

The predictable collapse of pan-European security

Combination of ignorance and dishonesty of the Western political media elites

by Professor Glenn Diesen,* Norway



Glenn Diesen.
(Picture ma)

The international system during the Cold War was organised under extremely zero-sum conditions. There were two centres of power with two incompatible ideologies that relied on continued tensions between two rival military alliances to

preserve bloc discipline and security dependence among allies. Without other centres of power or an ideological middle ground, the loss for one was a gain for the other. Yet, faced with the possibility of nuclear war, there were also incentives to reduce the rivalry and overcome the zero-sum bloc politics.

The foundation for a pan-European security architecture to mitigate security competition was born with the *Helsinki Accords* in 1975, which established common rules of the game for the capitalist West and the communist East in Europe. The subsequent development of trust inspired Gorbachev's "new thinking" and his Gaullist vision of a Common European Home to unify the continent.

In his famous speech at the UN in December 1988, Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union would cut its military forces by 500,000 soldiers, and 50,000 Soviet soldiers would be removed from the territory of Warsaw Pact allies. In November 1989, Moscow allowed the fall of



*Final session of the 1975 Helsinki Security Conference. Helmut Schmidt, Erich Honecker, Gerald Ford and Bruno Kreisky sign the CSCE Final Act. Leonid Brezhnev as signatory for the Soviet Union is not visible.
(Picture: Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-P0801-026/Wikipedia)*

the Berlin Wall without intervening. In December 1989, Gorbachev and Bush met in Malta and declared an end to the Cold War.

In November 1990, the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe* was signed, an agreement based on the *principles of the Helsinki Accords*. The charter laid the foundation for a new inclusive pan-European security that recognised the principle of "the ending of the division of Europe" and pursuit of *indivisible security* (security for all or security for none):

"With the ending of the division of Europe, we will strive for a new quality in our security relations while fully respecting each other's freedom of choice in that respect. Security is indivisible and the security of every participating State is inseparably linked to that of all the others."

An inclusive pan-European security institution based on the Helsinki Accords (1975) and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990) was eventually established in 1994 with the foundation of the *Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe* (OSCE). The OSCE Bucharest Document of December 1994 reaffirmed:

"They remain convinced that security is indivisible and that the security of each of them is inseparably linked to the security of all others. They will not

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strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other States.”

NATO Expansion Cancels Pan-European Security

Yet, security in Europe came in direct conflict with America’s ambitions for global hegemony. As *Charles de Gaulle* had famously noted, NATO was an instrument for US primacy from across the Atlantic. Preserving and expanding NATO would serve that purpose as the US could perpetuate Russia’s weakness and reviving tensions would ensure that Europe’s security dependence could be converted into economic and political obedience.

Why manage security competition when there is one dominant side? The decision to expand NATO cancelled the pan-European security agreements as the continent was redivided, and indivisible security was abandoned by expanding NATO’s security at the expense of Russia’s security.

US Secretary of Defence *William Perry* considered resigning from his position in opposition to NATO expansion. Perry also argued that his colleagues in the Clinton administration recognised NATO expansion would cancel the post-Cold War peace with Russia, yet the prevailing sentiment was that it did not matter as Russia was now weak. However, *George Kennan*, the architect of the US containment policy against the Soviet Union, warned in 1997:

“Why, with all the hopeful possibilities engendered by the end of the cold war, should East-West relations become centred on the question of who would be allied with whom and, by implication, against whom.”¹

NATO was continuously described as the “insurance guarantee” that would deal with Russia if NATO expansion would create conflicts with Russia. Secretary of State *Madeleine Albright* explained in April 1997:

“On the off-chance that in fact Russia doesn’t work out the way that we are hoping it will, [...] NATO is there.”²

In 1997, then-Senator *Joe Biden* predicted that NATO membership for the Baltic States would cause a “vigorous and hostile” response from Russia. However, Biden argued that Russia’s alienation did not matter as they did not have any alternative partners. Biden mocked Moscow’s warnings that Russia would be compelled to look towards China in response to NATO expansion and joked that if the partnership with China

failed to deliver, then Russia could alternatively form a partnership with Iran.³

Russia Continued to Push for a Greater Europe

When it became evident that NATO expansionism would make the inclusive OSCE irrelevant, President Yeltsin and later President *Putin* attempted to explore the opportunity for Russia to join NATO. They were both met with a cold shoulder in the West. Putin also attempted to establish Russia as America’s reliable partner in the Global War on Terror, but in return, the US pushed another round of NATO expansion and “colour revolutions” along Russia’s borders.

In 2008, Moscow proposed constructing a new pan-European security architecture. It was opposed by Western states as it would weaken the primacy of NATO.⁴ In 2010, Moscow proposed an EU-Russia Free Trade Zone to facilitate a Greater Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok, which would provide mutual economic benefits and mitigate the zero-sum format of the European security architecture. However, all proposals for a *Helsinki-II agreement* were ignored or criticised as a sinister ploy to divide the West.

Ukraine was “the brightest of all redlines” for Russia and would likely trigger a war, according to the current CIA Director *William Burns*.⁵ Nonetheless, in February 2014, NATO-backed a coup in Kiev to pull Ukraine into NATO’s orbit. As predicted by Burns, a war began over Ukraine. The Minsk agreement could have resolved the conflict between NATO and Russia, although the NATO countries later admitted that the agreement was merely intended to buy time to arm Ukraine.

The Collapse of Pan-European Security

Gorbachev concluded that NATO expansionism betrayed the Helsinki Accords, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, and the OSCE as agreements for pan-European security:

NATO’s eastward expansion has destroyed the European security architecture as it was defined in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. The eastern expansion was a 180-degree reversal, a departure from the decision of the Paris Charter in 1990 taken together by all the European states to put the Cold War behind us for good. Russian proposals, like the one by former President *Dmitri Medvedev* that we should sit down together to work on a new security architecture,



The definitive end of the Cold War: Heads of State of the participating member states of the then CSCE at the Paris Summit, Palais de l'Elysée, 19 November 1990. (Picture: David Valdez, White House Photograph Office/Wikipedia)

were arrogantly ignored by the West. We are now seeing the results.⁶

Putin agreed with Gorbachev's analysis:

"We have done everything wrong. [...] From the beginning, we failed to overcome Europe's division. Twenty-five years ago, the Berlin Wall fell, but invisible walls were moved to the East of Europe. This has led to mutual misunderstandings and assignments of guilt. They are the cause of all crises ever since."⁷

George Kennan predicted in 1998 that when conflicts eventually start as a result of NATO expansionism, then NATO would be celebrated for defending against an aggressive Russia:

"I think it is the beginning of a new cold war. [...] There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anybody else. This expansion would make the Founding Fathers of this country turn over in their graves. [...] Of course there is going to be a bad reaction from Russia, and then [the NATO expanders] will say that we always told you that is how the Russians are – but this is just wrong."⁸

Within the West, it has been nearly impossible to warn against the predictable collapse of European security. The only acceptable narrative has been that NATO expansion was merely "European integration", as countries in the shared neighbourhood between NATO and Russia were compelled to decouple from the largest state in Europe. It was evident that redividing the continent would recreate the logic of the Cold War, and it was equally evident that a divided

Europe would be less prosperous, less secure, less stable, and less relevant in the world.

Yet, arguing for not dividing the continent is consistently demonised as taking Russia's side in a divided Europe. Any deviation from NATO's narratives comes with a high social cost as dissidents are smeared, censored and cancelled. The combination of ignorance and dishonesty by the Western political-media elites has thus prevented any course correction.

Source: <https://glennadiesen.substack.com/p/the-predictable-collapse-of-pan-european>, 15 January 2025

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