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Peaceful coexistence in our time - The New Cold War and the Question of Peace

So, today NATO in Europe, militarily and ideologically highly equipped, stands on Russia's European doorstep. - What now? Russia has closed the last loophole leading directly into Russia's interior - Crimea - and will not open it again. So on this side, too, the question remains "what now?" Crossing the threshold into Russia- for one side? Forward defense into NATO's territories for the other? Both mean war. Once more, Europe would be the theatre, as in the East-West conflict. This makes the question "What now?" once again a European-collective question.

The lack of acutely due, practicable answers to this question illustrates two things. Firstly, the military card has obviously been exhausted. Secondly: What remains are primarily the spirit and political means of peaceful coexistence. The West's doctrine of universalism, its values and normative political system rules stand in the way. Its hegemonic claim de facto replaces, mutatis mutandis, the once world-revolutionary claim of a socialist camp that had to disarm in 1989/90. This time, a West-East conflict and the new Cold War revolve around this universal claim.

In its evolution, this new West-East conflict went through two phases; in both, the West was concerned with expanding its dominance. For about twenty years after 1990, it was first about regaining lost Eastern European spaces - which had come under the control of the Soviet Union through the October Revolution of 1917 and after 1945. Then there was the post-Soviet space in the Caucasus and Central Asia. In both areas, the aim was to establish the market-based capitalist system with the help of economic and political transformation strategies. Already in this first phase, the West developed a double strategy for its "space grab" in the form of an amalgam of international and domestic political approaches.

In the current, second phase, the West is internationalizing this basic architecture to the new multipolar power structures as they are taking shape globally, and their heterogeneity is increasing. Since it is not within the West's power to bring the dynamics of these multipolar changes to a halt, they threaten to slip out of its control and dominance. The claim to universality is its paradigmatic counter-strategy in the form of (Western) "value based international order" or "European canon of values". Inevitably, those who are supposed to subordinate themselves to the West's claim to universality position themselves, albeit in different ways: Those are major powers such as China, Russia, Japan, Brazil, India, as well as regional powers such as Nigeria, Iran, South Africa, Indonesia.

The Eurasian continental region in particular is becoming the pivot of new multipolar power relations. The USA is bluntly staking its claim to hegemony in this region. They declare that

they will not allow Russia and China to become regional hegemons in Eurasia. In a supplementary paper to the US Congress published on 27 January 2021, it says: "the key element of the US national grand strategy is to pursue the goal of preventing the emergence of regional hegemonies in Eurasia."¹

"There is no question that a power shift has taken place in the international system and that this has weakened rather than strengthened the West. [...] The proclaimed 'alliance for multilateralism' and the 'strategic autonomy' sought by the European Union are defensive reactions. [...] What is needed is a policy that combines a clear diagnosis of changes in the global balance of power with an appropriate institutional and normative design in the interest of global security and peace. This is all the more urgent because in the past such adjustments rarely took place without resorting to war." (Spanger²)

This picture concisely outlines the global environment in which new West-East conflict, new Cold War and the West's claim to universality have to "struggle" and at the same time determines the dimensions of the peace question in the present. From this point of view, at least two aspects deserve special attention:

First, the contradictions emerging in the new power constellations: For example, it cannot be ruled out that the compatibility between massive American hegemonic intervention in Eurasia against China, Russia as well as their alliances and the interests of Europe is not too close.

On the other hand, experiences from the negotiation and mediation processes of the "Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe" (CSCE, 1975-93) between the antagonistic world camps at that time find a new weight. The CSCE was able to "civilize" their confrontation. "Civilizing" in the sense of political compromise settlements of systemic contradictions, political antagonisms and military threat perceptions. As the President of the Republic of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, underlined recently: The Helsinki Final Act, with its ten principles guiding relations between states, remains the only available basis for cooperative security in Europe, for a European security order.³

1 Renewed Great Power Competition: Implications for Defense-Issues for Congress, Congressional Research Service, Report for Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress, S. 3. <https://crsreports.congress.gov>, R43838, Updated January 27, 2021.

2 Hans-Joachim Spanger, Rethinking European Security, FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe, Vienna, October 2019, S.8, (tra A.S.), <http://www.fes-vienna.org>.

3 "International Dialogue Revisited: The Spirit of Helsinki in an Age of Great-Power Competition", Körber Foundation event, Berlin, 22. November,(translation A.S.) <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/speeches/speech-by-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-sauli-niinisto-at-the-korber-foundation-event-international-dialogue-revisited-the-spirit-of-helsinki-in-an-age-of-great-power-competition-22-novem/>

The following historical peculiarity also speaks in favor of "forward reflection" on the principles and experiences of the Helsinki process: It was not the Helsinki process that resolved the East-West conflict. Rather, it was the socialist system's silent self-extinction that did away with it. This remarkable event is worth noting with regard to a realistic assessment of the challenges in the new West-East conflict and the new Cold War. The constellation of powers is such that the self-extinction of one of the conflict sides is not to be expected. On the contrary, the West's political and value system has no majority in multipolarity.

What characterises the new Cold War?

The first and second Cold Wars differ in significant ways. Compared to the "old" East-West conflict and Cold War, the conflicts today move between different political systems in the context of multipolar contradictions, rivalries and zones of influence. In contrast to the systemically bipolar first Cold War, the new power groupings - USA, EU, NATO, China, Russia, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS - operate in a globally overarching *capitalist* social order. What geostrategic repercussions this new geopolitical pluralism will have on the stability of world capitalism remains largely unclear. That the new Western type of Cold War for universal value and system hegemony, its goals, character, structure and means will reinforce the heterogeneity of global capitalism as a whole - this is to be expected. Also from a point of view named by Jürgen Habermas, that "the conviction nurtured in the West of having been proved right in world history exerts a seductive effect."⁴ This also applies, according to Samuel P. Huntington, to the latter's "view" that "his ideology of democratic liberalism has triumphed worldwide and is therefore valid worldwide. [...] What is universalism for the West is imperialism for the rest of the world."⁵

The current West-East conflict and the second Cold War embedded in it are primarily conflicts of systemic order and hegemonic claims. Their explosive power is decisively higher because the totalisation of politics and means has been raised. It is currently condensed into a "cold war of values", which includes military means as well as "changed patterns of exerting pressure", such as sanctions of all kinds. "Economic warfare without an official declaration of war, influence on decision-makers, the imposition of economic sanctions enable decision-makers in the US and Europe to impose the same high political and economic costs on their

4 Jürgen Habermas: Zur Verfassung Europas, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2011, p. 103. (On Europes Constitution)

5 Samuel P. Huntington: Kampf der Kulturen, Siedler, 1998, S. 292.

opponents as they would with a war effort in order to influence their decision-making - without having to send soldiers into harm's way."⁶

Thus, that war of values is not a defensive one, but an offensive one. The offensive lies in the self-empowerment of "regime change", "internal pressure" in states and the installation of alliance-compliant regime. In this way, it has a subversive effect on regional constellations of states in favour of the expansion of influence, first and foremost NATO.

If one superimposes the foils of both Cold Wars, the conflictive facts of the first can also be found in the second: "ideological confrontation; arms competition; economic combat measures (embargo policy); permanent combat measures in the third place; attempts at ideological and propagandistic infiltration, i.e. strategy of ideological warfare; attempts at subversion in order to draw third governments to their side; in acute situations, so-called 'brinkmanship', i.e. a policy close to the brink of war in order to lend emphasis to one's own interests." (Senghaas⁷) Also, during the first systemic conflict, Cold War and (socialist) Soviet Union were synonyms, which are repeated in the new Cold War with Russia (although capitalist).

As the sources in the analysis show in detail, the focus of Western strategy was the regulatory equalisation of the post-Soviet space as a continental zone of influence. The Eurasian space was "reserved" for the USA as its domain. As Zbigniew Brzezinski put it in 1997: America is now the arbiter of Eurasia, and no major Eurasian problem can be solved without US involvement or against its interests.

The US directed its first steps towards NATO's eastward expansion to Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia as early as February 1990 to sound out their willingness to do so. "We thought it was important to disentangle why the United States did not think the CSCE could replace NATO as an instrument of European security," reported Robert L. Hutchings⁸, foreign policy officer in the Bush Sen. administration and a participant in those talks.

The origins of the new West-East conflict can therefore be traced back to 1990, even before the 2+4 Negotiations on German Unity and before the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty (31 March 1991). Thus, a common European security order, which Chancellor Kohl, Foreign Minister Genscher, NATO Secretary General Wörner and Egon Bahr were considering, also remained without perspective.

6 Sascha Lohmann, *Diplomaten und der Einsatz von Wirtschaftssanktionen*, in: Volker Stenzel (Hrsg.): *Die neue Wirklichkeit der Außenpolitik*, Nomos, 2019, S. 28, 26. (Diplomats and the Application of Economic Sanctios.

7 Dieter Senghaas, *„Weltordnung in einer zerklüfteten Welt*, Suhrkamp, Berlin 2012

8 Robert L. Hutchings: *Als der Kalte Krieg zu Ende war*, Alexander Fest Verlag, Berlin, 1999, S. 176. (As the Cold War Ended)

The first roots for the "deep crisis between Russia and the West" were thus already set in that American approach. Gernot Eler, Coordinator for Inter-Societal Cooperation with Russia, Central Asia and the Eastern Partnership Countries at the Federal Foreign Office, assessed in 2017: The crisis "has at first glance emanated from the Ukraine conflict, there is often talk of the violation of the European peace order, i.e. the agreed rules and principles of Helsinki and Paris. [...] The question is why no political solution is found. The crisis obviously has roots that go deeper. More and more it is becoming apparent that the conflict is not the cause but the product of a process of loss of trust and alienation that has been going on for a long time".⁹

Peaceful Coexistence and the New Cold War

The overall CSCE construction of a *modus vivendi* as a combination of *stability of state relations*, *relations at leadership levels* and the respective *military status quo* proved to be a kind of master key to peaceful coexistence.

The new Cold War is most damaging to Europe and the EU: it divides the common Eurasian space. It prevents Europe's Eurasian continental positioning from being seen as mutually beneficial. The latter is of central importance in perspective, because no one else can enjoy a continental neighborhood of three centers of the new multipolar world construction like China, Europe and Russia. A relationship of peaceful coexistence and cooperation could together make them the global economic center of gravity. "It would be the proper task of Western Europe to contribute to the civilisation of conflicts with its specific potential, and not to try to establish itself as the fourth pole in the global power constellation. This includes initiating the proposed change of course and perspective towards both Russia and China, as such a change can only take place in Europe. Nothing can be expected from the USA in this regard at present" (Spanger).

Europe should find ways with Russia and China to shape mutually beneficial economic relations as well as a modern model of economic cooperation and connectivity that addresses the new multipolar demands, both with each other and taking into account the regional, not tension-free diversity of this space. Such an approach of modern "pragmatic coexistence" (Spanger) could go beyond the area of trade to fields such as development, climate, digitalisation or migration, which individual states are not able to deal with alone.

Fundamental to this is freeing relations between European and Eurasian states from tension. This requires overcoming the current state in which the Cold War abuses state relations as a weapon. The CSCE process offers broader structural suggestions for this:

First, the CSCE process functioned *in parallel* with the first Cold War and thus provided fora to reconcile problems.

⁹ Gernot Eler: Neue Ostpolitik – Entspannen, Eindämmen, Abschrecken? DGAP-Veranstaltung, Berlin, 1. Juni 2017. <https://dgap.org/de/veranstaltungen/neue-ostpolitik-entspannen-eindaemmen-abschrecken>.

Secondly, the priority understanding of "conflict civilisation" was the prevention of war between states. This was based on a perception that it was not system differences or system competition per se that constituted a primary cause of threat, but the militarization of how these were dealt with. The following behavior between states developed from this in the course of the Helsinki process:

A) The European leaders concentrated their approach to defusing their system conflict on its actual bearers, who would also have to be the later pillars of peaceful coexistence - on the states. It was the primacy of mutual security and cooperation that motivated states to coexist peacefully, which in turn presupposed the stability of *state* relations. Both correspond to *interstate peace*, i.e. international peace.

B) They understood how to protect state relations from the actual sword of Damocles of permanent mutual security threats and to relax their (also personal) relations at the leadership levels and keep them intact.

C) During the first Cold War, East and West were able to "freeze" or adjust security policy unpredictability at a mutually agreed level. To this end, they created the necessary political and military confidence-building structures before and with Helsinki, as well as with the agreed CSCE process. These enabled a comparative mutual security policy *predictability*. This benefited above all "ceasefire" in Central Europe, on the dividing line between the pacts.

D) This ceasefire was supported by a respective military status quo. The sides agreed on preventive principles in the "Helsinki Final Act", the observance of which was to prevent political discord from turning into military discord.

E) From this, a *modus vivendi* between East and West developed based on two pillars: pillar one the military status quo, pillar two the political competition to be fought out by peaceful means.

Such an overall construction of *modus vivendi* as stability of *state* relations, working relationship at leadership levels and military status quo proved to be a kind of master key to peaceful coexistence. It consistently enabled democratic behavior of states towards and with each other and served, above all, great international and regional stability.

It is conceivable to "civilize" current regional conflict situations on such or a similar basis. In this way, the extremely tense relations in border regions, for example between EU states and the Russian Federation or among themselves, could be regulated by treaty.

Peace Policy Contours and the Will to Détente

At the beginning of this paper, reference was made to the fact that its empirical investigations open a number of productive contours. They should now be examined from the perspective of promoting *détente*. The claim is: Which conflict aspects of the West-East conflict and the new Cold War could be bridged pragmatically and in a timely manner?

The term "productive" should also be understood to include contours that, if left unconsidered, would block creative paths. This should first be applied to the Eurasian state

relationship in the OSCE area. The highest hurdle is the "cold war of values" as well as NATOS' eastward extension as far as Russian's borders, as this study makes clear. Rather, it must be taken into account that the "European canon of values" will not be on the agenda of Asian Eurasian states for unforeseeable periods of time. It is an absurd expectation for the 21st century that these states define their internal political order through external state relations.

As a first "discussion starter", the following considerations are on how the common Eurasian space of the OSCE states could begin to identify ways out of the new Cold War as well as ways to modern modes of peaceful coexistence. Peacekeeping is the overarching task.

Firstly, European/Eurasian state relations and state relations as such should be relaxed. A first essential step would be to relieve them of the hostilities surrounding the problem of values. In this way, considerable atmospheric improvements would be achievable in a timely manner. There is no objective reason for not ending the "Cold War of Values". Neither the values nor the political identity of Western societies are threatened from the East. Neither Russia, nor the states of Central Asia or the Caucasus, nor neighboring China with its specific culture, values and language have any reason to do so.

Secondly, the enforcement of human rights should focus on the preservation of the physical integrity of the human being as the most elementary prerequisite of any democratic progress. Conventions demanding and protecting the physical integrity of the human being must be enforced.

The problem of democracy and values must be dealt with in accordance with the Helsinki Final Act, which states that "all peoples have the right at any time and in full freedom to determine their internal and external political status without external interference and to pursue their political, economic, social and cultural development according to their own wishes."¹⁰

As an orientation, the following could apply: "Pragmatic handling of diversity in the international system and refraining from its official proselytizing towards democratic homogenization. Contrary to widespread claims, this in no way calls democracy into question, but reactivates its core: the self-determination of peoples."¹¹

Thirdly, development of a diplomatic approach of peaceful coexistence under plural socio-cultural and religious conditions for Eurasian state relations. The starting point could be a realistic assessment of the significance and place of the value problem in the multipolarity of the common Eurasian space. Modalities for dealing with the conflict of values should be

10 Helsinki Final Act, Chap. VIII. Equal Rights and Selfdetermination of Peoples

11 Hans-Joachim Spanger: Rethinking European Security, FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe, Wien, Oktober 2019, S. 8, <http://www.fes-vienna.org>, S. 45.

developed that enable cooperative state relations. The values issue should be removed from the military policy context, including NATO Strategy 2030.

Fourthly: Adherence to the principles of the "Helsinki Final Act" as well as the "Charter of Paris" by their signatory states. In the framework of the OSCE, its signatory states should again commit to to adhere to their principles and basic rules. The fact that the West-East conflict and the new Cold War blatantly violated these agreements and that the current crisis in international relations could have been avoided if the agreements had been adhered to speaks in favor of such a requirement. Lessons must be learned from this in the long term. The CSCE and OSCE Founding Acts should retain their validity as a normative frame of reference for Eurasian OSCE-state relations.

Fifthly, the OSCE should play a decisive role in overcoming the West-East conflict and the new Cold War. The conflict structure of the West-East conflict and the new Cold War includes hot spots of a military nature. Their preventive settlement would contribute significantly to European détente, for example through regional non-aggression agreements along the EU's eastern and Russian's borders.

The OSCE should take on a leading role in the modernization of peaceful coexistence in the Euro-Asian region. It is the most effective regional organization for this purpose, with proven state relations and mechanisms, mutual knowledge of political positions and constitutive principles and rules accepted by all member states. However, since the "Charter of Paris", this space has also experienced a remarkable pluralization of interests, values and political systems, the dynamics of which a dogmatized paradigm of values has not been able to follow less and less in the future. The OSCE still has the prerequisites to be a "laboratory" for constructing a Eurasian modern dynamic understanding of peaceful coexistence. It should start with an "offensive" of regional confidence-building measures aimed at mutual benefit.

Peaceful coexistence – what does it mean for today?

Peaceful coexistence of states is more than the absence of the use of force.

Peaceful coexistence is the existence of a political space in which conflicting social, value and political systems relate to each other and interact without calling into question the international law principle of sovereign equality of states, as long as their governmental actions comply with the Charter of the United Nations and/or its normative acts.

Peaceful coexistence is a space in which the subjects of international law do not make transformation of social character of the other a condition for the "development of better and closer relations among themselves in all fields, and thus to overcome the confrontation arising from the character of their former relations, as well as to better mutual understanding."¹²

This principle of the Helsinki Final Act of the CSCE for "Mutual Conduct between the States of Europe and the United States of America", as well as its principles and commitments

12 This refers to the East-West conflict and its Cold War after the end of the Second World War until the collapse of the socialist system and the Warsaw Pact.

as a whole, were already creations of real-political, pragmatic ability of state leaders of the two antagonistic camps as well as of non-aligned states to compromise on how to deal with their socio-political and value-oriented contradictions according to common rules of peaceful coexistence. Their overriding goal, which pacified them, was to "guarantee security in Europe".

The goal, spirit, message and procedure of the Final Act offer indispensable peace policy instruments for achieving "pragmatic coexistence", especially for multipolar constellations of forces.

The German architect of East West détente, Egon Bahr, pointed out: "When there is tension, Europe's influence shrinks; when there is confrontation, its weight diminishes; when open violence breaks out, it largely disappears. War is the enemy of Europe."

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