

## PRE-WORLD WAR I EUROPE AS THE GLOBAL SYSTEM: POST-WORLD WAR II EUROPE *WITHIN* THE GLOBAL SYSTEM: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE DILEMMAS OF EUROPEAN SECURITY AND IDENTITY

HALL GARDNER\*

... In my opinion two extreme things ... would produce conflict. One is the attempt by us to isolate Germany. No nation of her standing and position would stand a policy of isolation assumed by neighboring powers. Another thing ... would be the isolation of England ... attempted by any great Continental Power ... as to ... dictate the policy of the Continent. That has always been so in history. The same reasons which have caused it in history would cause it again (Sir Edward Grey, March 1909).<sup>1</sup>

The rasing of the Berlin Wall signals an end to the largely bipolar Cold War and the emergence of a new polycentric era of global relations. As the U.S. continues its relative geostrategic and political economic decline, and as Soviet Russia (in a period of apparently absolute decline) retrenches to more traditional 19th-century Russian security concerns, international relations of the 21st century will tend to be characterised by a more polycentric system of territorial states and regional blocs with uneven geostrategic, military technological, political economic and socio-cultural interests and capabilities, most reminiscent of the late 19th century.

Whether the 21st century will be characterised by fierce geostrategic and political economic rivalry, possibly leading to a global war most reminiscent of World War I, or whether a more peaceful concert of major core powers can be established, is still largely dependent on the nature of the U.S.-Soviet relations. Should the global U.S.-Soviet relationship continue to be characterised by friction, Western Europe could adopt a *deeper* strategic integration, resulting in a 'Gaullist' Europe. On the other hand, if the U.S. and Western Europe can begin to draw Soviet Russia into a *wider* European community (without resulting in European fragmentation), global tensions may well be reduced.

Despite a few parallels with the pre-World War II (pre-WWII) period, the contemporary nature of territorial state rivalry more closely resembles the pre-World War I (pre-WWI) period. Analogies comparing Soviet behavior to either Hitler's Germany (most commonly used during the 1980s) or Weimar Germany (prevalent since 1990) ring hollow, and stereotype Soviet behavior as either bent on world domination or else teetering on the brink of collapse. These facile analogies also serve domestic political interests and work against efforts to resolve problems by diplomatic, rather than military, means.

In the case of the analogy to Nazi Germany, the rise of the Nazi movement represented a second, militantly *revanchist* effort to regain Imperial Germany's

\*American University of Paris, 31 Avenue Bouquet, 75007 Paris, France.

global amphibious status. In the contemporary situation, the Soviet Union is attempting to hang onto, not regain, its rapidly deteriorating global amphibious status. In the case of the analogy to Weimar Germany, the Soviet Union has yet to be broken up into constituent nationalities. Rather, it is in the *process* of disintegration, more like Imperial Germany and its ally Austria–Hungary in the years before World War I, though (apparently) decomposing at a more rapid rate than did Imperial Germany. Rather than comparing the Soviet Union to Imperial Germany alone, it is best to depict it as a *cross* breed of Imperial Germany and Czarist Russia; thus contemporary Soviet behavior is best seen as a mix of post-Crimean War Czarist Russian efforts to retract its imperial outreach (its claims to Alaska and the Pacific) and revitalise the Russian economy, as well as Imperial German efforts to stave off the decline of its amphibious ‘empire’ for as long as possible.

Moreover, the decline of Communist Party legitimacy in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China has more parallels with the decline of Prussian Junker legitimacy in pre-WWI Germany and collapse of monarchist and aristocratic legitimacy in Austria–Hungary and Czarist Russia (as well as Imperial China), than it does with the collapse of post-World War I governments and the rise of Nazi and Fascist movements. Likewise, Imperial German efforts to achieve ‘parity’ and an Anglo-German *entente* appear to parallel Soviet actions to achieve ‘parity’ and a U.S.–Soviet *entente*, more so than the even more aggressive Nazi efforts.

Finally, on the global systemic level, an isolationist Britain, a withdrawn France, a *revanchist* Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, a territorially annexationist Italy and Japan, represent states with very little in common with the major actors of the contemporary period. The interwar period is thus best seen as a transitional period from the Eurocentric multipolar 19th-century system to the rise of a largely East–West antipodal system, now moving toward an emergent global polycentrism.<sup>2</sup>

From this perspective, the contemporary global configuration has stronger parallels to, but also significant differences with, the multipolar system of the late 19th century. In the late 19th century, Great Britain represented the classical insular-core state in relative hegemonic decline since 1873; Imperial Germany represented the amphibious core challenger, which began to fear the disintegration of its alliance system with Austria–Hungary and Italy as well as its own central European empire by the 1890s, after an extended period of Prussian/German continental conquest followed by overseas amphibious expansion in the 1880s. Quasi-insular France flanked amphibious Germany to the west, while continental Czarist Russia checked Imperial Germany and Austria–Hungary to the east. By the mid-1890s, both quasi-insular core U.S. and insular Japan began to check Imperial German amphibious overseas outreach: the U.S. became noted for its role of ‘dollar diplomacy’.

In the contemporary situation, the U.S., like pre-WWI Britain, represents a quasi-insular state in relative hegemonic decline since 1968/71; the Soviet Union, regarded as a crossbreed between continental Czarist Russia and amphibious Germany, represents the triphibious core challenger, which has begun to fear the disintegration of its alliance network with Eastern Europe and India in the 1990s, as well as its own internal disintegration, after a period of continental ‘conquest’

(of Eastern Europe) and amphibious expansion in the 1960 and 1970s. Quasi-insular Western Europe/Germany plays a role flanking the Soviet Union on the west similar to pre-WWI France, while the continental PRC plays a role flanking the Soviet Union similar to pre-WWI Czarist Russia. Contemporary insular core Japan presently plays a role similar to both the pre-WWI U.S. and Japan in terms of contemporary 'Yen diplomacy', comparable to pre-WWI 'dollar diplomacy', (though it could once again begin to assert its military potential).

Much as Imperial Germany's quest for parity represented an *initial* amphibious challenge to insular Britain in a multipolar configuration, the Soviet quest for 'parity' today has represented an *initial* challenge to the global geostrategic and political economic outreach of the quasi-insular U.S. The nature of the predominant pre-WWI Anglo-German, post-WWII U.S.-Soviet, interaction shapes and reshapes the strategic nexus, and helps to define the role and identity of both major and minor states and blocs within the international system. The failure to reach an Anglo-German *entente* in the pre-WWI era as a means to check the rise of both the United States and Russia ultimately led to U.S.-Soviet preeminence following World Wars I and II. In contemporary circumstances, failure to reach a U.S.-Soviet *entente* will tend to exacerbate tensions between the major core powers, and will concurrently cause friction within states of the European bloc.

Much as Imperial Germany feared a 'nightmare of coalitions' of Britain allied with France, Russia, and including the Anglo-American *entente* and Anglo-Japanese alliance, Moscow fears the 'encirclement' by the U.S. linked to Western Europe plus unified Germany, China and Japan. Much as Britain feared 'isolation' (the shifting of France and/or Russia closer to Germany), so too the U.S. fears that West Europe/Germany, China, and Japan might shift closer to the Soviet Union. Moreover, much as France desired *revanche* for Alsace Lorraine taken by Prussia in the Franco-Prussian war, West Germany, with U.S. and European backing, has already begun the process of unification with East Germany. Failure to form new systems of security in both Europe and Asia could help instigate a Soviet-Russian backlash most similar to increasingly hardline taken by the Imperial German elite in the period 1894-1914, following the 1887-1894 Anglo-German detente.

More specifically, in terms of the analogy between contemporary Western Europe and pre-World War I France, quasi-insular France represented a largely homogeneous yet politically unstable *rentier* core state with a substantial colonial empire. In terms of Alliances, it was first linked to Czarist Russia by 1894, and then loosely linked to Britain by the 1904 *Entente Cordiale*. French support for the secession of Alsace Lorraine, coupled with Russian support for pan-Slav movements in the Balkans, were seen as exacerbating Imperial German fears of a 'nightmare of coalitions', and the break up of the German and Austrian empires.

Contemporary Western Europe as it attempts to move toward *deeper* political, economic and strategic integration by 1933, on the other hand, represents a heterogeneous conglomeration of core and semi-peripheral states, with still divergent interests. Britain, in absolute decline, has attempted to hold onto its 'special relationship' with the U.S. as well as the remnants of its colonial empire, and has been reluctant to integrate itself into a *deeper* Europe. Continental core-

Germany has begun to assert a political-economic hegemony—*Drang nach Osten*—over East Germany and Eastern Europe. France represents a quasi-insular core state, whose support for the Franco-German axis has glued the European Community together. Prior to prospects of German unification, France played the central role in attempting to balance the interests of insular Britain and continental West Germany and maintain a loose European unity under the hegemonic aegis of the U.S. in the 'double containment' of the Soviet Union and a divided Germany.

Yet, the unravelling of the 'double containment' has begun to transform the identity and role of Europe. First, it has impelled tighter Franco-German co-operation, and has drawn a reluctant Britain into closer co-operation designed, in part, to 'contain' a unified Germany within European multilateral controls so as to deter possible German steps toward military independence and political economic hegemony. If European integration becomes too *deep*, however, it could result in the formation of a Gaullist Europe which would possess the potential capability to threaten shifts in alliances *vis-à-vis* the U.S. or U.S.S.R., in addition to opening or blocking access to European markets.

By supporting a continued role for NATO in the 'post-Cold War' era, Washington has hoped to sustain a U.S. strategic and economic presence in Europe in order to check the potential rise of either a Gaullist Europe or else a militarily independent Germany. Washington also fears the formation of a close Euro-Soviet *entente*, or else the danger of a schism along insular Anglo-American versus continental Franco-German-Soviet interests. A less likely possibility is a separate German-Soviet Rapallo Treaty, based on the pre-WWII analogy.

On the one hand, German unification does raise the prospects of political economic co-operation between Moscow and Europe/Germany. On the other hand, it eliminates aspects of a tacit U.S.-Soviet co-operation in the 'containment' of a divided Germany. Yet despite Soviet acceptance of a unified Germany within NATO (in exchange for limitations on the size of the German military and financial credits), Moscow is still wary of becoming isolated from decisions affecting the security of Europe. Moscow fears becoming isolated from the formation of either a Gaullist Europe, or a more independent 'European pillar' within the Atlantic Alliance. The rise of an independent Gaullist Europe would be most reminiscent of the role of pre-WWI France prior to the 1904 Anglo-French *Entente Cordiale*; a looser European pillar within the Atlantic Alliance would be most comparable to the Anglo-French relationship following the 1904 *entente*.

The dilemma is that the decline of Soviet hegemony and the rise of Germany may not only lead to the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, but also to the break up of European Russia as well. What is relevant about the interwar period is not the exaggerated fear of a unified Germany seeking '*Lebensraum*', but the 'strategic vacuum' that has begun to reemerge in Eastern Europe. Much as the Versailles Treaty resulted in the independence of Eastern European states, Soviet retrenchment results in fears of a contemporary Germany facing off with the Soviet Union for strategic and political economic influence over both West and East European states.

Secondly, the question is not that of '*Deutschland über alles*', but

'*Deutschemarks über alles*'. The pull of a strong Deutschemark has not only begun to draw Eastern European states toward the West, but states within the Baltics and European Russia as well. In addition, as the Soviet grasp over southeastern Europe wanes, conflict among Balkan states and the Transcaucasus appears to be reemerging. Conflict in these regions could mesh with conflict between Greece and Turkey, as in the late 19th century, particularly if the latter state is not well assimilated into a *wider* European Community.

To avert renewed friction, a unified Germany must play the traditional Bismarckian role of balancer. Too great a tilt to the West will tend to exacerbate Soviet fears of German '*revanche*' similar to the pre-WWI French '*revanche*', provoking Moscow to play upon schisms within Europe and its looser *entente* with the U.S., much as Imperial Germany pressured France to break its alliance with Britain after 1904. On the other hand, too great a West European/German tilt to the Soviet Union will stir U.S. fears of isolation, provoking Washington to attempt to put the brakes on a closer Russo-European/German relationship much as pre-WWII Britain sought to draw France away from a possible *entente* with Imperial Germany.

The danger in the polycentric world of the 21st century is Soviet unwillingness to accept its absolute decline gracefully and U.S. unwillingness to draw the Soviet Union into a *wider* European community by addressing its legitimate security and economic interests. The path to a new Europe should first seek NATO-Warsaw pact co-operation, but then move toward a confederal all-European framework of security with more-than-token powers. The ultimate aim is to prevent Soviet (or U.S.) fears of isolation, as well as steps toward European Gaullism or German military independence.

In order to move toward a new Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, an addendum should be placed on the plan of German foreign minister, Hans Dietrich Genscher, for German unification. The deployment of an all-European or U.N. transition force in East Germany would represent a practical step to help devolve the Soviet military presence so that a unified Germany does not fear possible Soviet obstruction during East Germany's socially dislocating transition to a market economy. Such a step would also set the security framework for an eventual withdrawal of the U.S. military presence so that German domestic pressure does not force a potentially destabilising removal of U.S. troops, once Soviet troops ultimately roll out of East Germany.

Following verified reductions of relevant Soviet nuclear and conventional forces in eastern Europe and European Russia, NATO can then begin to revamp its strategy of forward defense. The U.S. could gradually move toward the defense of peripheral Europe, possibly including a military presence in France. Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary would play a role as a neutral buffer states. Linkages between Yugoslavia, Hungary, Italy and Austria can also be forged to maintain stability. States seeking independence or autonomy from the Soviet empire (the Baltics, Ukraine, Byelorussia) can apply for such status within the all-European confederal framework with Soviet co-operation.

'Yen diplomacy', like pre-WWI dollar diplomacy, would help stabilise social dislocation caused by the shift to a market economy in eastern Europe and the Mediterranean and help to counterbalance the political influence of '*Deutschemarks über alles*'. The dilemma, however, is that a deficit-prone U.S. risks losing

substantial influence in the new Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals unless it begins to establish a more open political economic relationship with Moscow. Without taking steps toward a U.S.-Soviet entente, the U.S. stands to lose out to Germany and Japan, and risks exacerbating global tensions.

As Europe becomes more strategically and economically integrated, the difficulties of forging a new security pact involving an unwieldy and potentially fragmented 35-nation CSCE framework will be somewhat reduced. Yet, a new Europe strategy should seek to *widen*, more than *deepen*, European co-operation so as to forestall the formation of a Gaullist Europe as a potential strategic and economic rival of both the U.S. and Soviet Union. At the same time, such a strategy must move beyond the concept of a European pillar within the Atlantic Alliance—a prospect that Soviet Russia may in the not-so-distant future regard with suspicion. The formation of a U.S.-Soviet-European-Japanese *entente* would simultaneously deter the possible formation of an independent Euro-Soviet, or German-Soviet, alliance and seek to guarantee *legitimate* Soviet/Russian security interests during the step-by-step devolution of the Soviet empire in the effort to forge a new Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, a European Byzantium.

Hall Gardner

*American University of Paris*

#### NOTES

1. Quoted in E.L. Woodward, *Great Britain and the German Navy, 1933* (Reprinted Hamden, CT: Archon Press, 1964), 232.
2. On these points, see Hall Gardner, 'Averting World War III: Beyond the World War I, World War II Analogies' *SAIS Review* (Summer-Fall 1988) Vol. 8, No. 2