

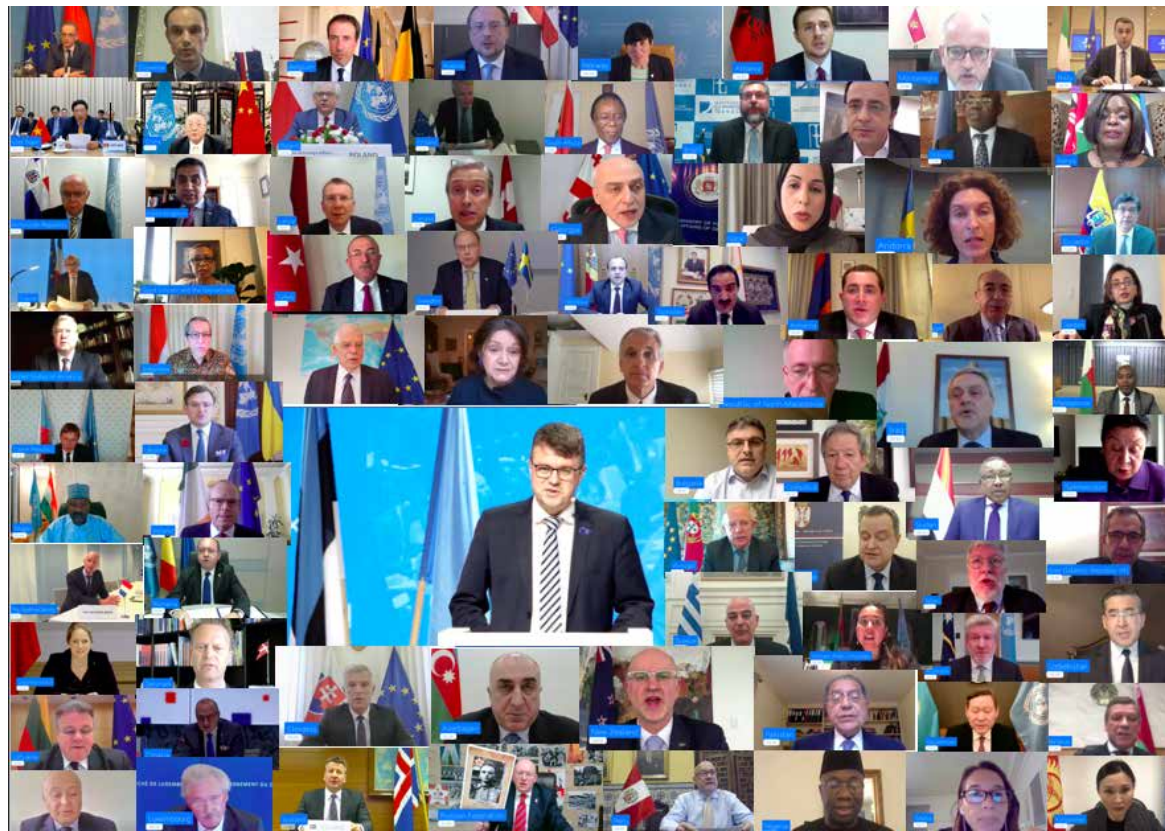
Diplomaatia

Lennart Meri Conference 2020 special edition May 2020

Lennart Meri
LENNART MERI CONFERENCE

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RAHVAUSVALIKU KAITSEVÕRÕHUKOOL KESKUS
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR DEFENCE AND SECURITY
EESTI - ESTONIA

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Estonia organised a videoconference commemorating the end of World War II in Europe on 8 May. The conference was attended by nearly 45 foreign ministers from around the world and Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative.

RAIGO PAJULA

Man Plans, and God Laughs

Eeva Eek-Pajuste

Director of the Lennart Meri Conference

What you have just opened was initially planned as the printed special edition of *Diplomaatia* (the ICDS's foreign- and security-policy magazine), to be given to you on 15 May at the opening of the 14th Lennart Meri Conference, entitled **My Neighbour's Problem Today – Mine Tomorrow**.

The title, inspired by Horatius' maxim, *nam tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet* (you too are in danger, when your neighbour's house is on fire), contains a slight dash of prophecy. The conference initially aimed to focus on various aspects of isolationism in these times when local has become global and vice versa. Even if countries try to isolate themselves from global challenges, the

problems find a way into their back yards anyway, so isn't it more rational to take up arms against them together? The main theme of the conference was intended to raise awareness, but we were too late. Our neighbours' dangers entered our domain before the conference had time to discuss them, and from an unforeseen direction.

What has Covid-19 taught us? Perhaps the first lesson to learn is about the fragility of the upper layer of solidarity, civilisation and common values in the face of a crisis that does not recognise borders. The basic instinct for us as nations is still from the perspective of Stone Age man, trying to save himself and find shelter, with no wider view. We saw this in the restrictions on medical deliveries within the EU, from Poland's unannounced border closures, and from competition with each other for supplies; all these minor steps mark a

significant erosion of the EU and its legacy. And yet we are united, and only in a coordinated way can we fight the malevolent aspect of globalisation: the pandemic.

There will be much to discuss during the conference, which will now take place on 14–16 May 2021. How will the EU, NATO and our common security system emerge from the crisis? Can the UN grasp the opportunity or will it fail to take the lead in tackling global crises? What sort of United States will we see after its presidential elections? How will Russia and China position themselves under the new circumstances?

I dearly hope that mankind can learn the lessons in a progressive way, won't make decisions based on instincts, and won't take a U-turn in the cycle of civilisation. The 2021 Lennart Meri Conference will do

its best to help keep the discussion going, to analyse the situation and to promote new ideas and viewpoints. For now, the current virtual edition of *Diplomaatia* is a little appetiser and food for thought.

I'd like to end with the words of a young Ukrainian poet, Irena Pavliuk:

Travelling seas
As you keep your eyes open
Powers the intellect, powers the soul,
Having no fear of depth to be trodden,
Treating your country as part of the
Whole.

The Estonian word for "sea" is *Meri*.

See you in Tallinn in May 2021.

Things that mattered before Covid-19 and will matter after it, too



Kersti Kaljulaid
President of Estonia, patron of Lennart Meri Conference

The current Covid-19 pandemic has already demonstrated the importance of digital solutions. Technology is what helps us in this global crisis. And the multilateral world, including the United Nations, needs to keep up with the times by supporting it globally. This helps us collectively to avoid the emergence of new, digital divisions. But in parallel this requires that the UN, including the Security Council, also deals with new challenges that pose a threat to international peace and security.

Obviously, these days everybody is focused on getting the pandemic under control; this is rightly the top priority. But we need to remind ourselves that Covid-19 is not a magical virus that makes all pre-pandemic topics and security risks non-existent. In fact, we can see that in certain areas the pandemic has amplified security risks. A good example is cybersecurity, which Estonia—an elected member of the UNSC—raised with the United Kingdom and the United States in the Council. Unfortunately, it has been left in the shadows of the pandemic—undeservingly so.

5 March 2020 marked an important milestone in multilateralism and for cyber as an issue. It was the moment when cyber was, for the first time ever, officially discussed at the UNSC. Previously there had only been theoretical discussions about cyber during informal Security Council meetings, and this was the first time that malicious behaviour in cyberspace had been put formally on the table. This was done by Estonia, which is currently serving its two-year term as an elected member of the UNSC, along with permanent members the UK and the US. The case itself relates to Georgia, whose government and media websites faced a large-scale cyber-attack in October 2019. The attacks themselves were clearly conducted by Russia's military intelligence service, the GRU, aimed at destabilising Georgia, undermining its institutions and creating confusion—an objective since 2008 in which only the means have changed over time. On a wider scale these attacks demonstrated irresponsible state behaviour and disrespect for existing international norms and law in cyberspace. By raising the issue in the Security Council, Estonia fulfilled one of its election campaign promises: to bring to the most prominent

I firmly believe that mainstreaming cybersecurity-related issues in the UN is a moral obligation for the world's only digital society.



Estonia succeeded for the first time ever to have official discussion about malicious behaviour in cyberspace in the UNSC.

REUTERS/SCANPIX

global body the idea that international law and norms of state behaviour apply in cyberspace just as anywhere else.

At the time of our election campaign, I often heard it said that the role of small countries in the UNSC was limited to agenda-setting and that bringing a new topic to the table was a long shot—let alone having a lasting impact on a multilateral organisation. To these comments I always replied that small countries do not have time for small objectives. In addition, I firmly believe that mainstreaming cybersecurity-related issues in the UN is a moral obligation for the world's only digital society. As we help countries that lack digital capabilities to catch up and develop, they ultimately become more vulnerable in cyberspace because digital development and cyber security go hand in hand. The Security Council discussion on 5 March under Any Other Business was a critical starting point in raising awareness and mainstreaming cyber in the UN. As Estonia assumes its

first month-long chairmanship of the Council in May, we intend to continue on this path. Discussing cybersecurity-related issues in the UNSC should be a norm, not an exception. It is crucial to have a debate amongst members about global efforts to promote cyber-stability and conflict prevention. This is the only way to focus on emerging cyber-threats with the possibility to act in time, on the right scale and within the norms of international law. The Security Council also needs to discuss existing global, regional and national policy mechanisms in place to mitigate cyber-threats and advance responsible state behaviour.

As the global community fights Covid-19, conventional and unconventional security threats have not disappeared from the radar. The same applies to cyber, where healthcare organisations in particular are in the sights of cybercriminals, including nation-states. In addition, there is a new emerging trend of using technology to suppress democracies and support authoritarian regimes. So, we have to stay vigilant and principled in our approach to cybersecurity. To start with, we need to be clear that in the cyber domain the same rules apply as in the so-called analogue world.

The European Response to the Covid-19 Virus

Europe can be rebuilt after the crisis



Margrethe Vestager,
Executive Vice-President of the European Commission

Every evening for the last two months, at exactly 8.00 pm, people across Europe have stopped what they're doing for a moment. They've come out onto their doorsteps and balconies and stood together, while social-distancing, to applaud the people who work so hard and so selflessly to keep us all safe.

It is a moment that symbolises the way that Europeans have come together in the face of Covid-19. They've called on deep reserves of resilience and solidarity to keep essential services running and to help out the vulnerable people in their communities. They have changed the way they live, to protect not just their own health but also that of others who they've never met.

A European Response to the Coronavirus Crisis

That is true of our local communities; it's also true of Europe. The first instinct of Europe's nations may have been to turn inwards, closing borders and hoarding supplies without much thought for co-ordination. But very quickly—with the help of the European Commission—the EU's member states have begun to pull together. Because we know that we all depend on each other, and that the choices of any one of us affect us all.

Two decades ago, Lennart Meri spoke about the description that the Roman writer, Tacitus, gave of the people of Estonia. He recalled that, despite the huge distance from Italy to the Baltic coast, Estonians and Romans were part of the same world. Northern Europe provided not just amber and furs but also the seed grain on which the whole continent relied in tough years. And I don't think he would be surprised that today—in one of the toughest times in our continent's history—we are once again getting through by relying on each other.

In the past few weeks, the Commission has been working with member states to make hundreds of millions of euros available to fund research into new treatments, tests and vaccines. We have created a European stockpile of vital medical equipment—and launched joint procurement with member states of testing kits, masks and ventilators. We've set up a panel of independent epidemiologists and virologists from all over Europe so that governments can base decisions on reliable scientific advice.

We must also make sure that hostile acquisitions don't siphon off Europe's ability to meet its people's needs. Europe is open to foreign investment—and

this crisis doesn't change that. But we should not let foreign takeovers of critical businesses deny Europeans access to vital products. So, on 25 March, we issued guidelines that call on EU member states to make sure that foreign direct investment doesn't in particular undermine public health in Europe.

We have also been working to ensure that border closures don't stop the flow of vital products like medicine and food. Europe's supply chains cross many frontiers and the shelves of our pharmacies and food stores won't stay full for very long if goods get stuck at borders. That's why, on 23 March, the Commission issued guidance to member states on setting up "green lanes" at their borders so that goods can flow across them freely.

Of course, this is much more than a European crisis. The effects of this virus are global—and it will take global action to tackle them. This is why we're cooperating with our international partners to fight Covid-19 and to keep international trade flowing. We are also bringing together resources from the EU institutions with money from member states and from financial institutions like the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to help countries around the world to prevent and contain the virus. Already, 400 million euros has been made available, from a total of 20 billion euros that our "Team Europe" plans to mobilise.

Tackling the Economic Impact of Covid-19

This is a global public-health crisis; it's also an economic crisis. Whole sectors of the economy—aviation, tourism, live events—have almost completely shut down to keep the virus from spreading. And many workers are facing deep uncertainty about the future and where their next pay-check will come from.

So, to keep businesses intact and protect jobs, Europe needs an equally massive, coordinated response. And since March, the European Commission has been

playing its part, alongside the EU's member states, in leading that work.

Our Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative will let member states use eight billion euros of unspent EU funds, instead of paying the money back to the EU budget—which could bring in as much as 37 billion euros of investment. We have also proposed the activation of the escape clause in the Stability and Growth Pact, so governments can make full use of their public budgets to protect their economies without breaking the budget rules that guide spending in normal times. And the "SURE" initiative aims to make 100 billion euros available from the EU budget to support short-time work schemes, so companies can save money by cutting hours while staff still get paid.

The Livonian seed grain that Lennart Meri spoke about gave Europe a way to bounce back from tough times. No matter how bad the harvests might have been, that grain—kiln-dried, infection-free, long-lasting—always stored the promise of new growth within it. And these short-term work schemes help us to do the same today—to store away the potential, the know-how and the skills we will need to recover when the next growing season comes.

But for that to happen, we have to take the right decisions now. Above all, we have to rely on the EU's single market, which gives our economy the strength and resilience we will need to bounce back from the crisis.

That's the thinking behind the Temporary Framework of state aid rules, which the Commission put in place on 19 March. Those rules recognise that we will need large amounts of government support to help businesses survive this crisis and go on paying their staff. At the same time, they also reflect the importance of doing that in a way that doesn't undermine the level playing field in Europe's single market.

The Temporary Framework has enabled EU governments to provide large amounts of vital liquidity support to The

The first instinct of Europe's nations may have been to turn inwards, closing borders and hoarding supplies without much thought for co-ordination. But very quickly—with the help of the European Commission—the EU's member states have begun to pull together.



The European Commission is putting together a plan for a European recovery fund, which should be measured not in billions of euros but in trillions.

IMAGO IMAGES/STEINACH/SCANPIX

Temporary Framework has enabled EU governments to provide large amounts of vital liquidity support to European businesses - especially SMEs. We've already approved more than 150 state aid measures linked to COVID-19, in 27 European countries, making almost €2 trillion available to protect the economy - all in a coordinated way, with the same rules for everyone.¹

Recovery From the Crisis

We've kept the seed grain dry and safe. Our next task is to make sure that it has the right conditions to start growing again.

On 15 April, the Commission set out recommendations on how to start easing the restrictions that have kept the outbreak under control. And so—although that process of easing will not happen overnight—the time has come to start looking further ahead, at a strong European recovery.

Coming back from a crisis as deep as the one we're in will call for a strategic and coherent approach, and large commitments of public and private resources.

In the last few weeks, some industries have suffered much more than others. Some EU member states have been hit much harder than their neighbours, and not all countries have enough room in their budgets to invest in recovery. And, just as some organs in our bodies need special care to allow our whole physique to recover from illness, so a strong European recovery will call for particular attention to some parts of our economy. Because the alternative—an asymmetric recovery, in which some industries and some parts of Europe lag behind—will

mean a weak recovery for us all.

This is why the Commission is putting together a plan for a European recovery fund—a fund that should be measured not in billions of euros, but in trillions.

That fund will need to be linked to the EU budget—Europe's tested, trusted, transparent way of pooling resources—and direct that money where it can do most good.

We will also need to clear away the obstacles that could make it harder to recover than it ought to be. Europe's businesses shouldn't find that, at the same time they're fighting to overcome the effects of Covid-19, they also have to battle with competitors that are stuffed with huge foreign state subsidies. So, in June this year, we will put forward ideas on how we can level the playing field caused by these subsidies in our single market.

And we will have to ensure that the investments we make will help Europe prepare for the green and digital future—because those twin transitions won't wait while we deal with the recovery.

Before Covid-19, the European Green Deal was already Europe's growth strategy. Now it's also our recovery strategy. We need, more than ever, to get ahead of the game in the green technologies that will be the only route to sustainable success in the decades ahead.

And meanwhile, the way that many digital businesses have flourished through this crisis while their offline counterparts have struggled will only speed up the digital revolution—and make it even more important that we don't fall

behind.

The Digital World After Covid-19

In the past few weeks, as the coronavirus has forced us into physical isolation, digital services have stepped in to fill the gap. They have allowed us to go on working, studying, seeing friends and educating our children. New ideas have also emerged as the crisis has continued—partly thanks to hackathons like Hack the Crisis, which started in Estonia and has now had more than 100,000 participants in more than 40 countries.

In the coming months, even as strict lockdown measures are lifted, it's unlikely that things will go back to exactly the way they were. And we need to make sure that Europe has the fast, secure digital connectivity that people need to get the most out of that potential—speeding up our work, for example, to bring ultra-fast broadband to homes, schools and hospitals throughout Europe and continue reaching for the targets set for 5G deployment.

We also need to make better use of data. Europe's healthcare workers have done a remarkable job in this crisis. But that doesn't change the fact that our health systems would have been better able to manage the spread of the virus if they had been able to access a secure and anonymous pool of health data from all across Europe. So, in line with the data strategy that the Commission published in February, we urgently need a European framework for collecting and sharing data in a way that respects people's privacy, so we can build European data spaces, in particular for health.

And we need to be sure that the huge opportunities that digitisation has to offer are available to everyone. Without the right digital skills, fast internet connections and enough devices, some children are being left behind by the switch to digital education, while small local businesses may have to close down. And we need to tackle this issue urgently, so the digital revolution doesn't deepen the digital divide.

But none of this potential will bear its full fruit unless we can trust digital technology. Today, Covid-19 dominates our media and the work of governments and businesses. But there will be an afterwards, when we will sorely regret it if we find that we have allowed fundamental rights, like our right to privacy, to slip away.

This is why we're now coordinating work across Europe to specify how contact-tracing apps should be used. These apps could help to make it possible to lift lockdown measures without inviting a second, perhaps worse, peak of the disease.

And the toolbox we have developed, together with EU member states, includes specifications to make sure those apps work well, that they are interoperable throughout Europe, and—crucially—that they respect our data and privacy.

It is also why we need to make sure we have the right rules in place to control the risks of new technologies like digital platforms and artificial intelligence. These can do a huge amount to make our lives better. They might even save lives, perhaps by helping us to spot the next pandemic before its full force hits. But as a society, we won't be willing to accept that technology into our lives unless we're sure we can trust it.

That is why one essential aim of the White Paper on AI that we published in February is to create an AI ecosystem of trust. It is why my Commission colleague, Věra Jourová, has been working closely with social media platforms during this crisis to fight disinformation. And for the future, we will need to make sure that we have a robust, transparent framework in place to deal with false and misleading information, especially when it comes through big online platforms.

This need for trust also explains why it is vital that we work on improving cybersecurity. Because the more connected we become, the more we are at risk of cyberattacks—and in fact the number of attacks has increased during this crisis. So we'll focus on ensuring that Europe is prepared to meet the risk of serious attacks on our vital digital infrastructure.

And as digital platforms—search engines, online marketplaces, social media networks—come to play an increasingly important part in our lives, we are looking at whether the time has come to give those platforms new legal responsibilities to deal with dangerous products and harmful content. That way, consumers can have the same peace of mind when they go online as they do when they shop in physical stores, and businesses that follow the rules aren't punished for their good behaviour by having to compete with rivals that aren't so responsible.

Europe's Potential

In short, we still have a lot of work ahead of us. But when I stand on my terrace at 8.00pm and hear the applause for frontline workers echoing from the buildings all around, I have faith in what Europe can do. I know that our continent has rebuilt from worse crises, many times before. And I know that the spirit of togetherness we have shown in the face of this virus will give us the strength we need to emerge into a better future.

¹ State of play on 11 May 2020.

In Between vs Belonging, or Why Ukraine Matters

The EU should recognise Ukraine as a European country



PRIVATE COLLECTION

Hanna Shelest
Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism"

Hanna Shelest is Editor-in-Chief of UA: Ukraine Analytica and Head of the Board of the NGO "Promotion of Intercultural Cooperation". Prior to this, she had served for more than 10 years as a Senior Researcher at the National Institute for Strategic Studies, Odessa Branch. In 2014 Dr Shelest served as a Visiting Research Fellow at the NATO Defence College in Rome. Previously she had experience in PR and lobbying for government and business, as well as teaching at Odessa National University.

Misinterpreting a Dialogue

Dialogue. This word became a mantra for many European politicians when speaking about Russia. When Ukrainians reject it, they look bad in the eyes of their European counterparts. But most of them don't want to understand the logic behind a Ukrainian position. Franco-Russian dialogue about Ukraine and European security without Ukraine? PACE'-Russian dialogue without fulfilling any of the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe? Ukrainian central government dialogue with militants who are continually violating the ceasefire but not with those in Moscow who are supplying the weapons and paying for this war?

What type of dialogue should Ukraine welcome? Dialogue is essential but by definition it should be a two-way street. It should be between those ready to talk, not to manipulate, if the security situation on the ground is not changing, or if one side is threatening and turning facts upside-down. In such cases, a negotiating position should be supported not just by good intentions, but by a strong partnership, a clear position of all parties involved, and a long-term strategy for future co-existence.

With this in mind, we return to the statement that many Ukraine experts have been promoting since 2014: Europe needs to look at the "Ukraine issue" more broadly than just in terms of Russian-Ukrainian relations, but never forgetting that it is Ukraine at its core. For Russia, this confrontation is about the European order, competition with the US, and imposing its spheres of influence against Europe. But for the EU, it should be about a grave violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, human rights and the lives of millions, international law and support for other independent states.

The International Crisis Group (ICG), in its April 2020 report "Peace in Ukraine I: A European War",² answers its own question "What should be done?" with the proposition that "European states should engage Russia in discussions of European security, including regional and sub-regional arms limitations". The flawed logic is evident here. First, neither the EU nor NATO nor individual member states had ever stopped dialogue with Russia on these issues before 2014. However, the illegal annexation of Crimea was not a good first step to start a dialogue on the new security order, if such an intention existed. The problem is that most of the Russian proposals expressed in the 2000s were the "new" old ideas of divisions and

controls, spheres of interest and influence where Moscow would play a leading role in countries that did not want to return to its "protectorate".

This bottom line has not changed since 2014. Any call for dialogue should come with a clear understanding of how far the European states are ready to compromise their principles and values. When the answer is ready, it will be much easier to comprehend that Ukraine is both an ultimate goal and the testing ground for Russian policy. Could EU member states be next? Not in the same way. But an EU that does not counteract becomes an easy target for Russian acts of hybrid attack. Ukraine is a good example in this respect. Russia could be as strong as Ukraine was weak and not ready to oppose. Russia will be as strong as the EU is disunited. It is always easier to defeat individual states than a strong union.

As soon as Covid-19 developed in Europe, Russian propaganda picked up steam. The main messages were built on previous narratives: anti-EU sentiment, weakness of European institutions and unreadiness to support individual member states, failed policies at the local government level, inability to cope with the crisis; meanwhile, the Russian Federation is ready to help those in need (e.g. Italy). This brings us to the conclusion that, even when we want to forget about the continuing Russian-Ukrainian conflict, its consequences can reach us in the most vulnerable times. Russia is expertly using the coronavirus crisis to achieve its long-term goals. Requests to lift sanctions and PR manipulation thanks to medical assistance sent to Italy are good examples of this.

The Conflict that Cannot Be Forgotten

One problem is that most European leaders would happily forget about the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The number of deaths is comparatively low compared, for example, to Syria. The level of threat is perceived as lower than for terrorist attacks by ISIS. There are no economic or human consequences on the scale that the migrant crisis brought for the EU.

What type of dialogue should Ukraine welcome? Dialogue is essential but by definition it should be a two-way street. It should be between those ready to talk, not to manipulate.

Like any crisis, Covid-19 arrived without warning and occupied the international community's attention. The current response clearly demonstrated unreadiness and the lack of resilience in many European countries. However, the natural response—with all national efforts pulling together and concentrated on fighting this pandemic and its consequences, and 90% of efforts domestic and focusing within countries—doesn't mean we can afford to stop paying attention to other existing crises around the world, and especially in our immediate neighbourhood.

When you break your leg and a few weeks later catch the flu, it does not mean that you should forget about your leg and stop treating it. There is a good chance you will be left without your leg in the end. You cannot return to resolve the problem later, as the momentum may have been lost. It is the same with the response to Covid-19 and continued attention to the Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Calls to freeze the conflict and lift sanctions on the grounds that they are ineffective are heard more and more often. It is true that many of these appeals are not aimed at supporting Russia, and their promoters are even ready to openly blame the Kremlin for the annexation of Crimea or the war in the Donbas. However, the frozen conflict is one of the worst-case scenarios because it would allow the international community to pay even less attention to what is happening in Ukraine. (This is already visible when you compare the respective level of attention to the Donbas and Crimea.) It would start a period of endless talks-about-talks about a possible resolution, demanding ever-greater concessions from Ukraine, and anchoring the constructed "national" self-identification of the Donbas.

In this respect, an important statement was made following the video-conference of the foreign ministers of the Normandy Four states on 30 April. The German foreign minister, Heiko Maas, said it was clear that Russia was a party to the conflict, but not a mediator, as it had signed the Minsk Agreements. This was important in terms of recalling the starting positions, as it distinguished Paris and Berlin as negotiators compared to Russia's



Ukrainians with a placard stating “No EU without Ukraine” attend a rally in Independence Square in Kyiv, Ukraine on 8 December 2019, one day before Normandy Four format talks in Paris. Ukrainians gathered to remind state officials about so-called red lines and their responsibility to the Ukrainian people.

EPUSCANPIX

direct involvement. This was especially important given the recent emergence of various new proposals, such as the “12-step plan” presented in Munich, the ICG’s report mentioned earlier and “A Consensus Proposal for a Revised Regional Order in Post-Soviet Europe and Eurasia” published by the RAND Corporation.³

What unites all of these is attempts to propose that the EU states should excuse Russian actions, make concessions in order to move forward, and revise the European order based on the Helsinki principles—all at the expense of Ukraine’s, Georgia’s and Moldova’s security.

Moving Forward in the Right Direction

Ukraine is not in between Europe and Russia. Either EU member states recognise Ukraine as part of Europe or this confrontation will never end. A weakness of the EU states to accept Ukraine as an equal partner and a country of European destiny provides Russia with arguments and inspiration for continued provocation. Recognising Ukraine as a European country does not mean granting immediate EU membership. It means not questioning its European perspective and membership aspirations. It means practical steps to involve Ukraine in big European projects, including PESCO. It means

perceiving it not as a neighbour, an object of that policy, but as a strategic partner.

Upgrading relations with the A3 countries (the three members of the Eastern Partnership that signed association agreements with the EU) can also send an important signal. Association agreements provide a perfect basis for increased functional, practical cooperation. Integrating with energy, aviation, roaming and industrial markets, and creating opportunities for joint enterprises and cultural projects contributes much more than individual political statements.

But all these practical steps should be well communicated, both in countries with association agreements and in the EU. This will create an opportunity, firstly, to perceive Ukraine as an integral part of Europe, whose future is not questioned. Many such cases have remained unnoticed until recently, for example Ukraine’s agreement with NATO on assisting in the

Strategic Airlift International Solution (SALIS), through which Ukraine contributes the biggest aircraft in the world. SALIS provides assured access to aircraft (mission-ready within a few days in the event of a crisis) in support of national, NATO and EU operations for a multinational consortium of nine countries (Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia).

The recent pictures of “Mriya” landing in Poland, France and other countries delivering medical assistance from China and tweets about it by world leaders including the NATO Secretary-General provide a media lesson to build on demonstrating real interoperability and partnership. It is also crucial in showing European citizens that Ukraine is not only a victim and a security consumer but a significant other.

Europe should stop thinking about Eastern Partnership states as simply

“post-Soviet”. It is a war of narratives as, in describing somewhere thus, you give credit to Russian arguments about its spheres of influence and natural interests. You are looking into the past of these countries rather than their future. The EU does not refer to the Balkan states as post-Yugoslavian all the time. So why are Eastern European countries still considered primarily as post-Soviet?

Confirming the European future of Ukraine and other A3 states makes Europe’s position in a dialogue with Russia much stronger. The current contradiction is not just a competition of powers. In asymmetric, hybrid war, it is very important to gain additional points and to build proper alliances. Dialogue is an effective instrument when you have both a solid background and strong back support. Ukraine matters because it supports the EU model of equality and democracy, of values and future development. Ukraine still matters because Russia’s behaviour is not likely to change in the near future.

1 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.
2 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/eastern-europe/ukraine/256-peace-ukraine-i-european-war>.
3 https://www.fes-wienna.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/RAND_CF410.pdf.

Andrey Kortunov: Cooperation with the West Will Only Happen When Russia Modernises

We are facing a generational change among the leaders of the world’s great powers

Jaanus Piirsalu, *Postimees*

Russia can return to closer relations with the West only if the Kremlin’s future leaders sets itself the goal of serious social and economic modernisation, according to Andrey Kortunov, Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), who would have been a speaker at the Lennart Meri Conference. The RIAC was established in 2010 by Russian presidential decree.

Piirsalu: At the Lennart Meri Conference you were due to speak about Russia’s role in the world. What message did you want to send?

Kortunov: First and foremost, I would have wanted to draw attention to the existing, though limited, opportunities for cooperation between Russia and Europe. I would not have wanted to talk so much about problems, but rather about positive shifts that took place within the last year. In my view there were several of these. Russia returned to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which was indeed a difficult decision for all. Russia ratified the Paris climate change agreement. The Minsk process moved forward slightly, and in December there was a top-level summit in Paris of the Normandy Four. Agreement was reached on gas transit. Consultations between Russia and the European Union began on 5G communications. It is true, of course, that one cannot really speak of a serious shift in relations [between Russia and the EU], but there are certain positive moments. I would have wanted to speak about how to make use of these limited opportunities. But that was the topic before the epidemic and now, of course, much will change.

What effect do you think the coronavirus pandemic will have on the global political situation?

The economic impact is huge, of course, but is this also true of the political impact? Clearly, the cost of the epidemic will be high. In some ways, Russia’s situation is specific because, in addition to the economic crisis accompanying the pandemic, it was hit by the sudden reduction in oil prices, which will result in a decrease in gas prices. If we look at the broader picture, then without a doubt the epidemic will see an increased role for states throughout the world. Indeed, national governments bear the primary role in fighting the epidemic. In some ways, we are returning to the Westphalia system [the concept dating from the 17th century that each state is sovereign and others may not interfere in their internal affairs—*JP*]. It turns out that, during a major crisis, societies place more hope in their

governments. The current crisis has revealed the weakness of international institutions like the G7, the G20, the EU, the Eurasian Economic Union and even the UN Security Council. It is noteworthy that the Security Council was even unable to pass resolutions on the coronavirus pandemic, which it managed to do during previous pandemics such as Ebola and HIV/AIDS. The revelation of the weakness of international institutions is a very dangerous tendency, because it will begin to impact the international system of the future.

Third, I would draw attention to China’s growing strength, which may be somewhat paradoxical given that the virus originated there. Indeed, China is becoming stronger at the expense of others: the US, the EU and Russia. I believe that China will come out of this epidemic with the smallest losses. Economic growth will be restored faster there than in other regions of the world. China is currently consciously implementing a politics of soft power, to show the advantages of its state model in fighting the virus. Fourth, I would emphasise the instability that will grow in many regions of the world due to the epidemic. We are seeing a rise in religious fundamentalism in places where states are weak. We are seeing a decrease in international aid. We must be prepared for a situation in which regional conflicts will increase rather than decrease during and in the aftermath of the epidemic. This will create additional problems for all of us, for we will not succeed in any way in isolating such conflicts.

But some things will certainly remain the same. For example, relations between Russia and the West in the form they were established in 2014 are proving to be very strong and firm. The epidemic will not change anything about that. I do not think either side is prepared to make any concessions. The West’s sanctions against Russia will remain. I see no possibility on the horizon for a breakthrough in respect of Ukraine; rather, the [influence of the] epidemic there carries a minus sign. The next Normandy Four summit was due to take place in April, but now no one knows when it will happen. I also have no faith in positive developments on the subject of arms-control agreements. Of course, I hope that the START III treaty will be extended, but unfortunately so far there are no grounds for such a hope. [Kortunov is referring to the 2010 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between the US and Russia, which will expire at the end of 2020.—*JP*]

Clearly, the cost of the epidemic will be high. In some ways, Russia’s situation is specific because, in addition to the economic crisis accompanying the pandemic, it was hit by the sudden reduction in oil prices, which will result in a decrease in gas prices.

You claim that the role of international institutions is starting to decline. Does this benefit the Kremlin?

On the one hand, the Russian leadership—at least its current leadership—has always been cautious about international institutions. For example, up to this point Russia has not had serious experience of cooperation with the EU; it has always preferred to deal with individual states rather than the EU as a whole. [Russian president Vladimir] Putin once said how fortunate it was that Russia did not belong to any alliances. For Putin and his team, national sovereignty is very important. In that sense, everything we can see now, what is happening now, confirms Putin’s views of the contemporary world. In a tactical sense there are clearly certain opportunities for Russia in what is happening. However, if we look at Russia’s strategic interests, then in my opinion Russia *needs* international, multinational, institutions because it is getting harder and harder for a country to cope alone, not only with epidemics, but with securing economic growth and dealing with problems related to security.

How might global power relations change as a result of the pandemic? You already mentioned the rise of China, but what about other major powers in the world, such as the US, the EU and Russia?

It is difficult to say, because at best we are only near the middle of the epidemic. It seems to me that this crisis will not create new tendencies, but rather reinforce existing ones. The strengthening of China will continue, even faster and more and more strikingly. We are seeing a very interesting development in the US. Usually when problems such as war, an extensive crisis or an economic downturn occur there, we see a phenomenon the Americans call “rallying round the flag”: everyone gathers around the nation’s leader, the president, whose popularity rises sharply; internal problems recede into the background and the nation mobilises to fight the external danger. It is very interesting that this has not happened at present. [Kortunov is one of Russia’s most distinguished experts on the US.—*JP*] Quite the contrary: political and social polarisation has increased. Therefore, it

seems to me that, unfortunately, the US will emerge from this crisis weakened. I cannot see how Russia could strengthen its position [in the world] in the aftermath of the pandemic because, in addition to the coronavirus and economic problems, we have the sharp decrease in oil prices with its associated problems. As a rule, such crises are much more dangerous and painful for emerging economies like India, Brazil and Russia than they are for the developed Western countries.

Speaking of Europe, the coronavirus has coincided with a generational change among national leaders and crises in political parties in several EU countries. I predict that the next few years will be difficult for the EU, and a great deal depends on whether its leaders can maintain unity and solidarity, not allowing the populists to take the initiative, as well as retaining enough power to enter into agreements. Indeed, we can see even now how difficult it is for them to agree on the budget and common strategies to combat the virus. However, I still hope that all of this will help the EU to find new ideas and mechanisms, perhaps even to accelerate the generational shift in political leadership, which is also a very important issue.

Two years ago you wrote a long article in *Kommersant* on the growth of Russia’s international influence. You emphasised that this was expressed primarily in only one dimension—politico-military—and that Russia’s influence on global economic, social, financial and technological processes was small. At the end of the article you said that if the centre of world politics shifted to non-military areas, Russia’s influence would unavoidably begin to devalue. Are you already seeing this? Is Russia’s influence beginning to decline?

It depends on the timescale you are looking at. If one thinks of today or tomorrow, then many Russian politicians have grounds for saying to their Western colleagues: “Look, you kept telling us that welfare is primary, economic growth is primary, technological innovation is primary, but look where that has led you. None of those things were able to stop or even soften the crisis; international

institutions are demonstrating their ineffectiveness.” Today’s situation is very convenient from the perspective of the traditional narrative maintained by Russia’s current leadership. But if we look towards the near future, I am sure that what is happening today will mean the world will transition faster to a new technological platform, in terms of people moving to distance working, the decline of raw-materials-based economies and the prioritising of climate issues. Yes, Russia’s influence may temporarily increase, but in the longer term it is quite possible it will decline. The question is: how will Russia be able to adapt to the new socio-economic realities? I think this will happen very painfully, and of course it cannot occur without losses. Russia will have to face very serious problems.

In an article published in April, Igor Ivanov, a former Russian foreign minister [1998–2004] wrote: “Nuclear weapons and other contemporary weapons systems cannot fight the coronavirus, or changes in climate, uncontrollable migration, and other challenges facing humankind. The old instruments guaranteeing security, which we have inherited from a previous era, are today pointlessly wasting huge resources that could be allocated to science, education and medicine.” This is a brave thing to say in the context of Russia. What new instruments do you think Ivanov had in mind?

In Russia there are two positions on what the country’s basis for exerting influence in the world might be. Many believe that the most important is military power, and that Russia will continue to be a global superpower as long as it is able to maintain nuclear power parity with the US and is able to carry out operations in distant theatres of war, such as Syria. In other words, as long as Russia is capable of participating in the arms race. If you take all of this away, Russia becomes a regional superpower with not much influence, facing a great deal of problems with its neighbours who are economically much more powerful. The other position is that Russia’s influence is determined not so much by its government, but by its society. Russia continues to be a country with powerful scientific potential, sufficient energy for innovation, strong opportunities for educational development, and so on.

Depending on which of these positions you choose, you can imagine completely different profiles for Russia’s future role in the world. If we proceed from the assumption that what is happening now will continue for a long time—the crisis in international law, the crisis in international institutions, the inauguration of a protectionist era, reductions in free movement of people across borders, changes in migration flows, a new bipolarity between the US and China—in such a world the effect of these new means of influence are limited. However, if what we are seeing is a so-called glitch, which will swiftly pass—though not without consequences—then Russia will have to contend with a new world in which one must make use of completely different means of influence from those being used today in order to defend one’s claims to be a global superpower.



Andrey Kortunov believes there will be a generational shift in political leadership in the near future.

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What new instruments for security issues did Ivanov have in mind?

Our instruments must match the hierarchy of our challenges. If we spend the majority of our resources based on a highly improbable scenario—today almost no one takes the possibility of a nuclear conflict seriously—believing that terrorism is the greatest threat to global security in the near future, then we need to reformulate our priorities and all focus on, for example, Afghanistan as the single

source of terrorism. If we think that the primary threat to the world lies in climate change, then we must invest resources in the transition to a new kind of economy. This would not mean the level of rhetoric, but the level of real budgets, real actions and programmes. The other aspect that Ivanov had in mind was that it is imperative to restore a system for negotiations, for example between Russia and NATO. If this is not possible, temporary, ad hoc negotiating formats would have

to be created. For example, those participating in negotiations on cybersecurity and arms control do not have to be governments but, rather, representatives of business and civil society. Today it is no longer possible to work with the instruments and methods that were used during the Cold War, but we persist in doing that.

How do you think the world will recognise that instead of military conflict there will be new common enemies, such as climate changes and pandemics? Are the superpowers finally prepared to take such problems more seriously, leaving their mutual disputes aside? Or is this over-idealistic, even wishful thinking?

To my mind the whole problem is that behind the current, traditional conception of dangers lie very far-reaching bureaucratic, economic and personal interests. In terms of national security, every country has a huge machine that operates on its own logic and inertia. This mechanism is served by a large number of bureaucrats, businesses, arms manufacturers, etc. These people will always defend their view on things, the old view. In the West it is apparently easier to say [we are changing our attitude] than in Russia, because the latter has an authoritarian regime that intervenes in attempts to turn things around. However, I still believe that if you go to the Pentagon or NATO headquarters in Brussels, you can find this inertia there as well. That is why it is so difficult to change priorities; this will be a long and agonising process which will meet with strong resistance.

I think Russia can only return to the West if some Russian leadership sets itself a goal to undertake serious social and economic modernisation.

I keep hoping that the coronavirus will be a turning point, and that afterwards it will be impossible to maintain this obsolete conception of threats to security. I predict that, even without the virus, we are on the threshold of great changes, because of the generational shift among world leaders. Trump is over 70, Biden almost 80, [UN Secretary-General António] Guterres over 70, Xi and Putin are approaching 70, and Borrell and Merkel are far from young anymore either. In the next two to three years, perhaps by 2024, a serious generational shift will take place in many countries. I very much hope that new people will come to power who no longer remember the Cold War and have a completely different outlook on the world. Their views are already different. For me one of the current representatives of the new generation is [Ukrainian president Volodymyr] Zelensky. One can see immediately that in negotiations with Putin or Merkel, for example, his style is totally different. Soon there will be many more leaders like that.

Do you think that in the next few years there will also be a generational shift in leadership in Russia?

The laws of biology still apply; one cannot do anything about that. But let us not simplify, either: this new generation in Russia is very different. I would not say that the whole younger generation is liberal, but the older generation is a conservative one. The thing is that the world of the younger generation is different; they just live differently—quite apart from their political views, in fact. These changes will come to Russia, just as elsewhere in the world. It is not within Putin’s power to stop them.

At last year’s Lennart Meri Conference, Kadri Liik also talked about a generational shift in Russia. Granted, she was speaking more from the viewpoint that among the future shapers of Russia’s foreign policy there are signs of alienation from the West, and this may entail a situation in which the West is no longer the point of comparison for Russia as it has been for centuries. On the basis of interviews Liik had conducted, she claimed that the older generation of those shaping Russian foreign policy is disappointed in the West, but the younger generation no longer thinks of the West as a partner. Do you agree with her?

In my view, the younger generation does not think of a separate East and West. They might work or study in Milan one year and in Shanghai the next, and feel just as comfortable in both. The only difference between these places is their politics, but this is not as important to them as it is for the older generation. To answer your question directly, I think Russia can only return to the West if some Russian leadership sets itself a goal to undertake serious social and economic

modernisation. At present we just do not have the social and economic demand for cooperation with the West. If all of your exports are crude oil and gas, then you do not care to whom you sell it. Russia would not be able to copy China’s model, because we just do not have that kind of demographic and cultural background. In this case, Russia’s only option would be the Western one, because culturally and psychologically we are simply closer to the West.

It is said that nothing unites better than a common enemy—at present the coronavirus pandemic. But if I understand correctly, you do not think that in the short term relations between Russia and the West can improve?

I cannot see any objective tendencies on either side, in fact. Both sides view this “new normal” as an acceptable format for relations.

Do you not have even a shred of optimism about the new agreements on arms control?

If we talk about the technical content of arms control, this is not particularly of interest now. It does not matter what a military official in Moscow or NATO says to you; is there a problem with that? Six years have already passed since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine; we have ended all those arms treaties, but has anything happened as a result? Has war broken out? Has there even been a single serious incident? Has a crazy arms race begun? Nothing like this has happened. Thus, it is possible to keep living this way without making any new agreements. At the political level, for Putin and his team, entering into such an agreement is important as a sign of the restoration of political dialogue and, to some extent, returning to “business as usual”. But this is just what the West does not want to allow for Putin, because “business as usual” would in fact mean acknowledging Russia had won. I cannot see how this [problem] can be overcome, nor do I see any stimuli for agreeing a new treaty on conventional armed forces. [Russia removed itself from the 1990 CFE Treaty in 2007, as a result of which it no longer served any purpose.—JP] I would be glad to be wrong.

You said that the UNSC has not been able to prove its effectiveness in fighting the pandemic. Estonia is currently a non-permanent member of the Council, and has just begun its month-long term as presidency. So everything related to the UNSC is of great interest to Estonia at the moment. Why have the

permanent members been unable to agree over the epidemic? Why are they not interested? Estonia actually proposed a draft resolution, but it was not even seriously discussed.

The main reason lies in the differences between the US and China. In March, when China was president of the Council, a resolution was being discussed and the US tried to write into it China’s responsibility for the spread of the pandemic, while China sought to include a statement that Trump continued to engage in one-sided politics and trade wars, which interfered with joint efforts to fight the pandemic. They were simply unable to come to an agreement. I think that if there had been the will to do so, they might have come to agree in this question, but there is a deeper problem in the background that touches upon national sovereignty. If we want to cooperate, if you will, on the pandemic, for example, we all need to have accurate and reliable statistics; international health organisations must have guaranteed access to data; countries must not conceal information; there cannot be competition over the development of a vaccine. In order to engage in cooperation at that level, there has to be a certain breakthrough in mentality. In my view, the superpowers are not very prepared for this. How many deaths have to occur? How large an economic downturn does there have to be? How extensive does a crisis have to be for them to change their mind? I do not have an answer. Terrorism, the great financial crisis of 2008, and today’s three million infected and 200,000 deaths in the world: none of these have been sufficient. That makes one sad.

As a renowned expert on the US, what is your prediction for the US presidential elections?

Three months ago, I would have answered without a second thought that Trump would be re-elected. Today I think it is 50–50. His campaign was to be based on economic achievements—how everything had gone extremely well during his term and there had been a rise in average income. At present we know that the economy has collapsed and there is no way it will rebound to its previous level by November. Trump’s principles for fighting the epidemic do not strengthen his position, either, and he is being criticised for many things. It is very difficult to explain why the US, which spends three trillion dollars on its healthcare system, has the world’s highest number of cases and deaths. This clearly works against Trump. Technically, what also works against him is that he is a crowd person, who performs extremely well at large gatherings. In that respect, he would win over the uncharismatic Biden hands down. Of course, now that the election campaign will no longer be like that, this gives a helping hand to Biden. Of course, this does not mean that Biden has already won.

1 See <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3607353>.
2 See <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4326474>.

The strengthening of China will continue, even faster and more and more strikingly.

Japan's Search for Order and Stability: Navigating Chinese-Japanese-US Triangular Relations

Tokyo does not want the Cold War back



PRIVATE COLLECTION

Ryo Sahashi
University of Tokyo

Dr Sahashi specialises in the international politics of East Asia. He is the author of the book In a Search for Coexistence: the United States and Two Chinas during the Cold War¹ and co-edited Looking for Leadership: The Dilemma of Political Leadership in Japan². He has written on the impact of the rise of China on Asian order, Japan's security policy, and Japanese-Taiwanese relations. He is currently writing his next book on US-Chinese competition and leading two group studies on the alliance and order since the end of the Cold War.

Over the last two decades, it has often been pointed out that Japan's policy towards China has become increasingly tough. Many researchers argue that Japan has strengthened its balancing strategy against China through a diplomatic offensive and measures such as increasing its defence budget and changing the legal platform in the "Peace Constitution". In addition to territorial and historical issues, they argue, Japan is wary of losing its status as a major power in the international community and regional order. There is an argument that strong nationalism and even the return of Japanese militarism should be considered. Analysts of Japanese-Chinese relations emphasise that the strategic confrontation between Japan and China will not be neutralised.

These interpretations have certain limitations in explaining Japanese-Chinese relations and Japan's foreign and security policies. First, the relationship between Japan and China has been restored even despite the history issue and the political confrontation over the Senkaku Islands. It is true that Japan has not relaxed its guard against China. Over the past three years, however, the two governments have come to terms and significantly improved relations. Before the Covid-19 pandemic changed the political schedule, since the spring of 2017 the two governments had frequently held top-level meetings, and succeeded in some substantial easing of tensions. A state visit by Xi Jinping to Japan planned for this spring has been postponed, but it is still likely that Japan's government will host him in a few years' time.

While Japan's national security policy has undergone significant changes in recent years in terms of the defence budget, equipment, and reinterpretation of the Constitution relating to the right to collective self-defence, the Japanese government has been promoting cooperation with Beijing. In addition to third-country cooperation in aid policy, Tokyo is promoting negotiations on the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free-trade area that include China, and it is not excluding the possibility of Chinese participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Although Japan is not a member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (a Chinese initiative), it intends to coexist with it while maintaining the tradition of providing the president of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and promoting the rules of quality infrastructure. Assuming that Japan's China policy is balanced, maintaining Japan's status and

satisfying nationalism, certain things remain to be explained.

What are the objectives of Japan's diplomacy towards China and how should we explain the development of Japanese policy in recent years? It is indisputable that the alliance with the US remains crucial for Japan, but is Tokyo's approach to China consistent with US policy towards Beijing?

This essay argues that the goal of Japan's foreign policy has consistently been to maintain the regional order through stability and interdependence, and that the promotion of rules and norms, the Japan-US alliance, and diplomacy towards China have been identified as important means of achieving this goal. Its defence policy is merely one part of its efforts to stabilise the environment through deterrence. While its defence policy emphasises its preparedness against regional contingencies and the integration of the Japan Self-Defense Forces and US military services, Japan continues to pursue a policy response that takes account of the reality of regional socio-economic integration. Some policymakers candidly explain that solidifying the relationship with Washington is useful in managing and pressuring Beijing. In essence, Japan's foreign policy has aimed at "stabilising" the situation through economic and rules-based engagement and multifaceted diplomacy.

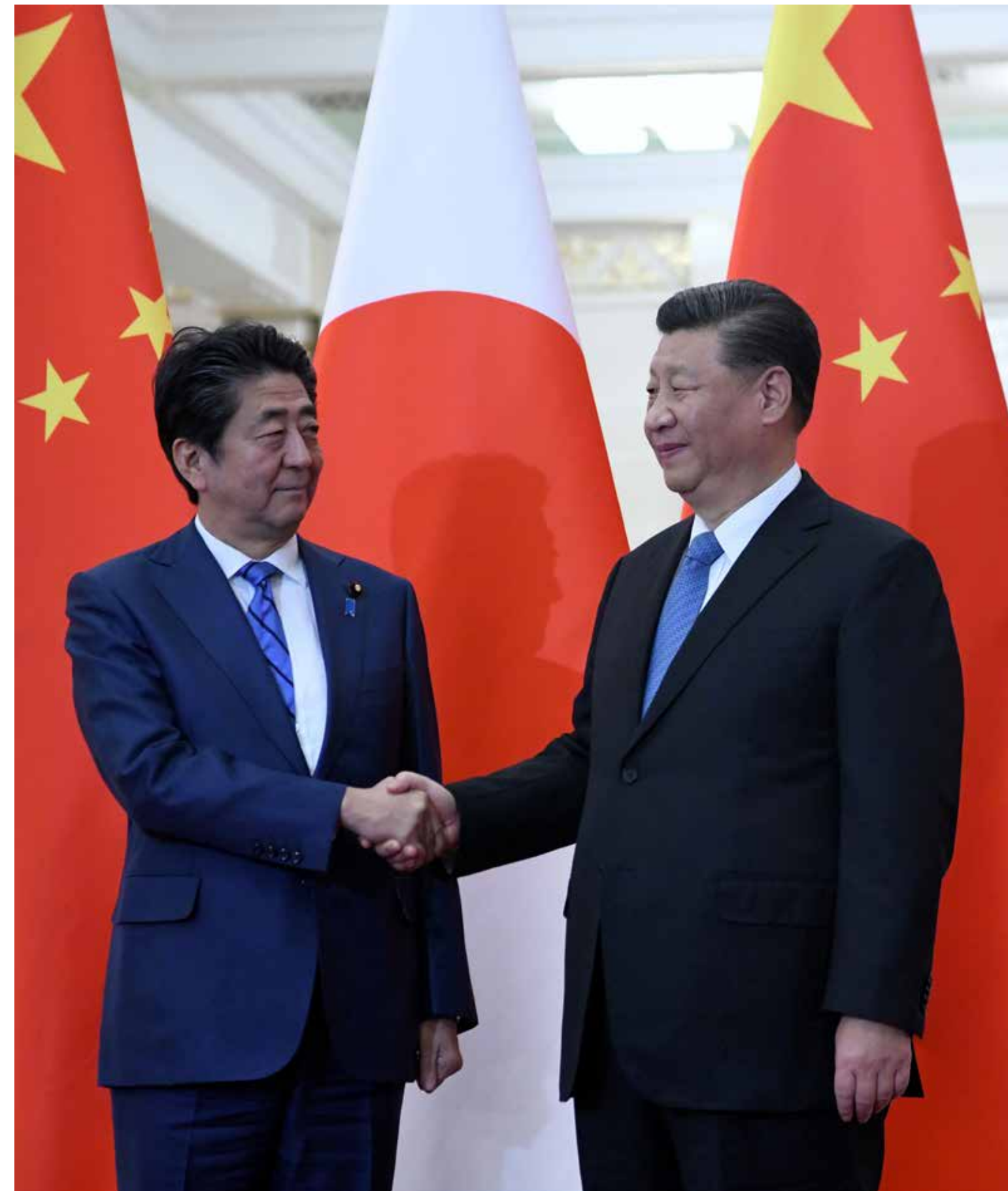
Japan seeks stability rather than status. Stability is the virtue in Japan's strategy. This way of thinking is not always the case with policy planners, since each engages in their own responsibility of diplomacy in bureaucratic silos, crafting Japan's diplomacy for each bilateral and functional agenda. However, it is clear from the practice of recent diplomacy that Japan's foreign policy is not intended to change regional stability for the sake of ideologically motivated goals or bilateral pressure from Washington. From this perspective, China is not yet seen as an existential threat but, rather, as a neighbour destined to seek co-existence, but which could also become the greatest potential destabiliser.

While Japan's national security policy has undergone significant changes in recent years in terms of the defence budget, equipment, and reinterpretation of the Constitution relating to the right to collective self-defence, the Japanese government has been promoting cooperation with Beijing.

Japan has certainly competed with China. At the beginning of this century, the two governments were serious rivals in the politics of Asian regionalism, in addition to dealing with historical issues. In 2010 and 2012, Japan saw the clearer risk associated with rising Chinese power and aspirations, over the Senkaku Islands. Faced with China's maritime expansion, Japan was more conscious of its homeland security, and the proximity to rising China creates a gap between Japan, other Asian countries and the non-resident powers. Asian policymakers were seriously concerned about globalists in the Obama administration setting the US foreign-policy agenda. The recent article by an anonymous Japanese official, "Y.A.", in *The American Interest*³ is a good example of frustration among Japanese policymakers over Obama's China policy, especially in the second term.

However, while Japan has been much concerned over its territorial and historical issues, it does not fully appreciate the virtue of confrontation between the US and China as much as Y.A.'s article insists. Like Europe, Asia is divided over the Trump administration's confrontational China policy and Japan's public support for the American position in some key areas such as 5G telecommunications, while it keeps quiet about worries over Washington's approach which could undermine its leadership and reliability in the eyes of allies and partners. Following the outbreak of Covid-19, the Trump administration's criticism of China is becoming more ideological and assertive, and Japan's worries persist. These include fears over the US-led decoupling efforts to push Chinese firms out of the global value chain, in which many Japanese companies produce and deliver intermediate goods as a part of the supply-chain network. Japan is not changing its support for the US-led order, nor does it support hedging in the sense of swinging between American and Chinese leadership. It simply fears that the loss of American leadership will result in a leaderless international order where its interests cannot be sustained.⁴

The essence of Japan's historically grounded approach towards China is



Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe, shakes hands with Chinese president Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on 23 December 2019.

REUTERS/SCANPIX

to engage, exchange, and maintain dialogue to work out differences over aims, preferences and actions. Military and diplomatic pressure has recently been overemphasised, and the author fears this makes it difficult to grasp the big picture of Japan's strategic thinking. There are several good analyses, however. For example, Sheila Smith argues that Japan's policy towards China was a process of "adaptation" to Chinese growth. Richard Samuels points out that the dream of Japan's strategists is to combine East Asian integration with the Japan-US alliance. However, many recent newspaper and journal articles on Japanese foreign policy omit such balanced perspectives,

simply focusing on Tokyo's change of policy. Japan has not lost its desire to deal with the problem through a combination of engagement, pressure, open regionalism and global governance.

Inclusive order-building is another good example of Japan's approach. Tokyo has proposed a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), and it is to be understood in this context. As the author of this essay argues with Tomohiko Satake in another paper:

unlike the commonly held view that the FOIP symbolizes Japan's containment posture toward China under the Abe

government, Japan's FOIP vision aims at maintaining an open and inclusive regional order that incorporates all regional countries into a common framework. Rather than directly targeting at a particular country or excluding it, it aims at strengthening resiliency and connectivity of the region so that it can successfully accommodate the rise of China in the future. To that end, Japan has accelerated its efforts in defense, economic, and diplomatic terms to establish a free and open regional order with other like-minded countries.⁵

In reality, Japan continues to deepen a range of functional cooperation with

Given the weight of China and Japan in the balance of power, such a bilateral development would reshape the regional political landscape. A forthcoming, not yet rescheduled, summit between China and Japan would be a good litmus test in Japan's search for order and stability in Asia.

China and other regional states simultaneously, and proposes new rules in key areas, such as reliable free data flow. Tokyo even asserts its approach officially as rules-based bridge-building between the US and China. Without the Chinese presence, most efforts will not succeed. As Prime Minister Abe Shinzo asserted in Beijing in October 2018, Japan's interests lie in changing from confrontation to a cooperative relationship. It hopes never to see another Cold War in the region.

Most Japanese believe that China must change. As Akio Takahara, Japan's leading expert on China, argues, Beijing does not understand the harsh public perception of China in Japan and the fact that it has been exacerbated by China's behaviour. In the East China Sea and the South China Sea, China is trying to fix the current situation by negotiating with other countries while challenging the status quo over the last decade. There is a fundamental lack of understanding among Chinese policymakers that such behaviour is creating unrest in the region and creating a hostile environment towards Beijing.

Japan's constructive and inclusive approach requires a response with a substantial outcome. That is why Takahara insists that Japan and China should jointly send a message for peaceful order-building when Xi Jinping's state visit to Japan eventually takes place, and he even proposes that Xi should speak of his intention to cooperate to achieve FOIP.⁶ A promise by China's leader to halt maritime activity would also help to reassure the region. Given the weight of China and Japan in the balance of power, such a bilateral development would reshape the regional political landscape. A forthcoming, not yet rescheduled, summit between China and Japan would be a good litmus test in Japan's search for order and stability in Asia.

¹ Tokyo: Keiso, 2015.

² Co-edited with James Gannon. Tokyo and New York: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2015.

³ Y.A., "The Virtues of a Confrontational China strategy", *The American Interest*, 10 April 2020. Available at: <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2020/04/10/the-virtues-of-a-confrontational-china-strategy/>.

⁴ Ryo Sahashi, "Covid-19: A leaderless age is fast approaching", *ThinkChina*, 29 April 2020. Available at: <https://www.thinkchina.sg/covid-19-leaderless-age-fast-approaching>.

⁵ Ryo Sahashi and Tomohiko Satake, "Rise of China and Japan's vision for free and open Indo-Pacific", *Journal of Contemporary China* (forthcoming, 2020).

⁶ http://www.gaikei-web.jp/test/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Vol60_p12-17_PostponementofPresidentXiJinpingsstatevisittoJapan.pdf (in Japanese).

Building the Post-pandemic World

The West should pull itself together in order to compete with China and Russia



Ambassador Kurt Volker

Kurt Volker is a former US Ambassador to NATO (2008–9) and US Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations (2017–19). He is currently Senior International Advisor at BGR Group.

Authoritarian regimes and top-down economies will act quickly to strengthen their global economic, political and security positions in the post-pandemic world. Democracies risk being insular, slow to recover, and slower still to think globally again. In the post-pandemic world, free societies need their own vision and strategy for the future and must band together quickly and decisively to advance a global order that preserves freedom.

The Challenges Ahead

Let us start from a troubling premise. In the next year or two, we will not conquer the coronavirus—we will learn to live with it. The first step will be establishing protocols to make the resumption of life and economic activity as safe as possible. Next will be development of treatments and vaccines. In a few years, we may begin to see what we used to think of as “normal” begin to return. In the meantime, however, just as with the Spanish flu of 1918–20, the virus will kill those it kills, and build antibodies in those it does not, long before we have a medical means of preventing spread of the disease.

The consequence of this is that we will need strategies for building a new global order while the coronavirus is still with us. We cannot wait until the disease is gone.

The magnitude of the changes to the global political, economic and security environment should not be underestimated. While we are still learning to live with the coronavirus, the global economy will have already experienced a shock not seen since World War II. It is not a question of making minor adjustments to return to the world we knew. It will require devising new ideas and strategies to prosper in a world that will never be the same.

Authoritarian regimes enter this challenging new world with a few distinct advantages. They have greater means and established practice in controlling their societies. They can prioritise resources for government functions and action, whether at home or abroad. They care about not the individual, but the state system itself. They have top-down control of state-owned enterprises and national resources. Many of Russia's state enterprises may be inefficient and lacking in competitiveness in normal times, but now they will benefit from size, government backing and the ability to act strategically and bend the rules in ways that their market-driven competitors cannot. China's industries have been successful

in normal times, and may be even more so now.

Already, some authoritarian regimes have used the coronavirus as a cover for expanding their control within society—from monitoring populations to restricting freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. Just as concerning, free societies that are normally averse to such controls have also adopted similar measures in order to prevent the spread of the virus. The result: people in both authoritarian and free states have accepted greater restrictions on freedom in the name of public health. We are becoming inured to a heavy hand from the state.

A further risk is the politics of distraction—something at which authoritarian regimes are also poised to excel. They already use disinformation campaigns and aggressive external policies to distort public understanding, undermine competitors and justify domestic repression in the name of preserving the nation. Democracies do not play this game well, if at all.

Authoritarian states have their vulnerabilities as well. Their societies may have been more gravely affected by the coronavirus than publicly acknowledged. Their instinctive repression of the free flow of information impedes effective policy responses. Natural resource industries—such as oil, gas and minerals—may be slower to recover than other sectors, given low demand. Many state-driven enterprises tend to be large, inefficient and laden with unnecessary cost centres. All this being said, however, we already see signs that China is seeking to position itself for advantage in the post-pandemic world, and Russia will seek to do so as well.

Wanted: a Foreign Policy with Vision and Strategy

Faced with these looming pressures coming out of the pandemic, the West needs a clear vision for building a world in which freedom is protected, economies, trade and wealth can again grow, and the influence and assertion of power by authoritarian systems is blunted and ultimately reversed. To accomplish this, free societies must band together and offer an inclusive vision of a free world, rather than one that simply raises national barriers.

Unfortunately, no matter where one looks in the West, one does not see that kind of leadership today. As a long-term trend, we see mainstream political forces losing

If there is a single fault with Western policy today, it is our defaulting into a reactive, inward-looking, minimising approach to the world—one that seeks to protect our narrow selves against the buffeting currents of changing times—rather than stepping forward with a vision for advancing freedom, prosperity and security, and a strategy for getting there.

public credibility, while more extreme nationalist and populist movements have harnessed public disenchantment. In some countries, this trend has been reversed temporarily—partly out of public hope that governments will step up in battling the virus, and partly out of concern that these populist movements are not up to the task of governing the country through a crisis. But this trend has yet to be tested in an election.

At the same time, one response of established governments has been to adopt some of the nationalist policies advocated by populist politicians, such as controlling immigration and borders more tightly. The motives are different—fighting the spread of the virus rather than preventing the spread of immigrants—but the effect is the same. In this sense, populist and nationalist movements may indeed be exerting tremendous influence on national policies, even when not in power.

What is needed, however, is to rekindle a sense of free societies seeing each other as allies in a common struggle rather than as disparate nations seeking only to protect themselves. The strategy of authoritarians will be to discredit and divide free societies. We need to pull ourselves together.

Echoes of the Past

This is not the first time the West has faced a brave new world and needed to put together a vision and strategy for the future.

Such was the case in the late 1940s and early 1950s. That's when, out of the ashes of World War II, Western leaders made



A woman wearing a face cover cycles along a preserved segment of the Berlin Wall on 10 April 2020 amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The fall of the wall ended the era of the Cold War, but now the world must learn to live with the coronavirus.

several key judgements and based their policies upon them. First, they concluded that the future of the victorious democratic community in the world depended on the growth of democracy, independence, prosperity and security in the world as a whole. They had an outward-looking vision.

They therefore believed it was essential to establish institutions that would protect and advance the cause of freedom, security and justice in the world. Out of that came the United Nations, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Bretton Woods institutions, the European Coal and Steel Community (which later became the EU), the International Court of Justice, NATO and more. It wasn't perfect, but it certainly represented a clear vision and strategy for the long term, and it brought tremendous results.

Another such occasion was in the 1980s, when Ronald Reagan, working closely with leaders like Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl—but against popular currents at the time—decided to push back on communism globally, outspend on defence and security, support human rights activists in Central and Eastern Europe, and call for the leader of the Soviet Union to “tear down that wall”. These policies, too, were imperfect. But it was a foreign policy with a vision, based on freedom and democratic values, tied to a long-term strategy, and it paid off.

A third time was after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Again, Western leaders

embraced a greater vision—understanding that freedom, prosperity and security in the West depended upon all of Europe being “whole, free, and at peace”. Instead of building a higher wall around the West, its leaders reached out to people in Central and Eastern Europe.

Today, publics in Western democracies are moving in the opposite direction. They seek protection—from disease, from migration, from economic competition. They reaffirm national identity over the investment in international systems that benefit all who share democratic values. Politicians in these democratic systems, needing to win elections, are following these public attitudes rather than leading them to higher ground.

An Agenda for the Future

If there is a single fault with Western policy today, it is our defaulting into a reactive, inward-looking, minimising approach to the world—one that seeks to protect our narrow selves against the buffeting currents of changing times—rather than stepping forward with a vision for advancing freedom, prosperity and security, and a strategy for getting there. As we enter a post-pandemic world, this is what needs to change.

Such an ambitious Western agenda should at a minimum be based on the following principles:

- Free societies have more in common than they have differences. We need to unify around protecting core values rather than arguing among ourselves.

- There is no longer a sharp line between military threats to freedom and information, cyber, economic and other means of asserting authoritarian power. Our responses need to address this full spectrum of challenge.

- Freedom, prosperity and security are universal human longings and should be accessible to all. While free societies must band together to protect ourselves today, we must always be determined to welcome other countries that have embraced the same values.

- International organisations need to advance the principles of freedom and security. If they are ineffective, failing in their duties, or unwilling to enforce their own rules and standards, they need to change.

To advance these principles, several practical steps need to be taken. A few suggestions would include:

- calling a series of summits of existing democracy-based institutions (the EU, NATO, the G7) and perhaps finally launching the “D-10”—adding Australia, India and South Korea to the G7—to develop a common, democracy-driven, post-pandemic global agenda;

- identifying core infrastructure—energy, cyber, health systems, etc.—that needs to be secure within such a democratic community, without dependence on authoritarian regimes. Given the vulnerabilities demonstrated in supply chains, businesses need to give higher priority to security, rather than simply being driven only by lowest cost. This

should touch everything from 5G technology to protective health equipment;

- launching new negotiations to create a Transatlantic Investment, Growth and Resilience (TIGRE) pact, designed to spur growth, eliminate all tariffs and establish the single largest free market in the world, based on democracies that respect the rule of law. This should include Canada and Mexico from the outset, and later be open to all democracies that adopt the same rules;

- reviving the process of NATO and EU enlargement so that any European nation that meets the standards of membership is invited to join. In the case of territories occupied by Russia in some invitee countries, NATO and the invitee country would commit not to invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, and commit to no first use of force and only peaceful reintegration of these territories;

- establishing among this group of democracies a process for review and recommendations for reform and more effective use of global institutions—including in particular “standards police” such as the OECD and the WTO.

Ultimately, advancing any of these practical suggestions will require national leaders to adopt such goals and build such an international approach. This may seem unlikely, if not impossible, given the current state of national leadership today. But perhaps the coronavirus is just the kind of shock such leaders need to aspire to a higher set of goals in a post-pandemic world.

China in Europe: Facing Up to the Threat

The West should have a comprehensive China strategy



Andrew A. Michta

Andrew A. Michta is Dean of the College of International and Security Studies at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies.

In the wake of the Wuhan virus pandemic, the West is finally waking up to the reality that, after decades of unfettered access to our technology, research, educational institutions and market, the People's Republic of China has become a threat to the post-Cold War liberal democratic order. Thirty-plus years of blindly pursuing "globalisation" since 1989—arguably the most ill-conceived foreign- and national-security policy *Gestalt* the United States and its allies have pursued to date—has left our critical supply chains dependent on decisions taken by Beijing, an adversary intent not simply on revising the existing balance of power but on replacing the US as both the largest economic and military power and the normative hub of the modern world. The post-Cold War belief that "history ended" and that ideological battles that had racked the West since the rise of Marxist socialism were settled once and for all led us down the rabbit hole of effectively unlearning the lessons that helped us overcome the Soviet communist challenge. Instead, for three decades the elite policy consensus was that China's "export-driven modernisation" would eventually bring about the opening-up of the country's political system, for as the Chinese middle class rose it would demand greater political participation, bringing in the end a true convergence between the West and the East—a transnational connectivity when it came to norms, values and attitudes. The brave new Friedmansesque "flat world" was to be the end game.

The simplistic reductivity inherent in the ideology of globalisation aside, the sheer absence of historical and cultural grounding in our policy of the last 30 years has been breath-taking. Even a cursory review of what has historically happened when nations rapidly industrialise should have been enough to make us realise that the China likely to emerge from this "globalisation experiment" would be more nationalistic and geostrategically assertive. There were plenty of warning signs even before the current pandemic that the PRC was rapidly morphing into arguably the greatest foe the West has confronted in the past two centuries, and yet—whether through strategic myopia, naiveté or sheer greed—until the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States, our policy elites continued to adhere to the same paradigm when it came to relations with Beijing. If there is any silver lining to the tragedy that this pandemic has wrought on us all, it is that the era of "globalisation" is finally coming to an end. The US—and, increasingly, its allies in Europe—are waking up to the fact that what was touted

Since 2008, the landscape of Chinese foreign direct investments in the EU has changed dramatically, with Beijing targeting not just the wreckage of the Greek real estate market and the increasingly cash-strapped governments of southern Europe, but also cutting deep into the most developed economies in Europe.

as "free trade" was nothing of the kind. Beijing's predatory mercantilist policies proceeded apace, America was deindustrialised and deficits in both America's and Europe's trade with China continued to escalate, while China succeeded in transferring vast amounts of intellectual property from Western companies and extorting for IP in exchange for market access.¹

As accessing US research and technology has become more difficult on account of policies that the Trump administration has been putting in place over the past three years, communist China has turned its attention to Europe. Although some cases of China raiding European technology have been given special attention—the acquisition of Germany's Kuka Robotics being arguably one of the best-known cases²—China has been ever more aggressively ploughing money into European companies and real estate since the 2008 financial crisis. Since then, the landscape of Chinese foreign direct investment in the EU has changed dramatically, with Beijing targeting not just the wreckage of the Greek real estate market and the increasingly cash-strapped governments of southern Europe, but also cutting deep into the most developed economies in Europe. Beijing's acquisitions in Europe went from 840 million dollars invested in 2008 to annual Chinese FDI in Europe of 42 billion dollars in 2017. In the process, China has taken over some 360 European companies.³ This puts the economic crisis in Europe generated by the coronavirus pandemic in a new light for, unless governments take decisive action to limit Chinese FDI, the PRC will be able to scoop up a multitude of European companies wrecked by the crisis at a discount comparable to its real estate bonanza in Greece.

All of Europe is currently targeted by Beijing's strategy to leverage its position in the European market. China's investments have been hitting all of Europe's principal economies, with the largest among them (the UK, Italy, Germany and France) attracting the lion's share of Chinese FDI, with 70 billion dollars in cumulative Chinese investment in the

UK, 31 billion dollars in Italy, 20 billion dollars in Germany and 13 billion dollars in France. While in Germany the debate over China's purchase of Kuka became headline news, equally important has been Chinese investment in the flagships of German industry; for instance, China invested one billion dollars in Daimler AG, becoming the top shareholder in the company. Berlin has become even more aware of Beijing's investment trajectory in Europe since the launch in 2015 of China's "Made in China 2025" strategy, the ruling Communist Party's (CPC) plan to dominate key high-tech industries, including aerospace, robotics, biotech and artificial intelligence. Arguably, the most spectacular Chinese investment in Europe has been the new Hinkley Point nuclear plant in southern England, with one-third of the project funded by China.⁴ The same pattern can be seen in the Chinese government's penetration of European financial markets, with Beijing targeting the UK in particular as the hub of its European operations. Moreover, Chinese investment in Europe in the past decade has shifted from opportunistic FDI to strategically targeted purchases aimed at transforming Europe from the traditional transatlantic Rimland of Eurasia into the end point of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative transcontinental supply chain, as Beijing seeks to reverse the centuries-old relationship between maritime and land domains that has historically favoured the West.⁵

As Beijing continues its push to transform Western economies into tributaries to its own market, the US and Europe are beginning to take stock of the damage already done and think of potential solutions. The most important and bitterly learned lesson during this pandemic crisis has been that three decades of "globalisation" has resulted in a radical centralisation of market networks that has effectively kneecapped Western governments when it comes to freedom of manoeuvre in a crisis. With a majority of antibiotics and other medicines needed by the US made in China and India, and a large proportion of PPE suits, gloves and goggles coming out of China, the US



Workers at the nuclear reactor area under construction at Hinkley Point C nuclear power station site, near Bridgwater, south-west England, on 12 September 2019. The plant has been the most spectacular Chinese investment in Europe, with one-third of the project funded by China.

and Europe find themselves vulnerable to pressure from their adversary at a time of their greatest vulnerability. China's heavy-handed propaganda campaign—demanding, for instance, that European media abstain from any criticism of CPC policies and edit out statements to meet Beijing's preferences when it comes to the language used—have marked arguably the most humiliating moments in the West's post-Cold War history. Symptomatic of this trend has been the EU's willingness to revise its report on the pandemic to satisfy Beijing's demands. The initial report blamed the PRC for spreading the disease internationally; however, concerned about the repercussions, European officials rewrote the document in ways that diluted the focus on China, ultimately bowing to the demands of the Chinese communist regime so as not to endanger Europe's trade and investment partnerships.⁶ If anyone needed clearer evidence of how deeply Chinese nefarious influence has penetrated into Europe, the EU report is a case in point.

Today the PRC's communist government is deeply embedded in European politics, making China a "power in Europe". This influence translates not just into FDI and financial transactions, but also increasingly into debt-for-equity operations aimed at buying up assets among Europe's weakest and most economically

vulnerable countries. It also involves military operations, with vessels of the People's Liberation Army Navy now moving in the Mediterranean and the Baltic, and increasingly eyeing the High North and the Arctic (in 2019 China issued tenders for 30,000-ton nuclear-powered ice-breakers).⁷ Increasingly, the PRC is moving into Europe with an eye towards exerting ever greater influence over its economy and ultimately vassalising the continent politically.

But it is not too late for Europe to push back. The West needs a comprehensive strategy that will severely restrict the areas in which Chinese FDI is allowed, putting strict limits on the degree of foreign ownership of European assets by China, restricting access to European universities and research laboratories, re-shoring companies from China to Europe (just as the US and Japan are currently gearing up to do), and cracking down on Chinese

information operations in Europe—the imperative of shutting down Confucius Institutes being the first necessary step to stemming Chinese communist propaganda's free access across Europe.⁸ Time is running short for a comprehensive and coordinated response by the US and Europe to China's hostile takeover of Western economic assets. As long as the CPC remains in control, China will not become a responsible stakeholder in the international system and should not be treated as such. Today China remains a totalitarian state where a 90-million-strong communist party controls 1.4 billion people and whose regime's principal objective is to preserve its power and squash any and all dissent. It is time to revisit the fundamentals when it comes to the incompatibility of liberal democracy and communism. It is time to set aside the "globalist" delusions of the past three decades. As the saying goes: "If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging". Before it is too late.

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The views presented are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, the Department of Defense or the United States government.

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The Long-awaited Death of Our Communication Naiveté. Again

The Covid-19 crisis has changed the way we communicate with each other



Dmitri Teperik
Chief Executive of the ICDS

From 2007 to 2015, Dmitri Teperik worked at the Estonian Ministry of Defence, where he was in charge of defence-related research, industry and development, serving as Estonian national coordinator at the NATO Science and Technology Organization and promoting Estonia's role in security-related cooperation projects at the European Commission and the European Defence Agency (EDA).

Teperik led the launch of a security-related development programme aimed at young ethnic Russians in Estonia, called Sinu Riigi Kaitse (Defence of Your Country), the main purpose being to strengthen social cohesiveness by promoting the development of Estonian national identity among young Russian-speakers.

There is a continuing struggle between my humble hope and deepening doubts about our ability to learn from the growing information disorder amid the pandemic crisis. Surely, one important lesson to study in depth among many others is related to communication patterns, to provide more convincing evidence about how information from the virtual environment transforms into real actions in the physical world. The same old truth, right? Ironically, we have to rediscover its value during the crisis, whose origin, progress and consequences have corrosive effects on the essence of truth.

The bewitchingly ugly beauty of this crisis opens through the multidimensional role of communication played by various—sometimes malicious or even hostile—actors to shape our perceptions about the pandemic. As it is mostly one-way traffic and its effects are largely irreversible, we still have no clear idea how to make people unlearn those consumed semi-truths, falsehoods or designed lies that have been produced and spread on an industrial scale not just by means of rumours on social media but also thanks to certain politicians and useful idiots, both locally and globally.

The first dimension of pandemic communication is, of course, internationally political: all the notifications and official messages between countries, the WHO, the EU and other organisations, and assorted political leaders. Slow in reacting, brave in implicating, fast in tweeting. Some of this has converted into suspicions and acquisitions, and contributed to mistrust and misinformation and then to further unfortunate misunderstandings. Put simply, real harm has been done with no cruel intent behind it. It happens, especially during a crisis fuelled with widespread panic and managed by surprisingly inexperienced politicians who tend to cultivate distrust in science-based evidence and evidence-based policies by replacing them with slogans and policy-based evidence. The pioneering denial of the

As it is mostly one-way traffic and its effects are largely irreversible, we still have no clear idea how to make people unlearn those consumed semi-truths, falsehoods or designed lies that have been produced and spread on an industrial scale not just by means of rumours on social media but also thanks to certain politicians and useful idiots, both locally and globally.

A deeper look into the social media groups of some Russian-speakers in the Baltics can be both thought-provokingly insightful and scarily illuminating. As the pandemic crisis has exposed gaps and weaknesses in our communication, governments should not hope for societal inertia and abandon the presumption of a fragile consensus among the silent majority.

Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, is a sad example of how scientific communication is being politicised with destructive consequences.

The second dimension is closely interlinked with the first as it addresses the geopolitics of those actors who desperately seek opportunities to satisfy their reputational ambitions at any cost. Circumstances during the pandemic crisis have provided plenty of chances to realise deliberately planned disinformation campaigns against some countries and in favour of others. While the Kremlin competes with Beijing for a positive image in Serbia, it is trying to undermine solidarity within the EU and disseminate anti-NATO narratives. These opportunistic yet entirely intentional actions are now being scrupulously documented, but their value might be overestimated. Describing and admiring the problem of malicious and hostile disinformation does not resolve it, because virtual debunking does not re-convince real people as attribution of that information does not stimulate any swift correct response. Since there is still neither general agreement on nor a working format for delivering punitive follow-ups, disinformation campaigns will follow any crisis in the future as they have done throughout history. Even (or perhaps particularly) during the pandemic, we cannot count on the in-existent conscience of those malicious actors. We have to relearn how to coexist with them by becoming more immune and resilient.

This brings us to the third dimension of pandemic communication: the personal. Again, this relates to the previous one because disinformation resonates not just on a geopolitical level but also as a masterfully crafted influence campaign. It is intended to form opinions, shape perceptions and—ideally—result in some action, intending to change behaviour in the short term and influence behavioural patterns in the long term. This dimension is uniquely significant since the distortion of truth at this level is practically harmful to those people who tend to consume information without checking its credibility and therefore often fall into the trap of reinforcing their own pre-existing misbeliefs or doubting official information. The motley variety of falsehoods can range from blunt propaganda narratives to numerous conspiracy theories from which everyone can choose what they consider the most trustworthy story, be it 5G-related nonsense, Covid-19 as an American or Chinese bioweapon, or magic pills that kill the virus. Information saturation and crisis-created chaos just predispose a situation in which false information can in fact dictate behaviour by triggering some of our cognitive biases. As a result, it might support, for example, the anti-vaccination movement or provoke quarantine measures and restrictions being ignored, because a truly compelling narrative provides a rationale for action and fosters an illusion of inevitability. In any case, such delusions and misbehaviour can be potentially dangerous not just for an individual but also for other people.

This is a good point to address the other dimension, which is societal. The pandemic crisis has undoubtedly influenced how we communicate with each other. The deep effects remain to be seen and studied, but the anticipated changes are not necessarily positive. This is not just about missing the emotions of interpersonal communication or about tiresome and exhausting conference-zooming; it is also about government communication to and with its citizens who supposedly

believed (or not) and followed (or not) the restrictive (or voluntarily) measures during lockdown. When the signals were weak or unclear, citizens took the liberty of interpreting the messages in their own way, judging them by their own standards and then, obviously, reaching the most convenient conclusions. There should be at least some healthy doubt about official statements suggesting that an opinion poll can provide any solid feedback on the government's actions. The best it can give is just a fraction of the general mood. A good dose of scepticism is a helpful tool for communications experts, since they know that what people say, what they do and what they say they do are three completely different things.

That, in a nutshell, is how unprofessionally mistargeted and non-feedbacked communication can be dangerously misleading and result in unenforceable legal restrictions. Even though these groups are apparently a minority, it would be a strategic mistake to underestimate the viral spread of narratives of such civic resistance. Studies on non-violent protests suggest that the active engagement of just 3.5% of the total population is usually enough to cause a noticeable shift in practice and major changes in policy. Not to mention the speed and penetrative power of modern communications technologies; there is a growing database of evidence on the polarising and radicalising effects of social media. Even small groups nowadays have highly effective tools to be heard, but they might be just under the radar of government communicators. A deeper look into the social media groups of some Russian-speakers in the Baltics can be both thought-provokingly insightful and scarily illuminating. As the pandemic crisis has exposed gaps and weaknesses in our communication, governments should not hope for societal inertia and abandon the presumption of a fragile consensus among the silent majority.

While anticipating changes in every dimension of communication, we should relearn the already known bases and proven functionality patterns. It will be a big, but interesting, challenge to analyse the lessons from the pandemic crisis and then begin to operationalise that valuable experience, rethink different scenarios and test their feasibility, redesign our response plans and control their reliability. But most importantly—because communication is not just multidimensional but also multidisciplinary—to conduct regular close-to-real-life exercises to train the whole communications ecosystem of policymakers, decision-makers, first responders, communicators, community leaders and active citizens. In that way, in the next crisis, we will be less naive and more prepared, at least in terms of communication.



Recent and Forthcoming ICDS Research Publications

Despite the disruptions and complications caused by the global coronavirus pandemic, our research and analysis work remains as rigorous as ever. In April 2020, the ICDS published two major reports of its defence research programme as well as an analysis paper and a brief by the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute (EFPI).

“Until Something Moves: Reinforcing the Baltic Region in Crisis and War”: <https://icds.ee/until-something-moves-reinforcing-the-baltic-region-in-crisis-and-war/>, by Lt. Gen. (ret.) Ben Hodges, Tony Lawrence and Roy Wójcik, was produced in close cooperation with the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) in Washington D.C. It focuses on exploring legal, procedural, logistical and infrastructure challenges in moving NATO forces across Europe to the Baltic region to reinforce deterrence and defence in the event of a crisis or military conflict. While NATO and the EU have been stepping up their efforts and mutual cooperation to enhance military mobility and reduce the time and speed of movement of military forces in Europe, there is still much to be done in order to ensure that those forces can reach vulnerable parts of NATO faster and easier, with the required capabilities and in large numbers, and the report puts forward a number of recommendations on how to achieve this.

“Dilemmas of Arms Control: Meeting the Interests of NATO's North-Eastern Flank”: <https://icds.ee/dilemmas-of-arms-control-meeting-the-interests-of-natos-north-eastern-flank/> was written by guest authors Łukasz Kulesa and Artur Kacprzyk, researchers from the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM). The report examines the implications for European security of the deteriorating prospects for effective arms-control, confidence-building and nuclear non-proliferation mechanisms. It develops a number of recommendations on how the countries on NATO's north-eastern flank could work to rejuvenate those mechanisms or develop new ones (for instance, in relation to military applications of new disruptive technologies) without undermining their efforts to strengthen deterrence and defence in the region.

“Estonia in the UN Security Council: The Importance and Limits of European Cooperation”: <https://icds.ee/estonia-in-the-un-security-council-the-importance-and-limits-of-european-cooperation/>, by EFPI director Dr Kristi Raik, analyses how Estonia and the EU as a whole can work in the UN framework to maintain the rules-based international order while simultaneously adapting to its erosion and change. In January 2020, Estonia became a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for a two-year term. The analysis contributes

important insights on what dilemmas it faces at a time when the international environment is becoming increasingly challenging for multilateral cooperation and as the coronavirus pandemic underscores the lack of global leadership and the inability of the UNSC to mobilise international efforts.

Through a new ICDS publications format, *Brief*, the EFPI also published the first paper in its China Awareness series, **“Academic Co-operation with the People's Republic of China: Dangers and Temptations”:** <https://icds.ee/academic-co-operation-with-the-peoples-republic-of-china-dangers-and-temptations/>, by Sinologist Märt Läänemets. The paper discusses why academic cooperation between Estonian universities and those of the PRC poses a risk in terms of national security. As the Chinese government is actively using academic institutions, researchers and students to build its influence worldwide, Estonia is not immune to these efforts and its academia should exercise due caution when developing cooperation with partners in China.

In May, the ICDS Security and Resilience research programme will launch its report on energy and climate policies in the region, **“Winds of Change or More of the Same?”**. In this publication, a group of researchers from Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, with the support of the ICDS research partner Elering AS, examines whether the 2018–19 cycle of national elections in these countries has reshaped the public debate and national strategies in energy and climate, and affected regional cooperation in ensuring security of supply, and if so how. While there is a great deal of policy continuity with the pre-election period, there have been some important shifts—although to varying degrees in each country—both in terms of political acceptance that energy transition towards carbon neutrality is necessary and inevitable and in terms of the stronger determination to push this transition forward. Resistance from the legacy industries, high economic costs and potential socio-economic disruption, insufficient regional cooperation and coordination, lack of interest and involvement by the general public, and fragmenting and increasingly confrontational domestic political landscapes are highlighted as key obstacles and risks to this process.

Other forthcoming ICDS publications include reports, analyses, policy papers and briefs on the future of NATO, Russian-Ukrainian relations, Nordic-Baltic cooperation in the context of transatlantic relations, the use of volunteers in Estonia's security sector, Russia's development of autonomous weapons systems, the future of the EU- and UN-led operations in the Sahel, and communications and information resilience and digital skills in south-eastern Ukraine. Follow us on Twitter (@ICDS_Tallinn), Facebook (ICDS.Tallinn) or LinkedIn (ICDS.Tallinn) in order not to miss their release and visit the publications section on our website (www.icds.ee) to find our other publications.

Lennart Meri Conference 2019 in Pictures



President Kersti Kaljulaid asking a question.



Jill Dougherty, Global Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and a CNN Contributor on Russia issues.



(From L) Jüri Luik, the Defence Minister of Estonia, Ursula von der Leyen, the then Defence Minister of Germany, Salome Zourabichvili, the President of Georgia, and Kersti Kaljulaid, the President of Estonia.



Kadri Liik, Senior Policy Fellow at the ECFR, and Thomas Bagger, Director-General for Foreign Affairs at the Office of the President of the Federal Republic of Germany.



Staff room.



The audience.

PHOTOS ANNIKA HAAS