursuing a transformation toward Western ways, as had been hoped for a while. Instead, it is embracing a new version of “reactionary modernism” (in the words of University of Maryland historian Jeffrey Herf). Such a peculiar form of

modernism is something we have seen already under Nazi rule in Germany in the 1930s. In President Putin's Russia, "reactionary modernism" is coupled with revisionist aspirations to expand Russia's sphere of influence on the Eastern borders of Europe.

As for the latest outbreak of Russian imperialism, some argue that this chain of events is apt to usher in a new Cold War. That proposition is wrong – for a very obvious reason: The Cold War has never turned violent except for moments of unrest inside the Eastern bloc. That makes it much unlike the series of events which has followed the end of the Soviet Union in 1990: From Chechnya to Transnistria, from South Ossetia to Abkhazia, from Crimea to Donbass, hot warfare by old and new means has taken place.

To be sure, the ideological source of today's set of conflicts is no longer rooted in past totalitarianism. Instead, it lies primarily in the geopolitical objectives of Russia: Eurasian nationalism has become the source of a new zone of blood, instability and uncertainty at the fringes of Russia. Regionalism by coercion – as President Putin tries to implement with his project of the Eurasian Union – will not work either.

But Putin is not the only problematic character on the global stage. On Europe's southern borders, the Arab spring has not turned into the hoped-for democratic Arab summer. Even the much harsher metaphor currently bandied about – that of a Caliphate winter – is misleading. In reality, the Arab world is going through a set of revolutions. By definition, they come in stages, go through phases and remain unpredictable until the end. Recognizing Arab diversity and accepting new forms of power sharing and identity tolerance will take a long time.

The reason is quite simple: What needs to happen is that this part of the world has to discover either Thomas Hobbes recipe for a solution to sectarian wars (i.e. the primacy of law over any claim of representing truth). Or it has to embrace Max Weber's notion about peace based on a monopoly of the legitimate use of state violence. Saying so is not a form of cultural or historical chauvinism. The two approaches basically describe the two only logical and effective choices when viewed from a purely

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anthropological, not political, perspective. Unless and until that happens, the world will have to live with privatized violence and terrorism, uncertainty and instability.

The Cold War came as one global conflict, uniting and dividing the world at large. Today's conflicts originate in multiple domestic anarchies, governance and state failures. As a consequence, however, they are no less powerful and scary. They repeat conflicts Europe has unlearned. And they have led to a robust mixture of cold and hot wars, frozen and overt conflicts, especially across the arc of instability from Morocco to Moscow. If one adds the territorial and power disputes in the South China Sea, and the root causes of Ebola – which are not medical but the consequence of state failure in the countries of origin – one suddenly realizes the expanding global nature of the series of escalating conflicts.

The only certain fact is only that Europe is no longer origin, source and center of current conflicts. If one adds the number of victims of political violence since the end of the Cold War outside Europe, the gruesome impression that the world is going through World War III appears in front of our eyes. Since 1990,

- (1) more than 157.000 people were killed in acts of terrorism,
- (2) almost nine million people have lost their lives in acts of civil war around the globe.

The statistics of violence since the end of the Cold War is getting us closer to the legacy of World War I with its 17 million dead than to anything the world has experienced during the Cold War. Like both World War I and World War II, the new series of global confrontations do not take place in all regions, all countries or all villages at the same time. Like the Thirty Years War of the 16th century, the budding World War III has already seen so far periods of armistice and recovery, only to prepare for the next round of shooting, looting and killing elsewhere.

Also World War III includes cold wars and hot wars, old wars and new forms of violence for political ends. It is a new Thirty Years War – and comes as the downside cost of the global age. Unlike the presumable upside – expressed by the gadgets of communication and gentle economic

power shifts – its currency are shifts in power relations due to war and violence. The new conflicts are fought less over territorial claims per se – and far more over basic notions of politics, the management of public affairs as well as identity and diversity management. Curiously enough, in some parts of the world the fight is over having too many states, while in others it is fought over the lack of states for some groups.

### ***VII. What is to be done?***

Given the arch of instability that is surrounding Europe in its East and in its South, Lenin's question of 1902 "What is to be done" has gained renewed importance – only this time for the West. The current wave of violence and uncertainty requires more than just analytical clarity about root causes and potential consequences. It also requires responses which, at least over time, can tame the flood of violence and coercion, suffering and fear. Otherwise, the memories of the past 25 years when most of the world enjoyed the sunny side of post-Cold war politics will quickly become a faint memory.

While the first two World Wars had their origin, sources and center in Europe, today the origins, sources and centers of conflict lie outside Europe. For too long, it seemed as if the many internal conflicts and civil wars which the world has seen since the end of the Cold War were unconnected: they are not. They represent the decolonization of the post-colonial era, which creates turmoil in more places than one likes and nostalgia for imperialism in others (especially in Russia, but also in Turkey and to some extent in China and Japan) which were considered as being on the same track as any ordinary 21st century European state. The common denominator of this age of trouble is a kind of World War, a global struggle over political concepts and norms primarily inside –and not too often between – states. Political concepts, strategies and tactics of those actors who are the source of trouble today include lies and disinformation, autocratic rule disguised as populism, ethno-nationalism, obsession with territories and identities, a distortion of the notion of democracy and legal concepts we thought of as universally binding; most depressing, is the use

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of violence as a means of politics and blasphemy by those who manipulate and abuse religion with their lust for violence.

Two tested solutions are seemingly at hand and both are limited:

(1) Collective security may maintain stability but it cannot generate it: As the OSCE demonstrates, collective security fails immediately if one player does not obey the commonly agreed norms.

(2) Rule of law based democratic community-building, the concept of the EU (and of NATO for that matter), is obviously strong as a magnetic force but less so as an export product. European Neighborhood Policy tries to square the circle in combining collective security and rule of law based reform and transformation; in the end, there is a danger of both solutions failing.

Western societies – exhausted from centuries of infighting and virulent social conflict – have become largely pacified at home. As a result, they tend to underestimate that confrontational concepts of politics as well as ethnic and religious identity still have a lot of currency around the globe. People living in the more conflicted parts of the world look at the West with a curious mixture of disregard and inferiority complexes.

Under these circumstances, the West needs a three-part strategy to cope with the current tide of uncertainty, violence and disregard for human dignity and diversity that has become virulent in too many countries of the world. The first element is strong defense: whether one likes it or not, this includes deterrence based on Article 5 of the NATO Treaty (meaning that an attack on the territory of one NATO member is an attack on all), a more efficient and flexible rapid intervention force as agreed upon at the NATO Summit in Wales in September 2014, and urgent efforts by the EU to advance joint European counterintelligence and military procurement policies; it also includes the need to better prepare for future cybercrimes.

The second element for a successful Western strategy is the use of proactive forms of crisis prevention. This includes continuous dialogue with those in power anywhere, even if they use power for violent means. It also includes efforts to cope with the root causes of the current escalation

of the politics of violence. The West needs to speak clearly about some core ideas and needs to resist their violation wherever necessary:

- (1) No religion justifies the use of force; no search for cultural identity justifies the exclusion and elimination of minorities.
- (2) No quest for national pride justifies the revision of borders and annexation of territories.
- (3) No legitimate interest into national cohesion justifies the infringement of fundamental human rights.

But fundamentally, crisis prevention needs to start with empathy for the fact that the youth bubble in the arch of instability requires new economic strategies and more creative forms of advancing economic life chances; otherwise, the West will continuously remain exposed to illegal migration pressure and blame-games about its egoism.

The third element of a coherent long-term Western strategy for the age of new global violence is to support those who promote human rights and reason. This applies especially to activists in the civil society of countries which have become the origin, source and center of conflicts with regional, if not even global ramifications. One example of hope is the European Humanities University, founded in 1992 in Minsk, Belarus. Since 2004, it operates in exile in Vilnius, Lithuania. The university, its founder Alexander Mikhailov and its courageous students deserve the Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen, the most prestigious civil society award across the European Union. It will be the right signal to support civil society pluralism through intellectual diversity in Belarus.

A war of ideas will accompany the next phase of the global age. For the West, the new Thirty Years War at its doorsteps comes as quintessential test case for the credibility of its legal and political norms. The West urgently revitalize trust in moral and social values that have stood the test of history but are challenged anew today. Credibility begins at home, which is why compassion with refugees and enforced migrants who simply look for a better life must be the starting point of any Western reaction to the arc of conflict. Despair and disenchantment among young people is a guarantee

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for further instability and violence if it does not find positive, constructive outlets to contribute to a better world.

In preparing for such a world, the very idea of religion has to be defended, provided it is properly understood. In the context of many of the most conflicted areas one can argue that only where there is religion can violence can eventually vanish. Ultimately, religion (etymologically derived from the Latin *re-ligare*, reconnecting with God) is about accepting humans' limits in dealing with fellow humans. This is why violence in the name of religion is the biggest blasphemy of all.

The key to conceptual clarity in this new era of uncertainty and threat is an organizing idea with links domestic considerations with global responsibilities. It is worth to recall what it took to establish American peace post-1945: The idea of enlightened self-interest. American enlightened self-interest is what eventually made the Marshall plan, the international financial architecture, the UN and NATO. Today, the West needs a similar conceptual link under completely different circumstances in order to pursue credible and appropriate policies. EU and transatlantic foreign policies based on enlightened self-interest must begin with the understanding that we work for global peace and shared human security, and not only for Western security against “the barbaric hordes” of the world.

The first test-case for Europe is the way to look at refugees. Why do EU citizens not feel honored and proud that human beings under existential pressure want to reach European shores to find refuge? Yes, EU citizens and states help, yet simultaneously they project as much fear as compassion. Credibility begins at home.

Secondly, the EU urgently needs a better policy of legal immigration into the EU. Yes, the EU also needs to combat illegal migration, but those policies must primarily focus on the perpetrators of human trafficking and not on those who sell their lives. It is not enough to count the number of illegal immigrants who entered the EU every night, as the “Frontex” headquarters in Warsaw does.

Thirdly, the EU needs to address the root causes of violent politics, but until EU neighbors discover the universal insights of Thomas Hobbes, Alexis de Tocqueville or Max Weber, the EU needs to find smarter ways of connecting the troubled neighborhoods with its own stability-driven societies. Demographics are not on the EU's side, especially if one considers the youth bubble in the South. Therefore, creative innovations which can help to improve life chances for the global "bottom billion" should become a priority in the EU's economic growth strategies. This is how enlightened self-interest could begin today.

Fourthly, strong defense includes deterrence, but, yes, the EU also needs more proactive forms of crisis prevention. Crisis prevention must relink the need for security with the overall search for peace and the objective of rule of law. Promoting technical apprenticeship in Jordan, Mauritania and Georgia is as relevant as a European counterintelligence system, which the EU needs. Whatever practical diplomacy requires, the European Union must avoid playing out the need for security against the desire for peace through justice and fairness.

The fifth and last point: Amidst challenges unprecedented for decades, the gradual emergence of a multi-polar world continues. This is why the EU and the US need to win China and Africa, India and Brazil as partners in today's global security management. For the West, in essence, the ongoing "piecemeal World War III" – as Pope Francis has called it – at its doorsteps is first and foremost a test case for the adaptability of its legal norms and political concepts to the era of uncertainty which will neighbor the European Union for a long time.

The European Union, in conclusion, needs a new Security Strategy, replacing the one formulated in 2003 with an updated analysis of where Europe stands, how Europe is threatened and what Europe needs to do to cope with the biggest set of challenges in a generation. It is time for the current EU leadership to take up this task and prepare the EU and all Union citizens for their life in an era of uncertainty.





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