

# THE CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

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Prof.Dr. Hasan CANPOLAT



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The occupation of the European continent by the USA and the USSR after the Second World War had very important consequences that have survived to this day. The security architecture established after the war was shaped not on the internal balances and needs of Europe, but on the security priorities of the USA and the USSR, which controlled the continent. More importantly, the political fragmentation of Europe has caused Russia to be excluded from European integration and security architecture (Gheciu, 2005; Duchêne, 1994).

The chance to integrate Russia, which replaced the USSR, which disintegrated after the end of the Cold War, into Europe and to integrate Europe's political and security architecture was missed as a result of the hegemonic policies of the USA (Brands, 2018). In January 1992, about a month after the official dissolution of the Soviet Union, U.S. President George H. W. Bush stirred up this enthusiasm in his State of the Union address: "By the grace of God, America won the Cold War." These words reflect the approach of not only the United States, but also the Western world in general towards the Cold War and the USSR (Krauthammer, 1990).

Shortly after the collapse of the USSR, NATO began to expand into the countries that formed a buffer zone around Russia during the Soviet era with this sense of victory (Gheciu, 2005). However, if the United States had created a viable security architecture for Europe in the 1990s, there might not be a war in Ukraine today. In this sense, the current crisis between Russia and Ukraine is associated with the future of the European order built after the collapse of the Soviet Union. (Kundnani & Wittner, 2022).

This article argues that the main reason for the current security crises in Europe is the failure to update the security architecture established after World War II, which has now lost its function. The article also offers alternative strategic proposals for the future of European security architecture.

#### Evolution of the European Security Architecture

After World War II, two priorities, economic and military, emerged in the US-occupied part of the European continent. The security dimension included containing the remilitarization of Germany, preventing potential future conflicts — especially on the Franco-German axis — and defending Western Europe against the threat of the Soviet Union. The economic dimension, on the other hand, aimed at the reconstruction of the countries destroyed by the war (Kaplan, 1999). In this context, an unprecedented integration movement

was initiated in Western Europe under the leadership of the United States (Duchêne, 1994).

Economic integration was shaped by structures such as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC), while military integration was largely determined by the security priorities of the United States, depending on the US-USSR bloc (Gheciu, 2005). Political integration, which was initially less prominent, turned into a contested process between "expansionist" and "deepening" tendencies due to

differences of opinion on how to define European identity (Kriesi & Pappas, 2015).

The first step towards military integration was taken in 1948 with the Brussels Treaty signed between the United Kingdom, France and the Benelux countries. However, this structure soon proved insufficient, and the transformative step came with the creation of NATO in 1949. During the Cold War, the security policies of European countries were largely shaped under the collective defense umbrella of NATO, led by the United States (Kaplan, 1999; Gheciu, 2005).

Europe's efforts to create its own defensive identity have come up from time to time, but have failed. The most obvious example is the European Defense Community (EDC) project, which aims at the rearmament of Germany under control. The initiative failed when France did not give parliamentary approval to this project in 1954 (Peterson & Sijssen, 1998). Moves such as France's withdrawal from NATO's integrated military command in 1966 indicated a quest for national sovereignty, but such steps did not fundamentally transform Europe's security architecture.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the end of the Cold War paved the way for fundamental changes in European security. During this period, the EU became a targeted center for political integration by post-communist countries (Follesdal & Hix, 2006). Under the influence of the expansionists, the EU grew from 15 to 25 members in May 2004.

In 2009, the "Eastern Partnership" was launched to ensure the political unity and economic ties of the post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine. Thus, the EU has indirectly intervened in the exacerbation of

a new problem. When Ukrainian President Yanukovich announced that he would not sign the Association Agreement at the end of a four-year negotiation process, the "Euromaidan", the second Ukrainian Revolution, broke out in February 2014.

The crises that emerged in Europe after the Cold War, especially the bloody conflicts in the Balkans that erupted with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, have been a bitter lesson of how inadequate Europe's capacity to effectively respond to crises in its own backyard is (Dunn & Posen, 2021).

This clearly showed that the EU needs a more integrated structure in the field of foreign policy and security. As a matter of fact, with the Maastricht Treaty signed in 1992, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was formalized, and the vision of the EU to become a common actor in the field of foreign policy and security, rather than just an economic bloc, was put forward (Tardy, 2020; Missiroli, 2011).

The Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in 2009, introduced new and more concrete mechanisms that allow for deeper defence cooperation between member states on a voluntary basis. However, despite these comprehensive mechanisms, the CSDP's effectiveness faced challenges such as lack of political will, dual structuring (areas overlapping with NATO), and differences of interests among member states, and the quest for Strategic Autonomy in European Security did not reach the desired level (Franke & Varwick, 2022).

However, the geopolitical shocks that emerged in the process that started with the invasion of Ukraine have brought European countries to a much more

serious stage than previous crises, with the necessity of Europe to redefine itself.

### Geopolitical Shocks and the Paradigm Shift in European Security

The period we are in is witnessing one of the most comprehensive stages of change and transformation in human history. Waves of technological, economic, social, political, geopolitical, demographic, and environmental transformation have created a global “perfect storm” environment by acting at the same time (Franke, 2020; Barysch, 2023).

The clearest reflection of this transformation in Europe was felt with Russia’s annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula in 2014. The proxy war that started in the Donbas region after this annexation meant the de facto disintegration of the European security architecture, which has been fragile since 1991 (Kundnani & Wittner, 2022). Russia wants to reposition itself in the newly formed balance of power and establish a security order in which it is involved, and the US’s tendencies to withdraw from Europe are considered as an important strategic opportunity for Moscow for this goal.

On the other hand, China believes that the increasing instability in the Western world in recent years and the internal vulnerabilities of the United States offer a geopolitical window of time for it (Brands, 2018). However, China is aware that it is no longer just a “rising power”. Slowing economic growth, lack of resources, changing demographics, increasing energy dependency and strategic siege imposed by the West lead China to diplomacy by avoiding direct conflict. For this reason, China considers it more advantageous to sit

at the table with the United States to strengthen its role in the global system.

The United States, on the other hand, has been at a serious disadvantage in the last decade due to its inability to adapt sufficiently to the changes in military technology. Although the U.S. Army was the first power in history to be able to deploy globally simultaneously with land, sea, and air elements, this superiority was shaken by the rapid adaptation of technological capacity by China and Russia (Kaplan, 1999; Brands, 2018). Under the current conditions, the United States is at risk of losing a large number of its advanced military platforms in possible conflicts.

In addition, the competition and technological competition with China prompt the US to lighten its global burden and focus on its domestic political problems. The new administration seeks to reduce its global military engagements in order to focus on domestic priorities in both the economic and social spheres (Dunn & Posen, 2021). In this direction, the strategy of renegotiating the global balance of power with Russia and China comes to the fore.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The shifting global balance of power and the possibility of US withdrawal from Europe create an important window of opportunity for Europe to rebuild its own identity and to spread the core values of European integration throughout the continent (Follesdal & Hix, 2006; Hobolt, 2016).

In order to achieve this goal, all actors, especially the USA and Russia, have critical roles. These two great powers, which invaded and divided Europe after the

Second World War, can now lead the unification of Europe and contribute to the establishment of a European security architecture based on a new security paradigm.

One axis of this new security paradigm should be based on the withdrawal of the US military presence from Europe, and the other axis should be based on the reintegration of Russia into Europe. As the first step in this process, the United States should adopt a realistic and targeted plan for the gradual withdrawal of its military power from Europe. In this context, the transfer of NATO's highest command center, Supreme Allied Command Europe, to a European general will symbolically and strategically support this transition. The gradual reduction of the US military presence in Europe will be an important step both in terms of easing the global burden of the US and ensuring stability by assuming Europe's defense responsibility.

In parallel with this process, Russia's declaration of a ceasefire with Ukraine and the withdrawal of its troops, followed by the conclusion of a permanent peace agreement, will pave the way for Russia's inclusion in the political, economic and military integration of Europe. The end of the division between Russia and Western Europe after the Second World War and the integration of Russia into Europe will make it possible for Europe to become a region of peace, prosperity and security again. If this strategy is successfully implemented, it will be a historic achievement not only for the future of Europe but also for the future of peace and security at the global level.

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Merdivenköy Mah. Nur Sok. Business İstanbul  
A Blok Kat:12 No:115, Kadıköy/İstanbul

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Prof. Dr. Hasan CANPOLAT** graduated from Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences. He completed his master's degree at Istanbul University Faculty of Political Sciences and his PhD at Ankara University Faculty of Political Sciences. In 2012, he received the title of Associate Professor in the field of Public Administration and Political Science. He is currently working as a faculty member at Gedik University.

He served as Çatalzeytin, Mesudiye, Sivrice District Governorships, Branch Directorate at the Ministry of Interior General Directorate of Local Administrations, Chief Inspector of Civil Administration, Head of Strategy Center at the Ministry of Interior, Sivas and Denizli Governorships. Between 2008 and 2012, he served as Deputy Undersecretary and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, and between 2012 and 2015, he served as a member and Chairman of the Board of Directors of ASELSAN. He retired in 2017.