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Europe's Goal Should Be Helsinki

Almost all of the challenges faced by the United States and Europe alike are on the global level. They include regional conflicts that involve state and non-state actors, climate change and resource shortages, the danger presented by nuclear weapons, massive human rights violations, and criminal and terrorist organizations who also use cyberspace. In the US academic debate, Europe's role in the future world is largely ignored, however. The debates mainly revolve around the US and China. This is unjustified. Realists and liberals alike look at Europe through a geopolitical lens.

In the same vein, the political debate in Europe mainly focuses on defence issues, even more specifically on the defence expenditure of European NATO-members. Regardless of the fact that Europe's defence expenditure as a whole is not particularly low anyway, Europe has much more to offer to solve global and regional conflicts than merely increased military spending. The European Union (EU) considers itself a peace union¹ and has developed excellent mechanisms to solve conflicts among the member states, but has been less effective with conflicts beyond its borders. However, Europe has developed instruments beyond pure power politics that were successful in the past and are still very relevant. One of these instruments that best expresses European values is the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) of 1975.²

*Europe Is Not a Major Political Factor in the US Academic Debate*³

Since the end of George W. Bush's presidency in 2009, there has been a debate among US academics about what kind of world will emerge next. Europe plays only a marginal role in this debate. The main concerns of US academics are the decline of the US and the rise of China. Europe is not considered a major power factor in the new world. At best, Europe is seen as a natural ally because it consists of market economies and liberal democracies. At worst, it is perceived as irrelevant because it lacks military capacities with global reach.

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- 1 The European Union lists as its primary goal: to "promote peace, its values and the well-being of its citizens", European Union, The EU in brief, Goals and values of the EU, at: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief_en.
 - 2 Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe, Final Act, Helsinki 1975, available at: <https://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act>.
 - 3 An earlier version of this chapter appeared in Heinz Gärtner, Occasional Paper: Where is Europe?, 22 May 2019, at: <https://homepage.univie.ac.at/heinz.gaertner/?p=2370#more-2370>.

Since 2016, there has been a debate regarding whether the liberal order has come to an end. Some scholars argue that the world never has been liberal but it has always been polarized, whether before World War I, during the Cold War, or under conditions of multiple poles.⁴ US President Donald Trump has put the US before all other states, including those in Europe.

The “Unipolar Moment” without Europe

The “bipolarity” of the Cold War era is gone. Representatives of both the realist and liberal schools of international relations theories have started to think about how the future world could look. For Charles Krauthammer, “the immediate post-Cold War world is not multipolar. It is unipolar”.⁵ And Europe plays a subordinate role: “The center of world power is the unchallenged superpower, the United States, attended by its Western allies.”⁶ During the period of the Bush administrations, some scholars started to talk about a US empire, where European countries were characterized as dependents.⁷

“Bound to Lead” – without Europe!

Even before Krauthammer wrote his essay, the liberal Joseph Nye wrote his book *Bound to Lead*⁸ as a response to Paul Kennedy’s book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*.⁹ He argues that although the US is not in decline, Germany and Japan, which had been destroyed during World War II, are now catching up with the US, getting a larger share of the World Gross National Product and world export rates than in the immediate post-war period. Since then, Nye¹⁰ has reiterated time and time again that the US is the only power in the world that can provide all the dimensions of the liberal order: security, economy, global commons, human rights, and liberal values.

Nye states that in the modern world, power is distributed according to a pattern resembling a three-dimensional chess game. The top “chessboard”, representing military power, is largely unipolar, and likely to remain the realm of the US for some time. The middle, or economic “chessboard” is multipolar, and it is here that Europe has a role to play. However, economic power has already been multipolar for more than a decade, with the US, Europe, Japan, and China as the major players, and others gaining in importance. The bottom

4 Cf. Graham Allison, *The Myth of the Liberal Order*, *Foreign Affairs*, 14 June 2018; Graham Allison, *The Truth About the Liberal Order*, *Foreign Affairs*, 28 August 2018.

5 Charles Krauthammer, *The Unipolar Moment*, *Foreign Affairs*, December/January, 1990/1991, at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1991-02-01/unipolar-moment>.

6 Ibid.

7 Cf. Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America’s Empire*, New York 2004.

8 Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York 1990.

9 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, New York 1987.

10 Joseph S Nye, *The Powers to Lead*, Oxford 2008. Joseph S Nye Jr., *The Future of Power*, New York 2011.

chessboard is the realm of cross-border transactions that occur outside of government control. Nye¹¹ rejects the notion of a “post-American world”¹²; he recognizes that the “America of the late twentieth century is over”. American primacy remains, however. This means that the United States will be the “first” but not the “sole” world power. The US will most likely remain “primus inter pares” among the other great powers. The preferred outcomes will, according to Nye, require “power with others as much as power over others”.

Parochial Europe

Similarly to Joseph Nye, Richard Haass does not support the thesis of the US’s decline.¹³ Globalization has created a “nonpolar world”¹⁴ of US primacy, but not domination. The US has to restore its economic foundations and foreign policy at home. He argues that the US is underperforming at home and overreaching abroad. For Haass, US primacy still means superiority: The US economy is the largest, American higher education the best, American society the most innovative and adaptive in the world. Europe, by contrast, performs far below its collective economic weight around the globe. This is the result of Europe’s “parochialism, its pronounced antimilitary culture, and the unresolved tensions between the pull of nationalism and the commitment to building a collective union”.¹⁵ Europe will, according to Haass, be less significant in the half-century ahead than it was in the past half-century. For him, “we are living in a post-European world”.¹⁶ In the 21st century, for Haass it is the Asia-Pacific region that will be the centre of gravity of the world’s economy rather than Europe – if it can be managed peacefully.

The 19th Century Belonged to Europe – but Not the Future

Parag Khanna makes a similar observation with regard to emerging powers as Zakaria’s “post-American world”. Zakaria sees the “rise of the rest”,¹⁷ while Khanna observes the rise of the “second world”,¹⁸ i.e. almost all others except the US and Europe. Their analyses are not necessarily as declinist as Paul Kennedy’s *Rise and Fall of Great Power*. For both Khanna and Zakaria, the US

11 Joseph S. Nye, *Presidential Leadership and the Creation of the American Era*, Princeton, 2013, p. 159.

12 Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World: Release 2.0*, New York 2012.

13 Cf. Richard N. Haass, *Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America’s House on Order*, New York, 2013.

14 Richard N. Haass, The Age of Nonpolarity, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2008, p. 4, at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2008-05-03/age-nonpolarity>.

15 Haass, *Foreign Policy Begins at Home*, cited above (Note 13), p. 39.

16 *Ibid.* .p. 38

17 Zakaria, cited above (Note 12), p. 1.

18 Parag Khanna, *The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order*, New York 2008.

will remain the dominant power (especially in military terms), but their argument is that the US will not be able to act alone. In his book *The Future is Asian*, Parag Khanna sees the “Asianization of Asia” as a first step towards the “Asianization of the World”¹⁹. Europe’s heyday – the 19th century – is a matter of the past. The 20th century belonged to America, and the 21st century will be Asian. Europe is now supposedly passé and the world is entering the “Asian century”.

Europe as a Consumer of American Liberal Values

Liberal internationalists argue that a liberal international order emerged under US leadership after the Second World War. The order is rule-based, organized around international institutions and market economies. According to John Ikenberry,²⁰ in the new world order, the US will find itself in the position of sharing its power and relying in part on others. The contested and unstable US-led hegemonic order will not destroy the American-built liberal international order, but rather will make it more inclusive. The strategic relationships that the US formed in Europe and Asia became pillars of the liberal world order during the Cold War. Ikenberry does not talk of a US-European-built order. Europe is a consumer of American values. The new world would be built around rules, norms of non-discrimination, and market openness, creating opportunities for countries – including rising countries on the periphery of this order. Such a liberal international order would create a foundation on which states could engage in reciprocity and institutionalized co-operation. Such an order can be contrasted with closed and non-rule-based relations such as geopolitical blocs, exclusive regional spheres, or closed imperial systems. The order would survive even without US hegemony.

Europe Might Be Absorbed by China Because It Is From Venus

In contrast, Robert Kagan believes that it would make a huge difference to the future world order if the United States eventually had to share global power with a richer and more powerful, but also autocratic China. “The United States and Europe must not give up on each other.”²¹ If the US declined, defenceless Europe would be absorbed by China, because, Kagan argues, “on major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus.”²² Kagan uses the metaphor of ancient Rome: After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Roman order and culture disappeared, too.²³

19 Parag Khanna, *The Future is Asian*, New York, 2019, p. 20.

20 John G. Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, Princeton and Oxford 2011.

21 Robert Kagan, *The World America Made*, New York 2012, p. 135.

22 Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York 2003, p. 3.

23 Cf. Kagan, *The World America Made*, cited above (Note 21), p. 5.

A More Benign View

Charles Kupchan's treatment of Europe is more benign.²⁴ He sees time running out on the West's global dominance. Power will become more widely distributed around the globe. The next world will belong to no one. Rather, the coming world will be both multipolar and politically diverse. The diffusion of global power ultimately means the diffusion of international responsibility from the Atlantic community of democracies to a broad array of states in all corners of the globe. For Kupchan, the goal would be to forge a consensus among major states about the foundational principles of the next world. The rules must be acceptable to all powers.

European "Vassals"

For Zbigniew Brzezinski, the US system's capacity to compete globally depends increasingly on its ability to confront problems at home. If the US falters, the world is unlikely to be dominated by a single preeminent successor, and would descend into chaos. Through its cultural, ideological, and economic connections, and more concretely through NATO, Europe remains a junior geopolitical partner or even a vassal to the United States.²⁵

Liberals and Conservatives Alike

The US debate about the world is very much a domestic one about its own role in the world. The promotion of US interests and values has always been one central tenet to US foreign policy debate, in which the prevalent elements have always been national security and economic interests. Both liberals and conservatives focus on reforming the domestic political and economic structure to reinforce the basis for a strong foreign policy. They both believe that the US should remain the global leader, stay engaged, and influence global and regional developments.

The Concert of Vienna and the Seeds of War

Interestingly, many of these thinkers – liberals and realists alike – seem to support a concert of powers like that which was established after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. It was rediscovered by the Democrat Franklin Roosevelt, and reinvented by the Republican Henry Kissinger. Such a concert would include democracies, such as the US and European states, and non- or semi-democratic

24 Cf. Charles. A. Kupchan, *No One's World: The West, The Rising Rest, And The Coming Global Turn*, New York 2012.

25 Cf. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power*, New York 2012.

powers, such as Russia and China, but could lead to peace and more security among world powers. It would be based on both common norms and principles, as well as a balance of power systems.

This seemingly rational model apparently kept the peace for one century until 1914, with the exceptions of the wars of liberation, starting with the Crimean War (1853-1856). However, in the second half of the 19th century, this model already contained the seeds of collapse, almost invisible to most of the politicians and the population, that led to the First World War. This prelude was characterized by nationalistic propaganda, demonization of other nations and governments, and an arms race.

The world is today witnessing the breakdown of multilateralism, the emergence of nationalistic and ethnic xenophobia, the demonization of adversaries, the depreciation of international institutions, the withdrawal of international agreements and treaties, and a new arms race.

Higher Defence Spending Is Not the Solution

US President Donald Trump, like some of his predecessors and their Secretaries of State, requested that European NATO members increase their defence spending, amounting to an accusation that European countries are failing to pull their weight in military affairs. NATO responded with assurances that there is a trend towards higher expenditure anyway and with concepts such as “smart defence”²⁶ and “pooling and sharing”²⁷ as a way to reduce costs and set priorities. The request for higher defence expenditure is not related to threat analyses but to fair burden sharing among member states. But why should Europe compete with the US regarding defence expenditure. They are neither enemies nor rivals.

Higher defence expenditures would not enhance Europe’s weight in the world. Moreover, Europe’s present military capabilities are not negligible either. After all, around 60,000 European troops are deployed in various missions abroad, and European countries spend about half of what the US spends on defence. EU military expenditures account for more than one fifth of total military spending worldwide, compared to US expenditure at about 45 per cent. Europe as a whole spends as much on defence as Russia, China, India, and Brazil combined. Russia spends a little more than the UK and France. If Germany spent two per cent of its GDP on defence, it would equal Russia’s military expenditures.²⁸

26 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Smart Defence, 20 February 2017, at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_84268.htm.

27 European Defence Agency, EDA’s Pooling and Sharing, at: https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-factsheets/final-p-s_30012013_factsheet_cs5_gris.

28 Data from SIPRI Yearbook 2019: *Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2019, p. 186-222, esp. 207 and table 4.3 on p. 194.

Europe's Deficiencies

The political engagement of the EU is a requirement for many conflict areas. This fact is recognized by the EU Global Strategy: "In a more contested world, the EU will be guided by a strong sense of responsibility. We will engage responsibly across Europe and the surrounding regions to the east and south. We will act globally to address the root causes of conflict and poverty, and to promote human rights. [...] The Union cannot pull up a drawbridge to ward off external threats. Retreat from the world only deprives us of the opportunities that a connected world presents."²⁹ The EU has not been very successful in engaging in international conflicts, however. It does not have independent policies on China, the Middle East, or East Asia. It is mostly reactive to the US concerning trade issues with China, Korea, and Iran.

The EU is considered a peace project. Whatever the causes, there are no tensions between the members of the EU which might lead to a military conflict. However, the geopolitical competition that culminated in the Ukraine crisis after 2014 is reverberated by the stalemate within the Organization for Security and Co-operation (OSCE), the successor to the CSCE, since the fall of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the EU and its treaties will not be able to achieve what the Helsinki Process after 1975 had achieved. The EU does not explicitly recognize other political and social systems. The EU Lisbon Treaty of 2007 states in Article 7a that the EU will develop a special relationship with neighbouring countries aiming to establish "an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union"³⁰. The 1967 Harmel Report published by NATO requests strong military deterrence but also dialogue.³¹ The Europe of 2020 will not yet have achieved this duality. The aim should be Helsinki 1975. The EU has to be amended by the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

The Leading Document of European Values: The Helsinki Final Act

The document that best expresses European values is the CSCE Helsinki Final Act of 1975. It does not identify enemies, nor even opponents or adversaries, while most of the security and defence strategies define other states as "opponents", "adversaries", and "enemies". The Helsinki Final Act requests cooperative security and considers security indivisible. It develops a Decalogue

29 Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, June 2016, pp. 8 and 17, at: http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf.

30 European Union, Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, Lisbon, 13 December 2007, Article 7a, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12007L%2FTXT>.

31 Cf. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, The Future Tasks of the Alliance. Report of the Council – "The Harmel Report", 13 December 1967, at: https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official_texts_26700.htm.

of humanitarian values and supports economic co-operation. It allows changing of borders only peacefully and by agreement.

Advocates of deterrence strongly believe that nuclear deterrence does work because there was no nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, in reality we do not know if this is true, since you cannot prove why something did not happen. The avoidance of nuclear war between the two Cold War superpowers would not have been possible without factors such as arms control negotiations, confidence-building measures and co-operation within the CSCE and in other regimes and institutions.

The Helsinki Final Act and the subsequent process could provide a guideline for resolving current conflicts without copying them. The CSCE process was based on three “baskets”: bi- and multilateral co-operation relating to security; the fields of economics, science, technology, and the environment; and in humanitarian and other fields (today the OSCE’s three dimensions: the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human dimension). The Final Act recognizes the indivisibility of security in Europe as well as the common interest in the development of co-operation throughout Europe. The CSCE participating States pledged to refrain from any form of armed intervention or threat of such intervention or any other act of military, or of political, economic or other coercion against another participating State. Accordingly, they would refrain from direct or indirect assistance to terrorist activities. The participating States reaffirmed their will to intensify such co-operation, irrespective of their systems. They consider that their frontiers can be changed, however, only “in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and by agreement”.³² The Final Act also recognizes the right “to be or not to be a party to treaties of alliance; they also have the right to neutrality.”³³ At the same time, the Helsinki Final Act was the midwife of the civil society movement Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. Co-operation at the top encouraged opposition building in civil society. Without Helsinki, there would have been no Charter 77.

The Spirit of Helsinki during the Cold War

Even developments during the East-West conflict have been influenced by the Helsinki Final Act. For example, the principle of mutual recognition of systems stood the test of heightened tensions during the Cold War. In spite of US President Ronald Reagan’s harsh rhetoric and references to the Soviet Union as the “evil empire”, he and his successor George H. W. Bush conscientiously respected the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and acknowledged parity between the superpowers and different systems during their various historic summits in the nineteen-eighties.

32 Cf. Final Act of Helsinki, cited above (Note 2), p. 4.

33 Ibid.

The Korean Case

European values cannot and should not be imposed on countries outside (or inside) the European Union. The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 provides a tool and a frame for co-operation. It can provide a guiding principle for addressing other conflicts. The two Koreas have been in a state of cold war for decades. North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) possesses nuclear weapons, South Korea (Republic of Korea, ROK) is protected by the nuclear umbrella of the US. The two countries have very different systems. The DPRK's conventional artillery can reach and destroy large parts of Seoul. Neither regime change nor military intervention are feasible or realistic options for the US to achieve denuclearization. Focusing on humanitarian issues, fostering economic co-operation, and most importantly, common security issues could be carried out according to the three CSCE baskets, and must begin at a low level. Old zones of economic co-operation, trade and investment must be reopened and new ones created. US sanctions on the DPRK and the stalling of demilitarization talks between the US, ROK and DPRK are major obstacles. Unifying families as a humanitarian act could be organized more frequently. Most importantly, both sides must acknowledge that their security is indivisible. War or military intervention would lead to the destruction of both countries. These steps are modest but very different to President Trump's "maximum pressure" policy.

The Iran Example

Iran has been at the centre of the political debate in both the Gulf region and transatlantic relations for almost two decades. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is the most comprehensive arms control agreement in existence. It was concluded in Vienna on 14 July 2015 between the five permanent members of the UN Security Council – the US, China, Russia, UK, and France – plus Germany, together with the EU on the one side, and Iran on the other. In May 2018 the Trump administration withdrew from the agreement.

The JCPOA does not include provisions on missiles, which is of concern to the some parties to the agreement. Regional arms control negotiations could address the missile issue outside the JCPOA. In this situation, the model of CSCE arms control mechanisms could be helpful. The CSCE process was accompanied by conventional arms control negotiations (Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction, MBFR, and Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, CFE). It should include not only Iran, but other regional powers too. For example, Saudi Arabia's missiles already have a longer range than those of Iran. Other heavy weapons could be included too: the 1990 CFE Treaty³⁴ could provide a model.

34 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, 19 November 1990, available at: <https://www.osce.org/library/14087>.

It covers battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters. The talks could be accompanied by confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), such as the exchange of military information and the prior notification of certain military activities. The provisions of the Vienna Document³⁵ (VD) could serve as an example.

Such talks could well take place within the framework of the Regional Dialogue Forum and the new security networks suggested by Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.³⁶ The European signatory states of the JCPOA could make efforts to promote such a security dialogue. As early as 1992-94, many Middle Eastern states, including Israel, were engaged in Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) talks.³⁷ They failed, however, because of the Egyptian-Israeli conflict over nuclear disarmament. The indivisibility of security of the Gulf States could be underlined by a regional non-aggression pact. It would have to include provisions on the transparency of military activities, such as the notification of large exercises and inviting one another to take part in manoeuvres and other measures aimed at building confidence.

Conclusion

Both liberal and conservative scholars in the US believe that the US should remain a world leader, stay engaged, and influence global and regional developments. Europe is not a major political factor in this US academic debate. Just as in the second half of the 19th century, today the world is witnessing the breakdown of multilateralism, the emergence of nationalistic and ethnic xenophobia, the demonization of adversaries, the depreciation of international institutions, the withdrawal of international agreements and treaties, and an arms race.

These factors amount to a slow-motion breakdown in the values that Europe holds dear: effective multilateralism, functioning international institutions, interdependence and interconnectedness, military restraint and support of peace, engaging adversaries in dialogue, common and co-operative security. Political engagement, rather than higher defence spending, offers a solution for Europe to increase its global leverage. The EU has not been very successful in engaging in international conflicts, however.

The CSCE Helsinki Final Act of 1975, rather than a concert of powers like that established after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, should provide a

35 Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, 30 November 2011 (first version: VD 1999).

36 Iran-proposed security architecture taken seriously: Zarif, *Tehran Times*, 21 February 2018, at: <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/421471/Iran-proposed-security-architecture-taken-seriously-Zarif>.

37 Multilateral discussions on the peaceful settlement in the Middle East that took place in Madrid in 1991 resulted in the formation of a working group on arms control and regional security (ACRS). For more information, see <https://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/arms-control-and-regional-security-middle-east-acrs/>.

model for Europe. The Final Act best expresses European values. It does not identify enemies, nor even opponents or adversaries. It calls for co-operative security and concludes that security is indivisible. The Final Act is not only a guideline to reduce the tensions in Europe, but can provide a model for other conflict areas in the world, for example the relations between the two Koreas. The EU should take its lead from the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.