



Facing the Dangers of 21st Century Great Power War

The Risk of Great Power War: Regional European Perspective

How to Prevent a Possible Second Cold War?

Introduction

In February 2013, I visited Old and New Delhi, India. I went to see several important places such as the Red Fort (Lal Qila) and the Raj Ghat - which is the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi (Gandhi was cremated at Raj Ghat on 31 January 1948). I also visited the India Gate¹ which commemorates the more than 70.000 Indian soldiers who lost their lives fighting for the British Army during the First World War. I was impressed seeing all the names of Indian soldiers who gave their lives during WWI. I immediately made the comparison with the Menen Gate² in Ypres, Flanders where 54.389 names of persons from the United Kingdom and Commonwealth Countries are written on the walls.³ More names, and unknown soldiers, are mentioned on the thousands and thousands of graves in the different cemeteries in Flanders Fields.

Chemical weapons have been first used in Steenstraete, nearby Yper. That is why that weapon got the name "Yperite."

The main reaction after WWI was: No more war ever again! Several initiatives were launched right after WWI working for stronger international solidarity and disarmament. What does this mean for the European Union and the European continent at large? What lessons can be learned by the international community?

"There are acts to commemorate the centenary of some Great War, millions dead. And everyone is scandalized! But today it is the same! Instead of a great war, there are little wars everywhere, divided people. And to preserve one's interest they kill, they kill each other." Pope Francis I, 25 February 2014.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India_Gate

² http://www.ww1cemeteries.com/othercemeteries/menin_gate_memorial.htm

³ <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/ypres-salient/memorial-menin-gate.htm>

⁴ http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-war-destroys?utm_campaign=dailyhtml&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dispatch

A couple of weeks ago some diplomats were talking about a possible Second Cold War because of the crisis in Ukraine, the Crimea and the Eastern part of the country in particular. The spiral of reactions from Kiev, Brussels (NATO and European Union), Moscow and Washington DC let us to believe that a new Cold War was in the making. There has been no shortage of ideas for how the West should respond to Russia's takeover of Crimea: from imposing wide-ranging sanctions on Russian political leaders and oligarchs to inviting Georgia to join NATO - to additional sanctions against key sectors of the Russian economy. The Russian Federation is left out of the G8 and became more and more isolated.

Is the West further going to confront Russia? Is Russia going to challenge the borders of NATO? And how should Europe respond? Europeans conveniently delegated questions of hard power and strategy to the USA. It is clear that NATO somehow came back in the game.

Tensions in the past kept in a sense of balance

Next to provocations between East and West, such as the Cuba missile crisis in 1962 and an ever increasing armament during the Cold War, compromise and de-escalation have been part of the strategy of the main actors during that period of time as well. The USA and the Soviet Union avoided deliberately provocative steps and were careful not to trespass on each other's important interests. For instance, the USA did not intervene in 1956, when Soviet tanks crushed the Hungarian Revolution. Most of the attention went to the Suez Crisis with Egypt at that time. In 1968, when the Soviet Union suppressed the Prague Spring, no direct action was taken against it. Even when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the USA avoided direct involvement. The USA invaded Grenada in 1983, called Operation Urgent Fury. That invasion was criticised by the international community, but nothing happened. Again, in 2003 when USA and UK invaded Iraq, the international community reacted strongly in wording and with mass demonstrations, but it happened.

The so called Cold War came to an end by the end of 1989, but the USA and NATO and later the Russian Federation kept their strategic interests.

Maidan was not a "revolution" - anti-Maidan not a "counter-revolution"

The Maidan movement has never had majority support in eastern and southern regions in Ukraine. After it succeeded in toppling the government, many people were scared and outraged with the exaggerated pictures they saw on television of violent clashes in Kiev, armed paramilitary groups including many far right elements controlling the streets, attacks on Lenin's monuments and the far right Svoboda party included into the new government. Many people in the east call it the "Kiev junta" and disapprove of its actions. Maidan was called a "revolution of dignity" but people in eastern Ukraine are also proudly talking about their dignity, regional identity, historical memory, Soviet heroes and language.

Russian Approach on Ukrainian Crisis

A substantial part of the Russian-speaking population distrusts today the new government. As a consequence, Russia will not return Crimea to Kiev's control in response to threatened sanctions. Russian presence in Crimea is welcomed by a majority of the population, even when there are several minority groups living there. Russian troops control the situation and have encountered little organized opposition. The Russian leaders have been supported by the majority of their citizens. The referendum on 16 March 2014 was a major step of having Crimea reincorporated in Russia. Pressure from the West and diplomacy at all levels to stop Russia did not work. So the geopolitical context has changed decisively. Russia's response in taking over the Crimea was deliberately provocative. But Russia confronts the determination not only of the USA, but also of the EU, which has so far acted cautiously. The annexation of Crimea is now seen as a fait accompli. EU diplomats are talking about the Crimea as "occupied territory" comparable to the Palestinian territories. That means no trade with companies in the Crimea, no EU flights, no EU ships. In reaction to that, Russian companies have been asked by the Kremlin to send their employees for holidays to Crimea. A major drop in the number of tourists (6 million in 2012) is expected for the current year in Crimea.

Meanwhile, South-eastern Ukraine is still facing the threat of Russian military intervention. Members of the general public remain fearful for their future. There are reports of citizens buying guns and weapons being distributed from military armouries to the public and paramilitary groups. A new national guard and local self-defence units are being organised. Russia's annexation of Crimea has raised the spectre of separatism in other parts of Ukraine and former President Viktor Yanukovich is promoting more self-rule by calling for similar referenda in the other Ukrainian parts of the country. Calls for national unity are still promoted because many believe that "The Fatherland is in danger!" But a possible civil war is becoming more a reality and it is doubtful that in such a situation free elections can be organised on 25 May 2014. It would be better for both the West as well as Russia to support progressive wings of both Maidan and anti-Maidan and try to unite them against the Ukrainian ruling class and against all nationalisms and imperialisms on shared demands for social justice.

Presidents Obama and Putin stayed in touch on this crisis via the phone (the Red Line?), as well as regular talks of the two Foreign Ministers John Kerry and Sergey Lavrov. NATO has ended its political and military cooperation with the Russian Federation. The UN Security Council and the United Nations as such has no or very little say over the Ukrainian crisis. The non-functioning of the Security Council is becoming again very visible. An agreement was reached in Geneva on 17 April 2014 by the USA, Russia, the EU and the Ukrainian leadership. But the implementation of it is behind.

Did NATO come back in the game?

NATO has developed relations with Ukraine since 1995. In 2008, Ukraine became a partner with NATO Membership Action Plan. End of March 2014, NATO decided to intensify their military cooperation with Ukraine including helping the Ukrainians to modernise their armed forces. Although joining NATO has never been popular in Ukraine. A deal with Russia might be that Ukraine becomes a neutral country (no membership of NATO). In turn, Russia should respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, NATO lost its threat from the East. The body became less visible and public scepticism was growing. A strong fragment of public opinion said that NATO no longer had a reason to exist. NATO lost its narrative and lacked a clear vision for the future. NATO had to look for other challenges outside of the East-West context.

Since 1989, one crisis after another has started, most unexpectedly. We learned to live with an asymmetric world perspective and multiple centres of power or influence. Threat perception became diverse. The threat landscape changes rapidly. It is unclear what threats NATO protects member states against.

NATO started with “out of area” operations (for instance in Afghanistan NATO-led ISAF operation) and felt challenged by all different types of terrorist threats worldwide, especially in the MENA region.⁵ Cyber-security is becoming a major challenge and there is also concern about debris in the Earth’s orbit and the militarisation of space, so space is a growing priority as well. The other forthcoming challenges for European security are failed states, piracy, tensions in the region, scarce resources and proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Due to the Ukrainian crisis, NATO came back in the game.

Russian Foreign Influence

Russia is no longer a global competitor to the USA and there is no strong ideological component that unifies and divides the international community with regard to Russia. Rather, what we see is a nationalistic and revisionist Russia that is challenging core principles of the international community. Its behaviour in the Ukraine crisis makes Russia look like an imperial power again. It seems that Russia is becoming a revisionist power that does not accept the status quo of 1991.

In fact, under Putin, attempts to shore up Russian influence in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East, are motivated by nostalgia for Soviet influence, a desire to demonstrate strategic national interests. For example, Moscow hopes to hold on to the vestiges of the former Soviet base in the Syrian port of Tarsus which is the sole remaining Russian military base in the Middle East region.

Common Security and Defence Policies of the EU

⁵ MENA is Middle East and North Africa.

About ten years ago the EU created the crisis management foundations, the institutional structures and the human capacity. The original idea behind the Common Security and Defence Policies of the EU was crisis management, mostly understood as a short-term intervention in “crisis mode”. Civilian CSDP missions are an instrument of the EU for helping post-conflict societies to reconstruct or reform their security sector as an essential precondition for further development, and also to prevent the renewal of conflict. They draw on the experience of policing, the penal chain, monitoring cease-fires and guaranteeing the rule of law. However, after a few years of evolution of the instrument, mandates are mostly about security sector reform as an element of state building.

The EU has deployed close to 30 missions and operations in three continents. Almost all of these missions contribute to the strengthening of states or to the spread of rule of law. Early political intervention and prevention is always much more cost-effective. Over the last few years the CSDP has focussed largely on Africa. Today, CSDP covers both military and civilian dimensions. The CSDP of the EU should not further develop its military option, including its combat dimension. Possible military interventions in Africa should be under the authority of the African Union and the United Nations only.

Some experts promote a stronger synergy between EU and NATO. For sure, duplications should be prevented. A recent European Parliament study estimates that the total cost of duplication in European defence is at least 26 billion Euros per year. The EU should stay away from any military or defence operation. The main focus of the CSDP of the EU is on an active civilian and peace building approach of conflicts, including crisis management.

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

Through its ENP, the EU aims to support the structural transformation of its Eastern and Southern neighbours, promoting democracy, the rule of law, and successful market economies. Ten years after the ENP’s launch, it is clear that the policy is not working. Today, the ENP includes 16 countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe that share little except a certain geographic proximity to the EU. The ENP’s methodology is very ambiguous. It creates the impression that the EU will further enlarge itself, but accession is not promised. The ENP is Eurocentric in conception and often ignores the roles outside actors play in the EU’s neighbourhood. For instance, the Council of Europe has membership of most of those countries on the European continent and focusses on democracy, human rights and the role of international law. Another example is the OSCE. For instance, the Permanent Council of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) decided on 21 March 2014 to deploy an OSCE Special Monitoring Mission of international observers to Ukraine for about 6 months or longer. Its aim is to reducing tensions and fostering peace, stability and security. They can go to 500

monitors. They will monitor the human rights situation in the country, including the rights of national minorities; and facilitate dialogue on the ground.

The EU's neighbourhood is very fragmented. To the south, for instance, the high hopes that the Arab uprisings that began in 2011 would usher in a democratic transformation of the Middle East and North Africa have been disappointed as - with the exception of Tunisia - authoritarian tendencies are regaining ground. The countries that experienced revolutions remain in turmoil, and the Syrian civil war threatens to destabilize neighbouring Lebanon and Jordan. To the east, assertive Russia power politics have challenged the EU's influence. Some ENP partners have drifted further away from the EU, rather than moving closer toward it. The other weakness is that most of the EU member states focus their foreign policies on national interests. My deep concern is that the EU wants to further spread and deepen its neo-liberal economic ideology. The free market system comes first. The social dimension of the EU is mainly seen as secondary and remains underdeveloped.

Conclusions: Some Major Challenges

1. In a multipolar world, where geopolitical influence is undergoing rapid configuration, the call (ever since 1990) for the reform of the UN Security Council is one that must be addressed with a sense of urgency if we do not want to risk the erosion of the system which - in spite of its failings - has limited the damage of conflict and ensured a measure of international cooperation for peace. The Security Council must be operational at all times! The actual situation in Syria and Ukraine makes this urgent more than ever.
2. All EU policy should contribute toward increasing human well-being. A policy of defence industry growth is inconsistent with the notion of the EU as a peace project. The EU should focus on the root causes of conflict and on civilian peace-building. Peace building capabilities includes transitional justice, police reform and mediation programmes.
3. Historically, it is the militaries of the most advanced countries that have wrought destruction on the widest scale. Today, threats to global peace and security continue to derive from the proliferation and possession of weapons of mass destruction - in particular nuclear weapons - and the notion that the most powerful may selectively place themselves above international law.
4. For years, the concept of European defence meant supporting military operations abroad. Now, given the influence of Russia in the former Soviet Republics, territorial security is back on the agenda. Since the end of the Cold War, the security landscape in Europe has become more fragmented, complex and deregulated. This would in principle require more regulation by means of arms control. That means that we need to focus again on the importance of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty which

broke down. NATO and Russia failed to agree on how to adapt the Treaty to reflect the new era.

5. The Cold War marked the end of the risk of large-scale conflict but not the “end of history.” Arms control can serve as an insurance policy against the re-emergence of military threats or against new threats. As such, it is an instrument of “proactive conflict prevention.” In view of rising tensions between East and West over the past few years, arms control can fulfil a key confidence building role, providing mutual reassurance.

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