
A New Geostrategy for Europe

by Flora Lewis

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This time, there was no planning for the turning point. During World War II, everybody knew the war would end some day, and from the time the US went to war, they knew the allies were going to win. How, when, in what way were the issues of wartime strategy. But it was clear that a post-war strategy would have to follow. So it made sense to start thinking of what next even as the great military offensives were being launched. It was clear that new decisions would have to be made on how to reorganize the international system to get it working again, above all how to avoid repeating the mistakes of the post-World War I arrangements which had broken down into a second war in just one generation. That was the major concern of those who built the institutions and relations to take hold after the war, those who in Dean Acheson's words were "Present at the Creation."

But in the Cold War, the succession of leaders and strategists and analysts just settled down to live with the confrontation as though it would never end. They paid attention to arms control, to containment, to preventing a degradation from Cold

War into World War III and to maintaining defenses of all kinds—political, economic, intellectual, as well as military. They didn't even speculate on a post-Cold War world, and when it arrived many scarcely believed it and found it difficult to adjust.

Nonetheless, the post-war is as dramatic a change of era as the one half a century ago, and requires as far-reaching a transformation of geostrategy. Even the need has yet to be acknowledged, let alone the conceptual and detailed planning required to define grand policy, adapt institutions, and explain to a bewildered public in search of relief from foreign-bred headaches that the end of a war, now as in 1945, is not the end of history and its problems. It has been said that the lack of an enemy makes it hard to focus attention and energies. This is partly true, and partly pretext. The enemy now is disorder, the will to change through violence, the other totalitarianisms of militant nationalism and fundamentalism. It is more abstract and diffuse and therefore more difficult to mobilize opposition against than the threat that "the Russians are coming." But it is at least as great a menace to the steady goals of peace, stability, civility, and human welfare.

The French poet Paul Claudel pointed out that two evils endlessly threaten mankind—order and disorder. Change is necessary and inevitable, so too much order become oppressive and dangerous when it blocks reasonable change. But disorder brings violence, and societies cannot long live in full uncertainty. The requirement is to minimize conflict and create mechanisms for needed change without great upheaval. Democracy provides these mechanisms in national politics and the market provides them in economic affairs. The international system also needs such a kind of flexible but regulating mechanism.

In the post-World War II period, various institutions were developed to meet these concerns—first, with a priority of correcting post-World War I failings, hence the structure of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods organizations, the World

Bank, the International Monetary Funds, and the GATT; then, with a priority of confronting the perceived Soviet menace, NATO, the Marshall Plan and its derivatives which became the OECD, and for a complex of reasons what became the European Community. The Helsinki accords were devised as a substitute for what seemed an impossible German peace treaty, adding human rights provisions to compensate the West for its acceptance of the Soviet demand for endorsement of the status quo in Europe.

There was no over-arching organization to hold all of this together. The various institutions developed separately, evolving their own habits, specific interests, and geographical definitions. The coherence of policy was achieved in the minds of strong leaders, who linked their decisions in the fields of military security, economics, politics, and ideology to their own vision and sense of priorities.

The institutions remain, but the underlying rationale has been so profoundly changed that they no longer serve the basic purpose of flexible regulation of the international system. The leaders are neither strong nor clearly purposeful beyond their own separate political constituencies. They talk more than they used to about their "national interest," and seem to have less of an idea of just what they mean by it and how best to serve it.

Something more is needed to organize their thoughts on the various, sometimes contradictory aspects of national interest and to enable them to work out the compromises for a common approach. This is what I mean by a new geostrategy. The ABC's are simple and clear—peace, promotion of stability and predictability in their relations with each other, mutual economic benefit, elementary values. The trouble is in moving on toward the goals. The first step is in acknowledging that it will not happen automatically, a "new world order" will not just grow, like Topsy, because room has been cleared by removal of the bad old order of the Cold War. Weeds grow where there is no deliberate cultivation.

The analysts have noted, correctly, that at this stage the threats to peace come more from within states than between them. This is a new, extremely difficult dimension of the task of maintaining reasonable order because there is almost unanimous agreement that the existing powers cannot and should not impose their own visions of a properly managed society on states undergoing unsteady internal transformation. They have neither the capacity nor the authority to police every block, nor are they willing or able to buy compliance with the kind of stability they seek through irresistibly vast outlays of money.

Yet they must find ways to encourage the desirable developments and discourage the obviously pernicious ones. And it must be done in sufficient concert that there is not room for the opportunistic and the trouble-makers to play the powers off against each other for narrow local advantage. The Russian ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovski, a ranter but a shrewd political manipulator, he does not hesitate to proclaim his vision of how to bring order. He talks of a "great Russia" and a "great Germany" to "neutralize" Europe, in conjunction with India to "neutralize" China. This is too chilling a reminder of the Axis power triangle to be laughed off. He seems to assume that the US will go home and stay there, another familiar concept from the past. That is a wild, but not impossible, direction for events to take, and it has to be headed off by conscious planning.

Russia clearly wishes and intends to continue playing an important role in the world, and this must be accepted, though not at the price of depriving its neighbors of their right to their own recognized and secure places. Moscow's argument against allowing Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary special ties with NATO (though not early full membership, because neither these countries nor NATO are prepared for that and need time to work it out but there should be a clear statement of NATO's intention) reminds me of Moscow's arguments during negotiations which led to reunification of Germany.

NATO was a sticking point. First Moscow said: dissolve

both alliances. Then it said: everybody in NATO. The West held firm. Then Moscow said: well, all right, a united Germany and NATO guarantees but no integration, like France. Asked if Moscow really would prefer an independent German army outside of NATO's, Russian officials gasped. They had not thought it through. I suspect they have not thought through the present problems of Eastern European security either.

They are groping, as the West is groping. But it is the West which has the duty, the responsibility, and the opportunity to make the new proposals for how to fit Russia in without squeezing its former forced dependents out. We cannot wait for Moscow to emerge from its state of bewildered turbulence, and good proposals can help guide it in the right direction.

Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl has come up with an idea that could well be part of a useful package for the new mechanisms. It is to separate the purely economic, trade and finance consultative functions of the Group of Seven industrial states (G-7), where there is a degree of leveling symmetry conducive to joint decision, from its political, indeed, world directorate functions, include Russia as a full-fledged member of this second part in a new G-8, and make it a significant policy forum.

Much ridicule has been aimed at the ostentatious, photocop G-7 summits, but their preparation performs a vital service which can and should be enhanced. First, the fact that a summit is to held forces the conflicting policy advocates inside the government to develop a national position which can be advanced at the sherpa meetings. Second, the sherpa meetings, held regularly over a six month period, enable the governments to hear and debate each other's prime concerns with a strong

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incentive to move far enough toward consensus for their patrons to identify agreement and proclaim success. This is the real value of the operation. If it could be maintained with the same momentum that the summit deadline imposes, it wouldn't matter in the least if the leaders never gathered for their annual family portrait. But it is the top-level date that shoves the bureaucracies toward reluctant decision.

Regular, institutional inclusion would assure Russia of the hearing and status it craves and deserves. In return, it must be willing to accept a NATO plan to admit at least some East European states at an appropriate time. The East Europeans want this pledge badly for two reasons. They are worried about national security, both in terms of Russia's future intentions and in some cases of each other's. And they believe that membership, even the promise of membership, will strengthen internal democratic forces against the challenge of extremists who do not subscribe to NATO values. Adam Daniel Rotfeld, the brilliant Polish director of the Stockholm-based peace institute SIPRI, points out that NATO's rejecting the East Europeans on the grounds of not wanting to draw any new dividing line in Europe simply buttresses the old East-West dividing line.

Meanwhile, the Bonn Foreign Ministry has another, supplementary suggestion which could ease the interim and reinforce foundations for long-term European security. This would be a network of bi-lateral "good neighbor" treaties among the eastern countries, including Russia, modeled on Germany's treaties with Poland and the Czechs. There would be resistance if this appeared to be a regional substitute for the eventual expansion of NATO, however, so "eventual" would have to be made fully credible.

I am convinced that a similar network in the Balkan region with mutual treaty guarantees of borders and minority rights, endorsed by the U.S., Europe, and Russia, is the only way to bring an enduring end to the current and brewing wars in that area. All of those states, old and new, have security fears, and all aspire to "de-Balkanize" in the sense of ending

the chronic backwardness and isolation. They are not able to find the way by themselves, as Western Europe found the way to European Union, and will have to be chivvied and driven to sorting out their relations with carrots and sticks in a framework to be established by the big three.

These are some elements for developing the new geostrategy. The point is to get on with it. Leaving events to take their course means leaving Europe to entropy, a great danger for itself and for the world. ●