

BY WOLFGANG ISCHINGER

What are Europeans willing and able to do in order to secure their wider neighborhood? This question is by no means new. But with instability growing and the US footprint shrinking in Europe's southern periphery, the question regularly returns – and each time with greater force.

Encouragingly, it looks as if Europeans are no longer evading the security question. Moreover, by hosting peace talks in Berlin, the German government – in a concerted effort with other capitals – made a courageous attempt to end one of the most worrisome military escalations at Europe's periphery: the war in Libya.

The German government, together with other European countries, succeeded in hosting Libya's chief conflict parties as well as their many foreign backers. The summit secured, at least on paper, all relevant actors' commitment to respect the international arms embargo, work toward a permanent cease-fire, and revive the UN-sponsored political process.

This is no small achievement. By pushing for this outcome, Europe-

ans demonstrated that they finally understand that if they don't try to bring peace and stability to Libya, no one else will. If they want to see an end to a conflict with massive effects on European security interests, they themselves must bring it about.

Forging the Berlin agreement was the easiest part. What comes next will be much more challenging. In Libya, Europe's resolve to become

a geopolitical actor will face its first significant test, while Germany can finally demonstrate how it seeks to implement its oft-heard pledge to take on a greater international role.

In many respects, Libya epitomizes the fundamental challenges currently confronting Europeans:

First, what has worked well for a considerable amount of time, namely outsourcing to the US the task of stabilizing Europe's neighborhood, is no longer a viable option. Washington is tired of engaging in far-away conflicts that may strongly affect its European partners yet have few – if any – ripple effects on US citizens.

Second, where the West fails to engage, other powers are increasingly willing and eager to jump in. The goals they pursue, however, are often at odds with European interests. In fact, ceding leverage to other powers rarely gives rise to the kind of environment that Europe desires, one based on peace, prosperity and stability.

And third, while Europeans may have come around to recognizing the need for a considerably more active European foreign and security policy – a policy of jointly engaging in the conflicts and crises

that affect them – this realization comes at the worst possible time. It comes at a time when the EU is subject to unprecedented centrifugal forces. Ironically, these same forces have been stifled – and continue to be stifled – by conflicts like the one in Libya. After all, it is hard to disentangle the Libyan civil war from the migration crisis that hit Europe in 2015 and provoked a significant rise in populist anti-EU sentiment.

This leads straight to the question of what Europe can do to secure its surroundings. What can it do to help stabilize Libya? The agreement reached in Berlin will not suffice. It must also be enforced. A potential cease-fire must be monitored while violations to the arms embargo must be sanctioned.

And most importantly: How can the warring parties be motivated to agree to a verifiable cease-fire?

This is where it behooves German and EU diplomacy to remember the hard lessons learned in Bosnia in 1995: A meaningful cease-fire or peace arrangement can only be achieved if and when all parties to a military conflict understand that the road to military victory is definitively closed. Absent the threat of military enforcement measures, the

parties involved are unlikely to sign on to a political process and abandon the goal of military and political victory.

In Bosnia and Kosovo, the US stepped in and convinced Slobodan Milošević to engage in peace talks. This time, it's Europe's turn.

For Germany and other EU countries, these are very difficult questions. On the one hand, military measures or enforcement measures mandated by the UN, as rightly considered by the EU's chief diplomat, will likely have to be part of the mix – although when asked about the possible need to deploy their military, German politicians quickly stepped on the brakes. On the other hand, Europeans must not be naïve: Whatever the contours of their engagement in Libya, Europe must prepare for the long haul. Almost 20 years in Afghanistan and even more in Kosovo have hammered this point home.

Either way, Europeans cannot avoid taking action. Whether in the form of migration, terrorism or transnational organized crime, instability at Europe's doorstep is sure to wreak havoc at home.

European attempts to contain these troubles and hold conflicts at bay have regularly produced considerable human suffering – the Libyan detention camps are dreadful proof of this fact. At the conference in Berlin, Germany and its European partners signaled that they have awoken to the changing tides. The next few weeks – including the debates at the Munich Security Conference – will give a first indication of whether Europeans are able to translate this realization into action. Tough decisions lie ahead. ■

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Europe is ready for its close-up

In Libya, the EU must demonstrate its willingness to become a true geopolitical actor

It is hard to disentangle the Libyan civil war from the migration crisis that hit Europe in 2015 and provoked a significant rise in populist anti-EU sentiment



BY PETER H. KOEPF AND LUTZ LICHTENBERGER

The West and the search for its future

NATO and the EU loom over the debates at this year's Munich Security Conference

There was a time when it appeared that history was coming to an end and the future was set to begin. The democratic and capitalist West had brought communism and the command economies of the East to their knees, not least by dint of an arms race the Soviet Union ultimately couldn't keep up with. The battle of the two systems had a clear winner and the era of the Cold War seemed finally to have come to an end. At the time, even the question was occasionally broached as to whether the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was still necessary now that the USSR and the Eastern bloc had dissolved.

Other options would have been for the Atlantic alliance to integrate Russia militarily and work toward a giant common free trade area and a "harmonious economic community stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok," as imagined by Russia's Vladimir Putin, as well as the creation of a "unified continental market." The

world seemed ready to become One World.

Anything was possible: Confrontation would give way to cooperation, democracy and peace.

That was then. This is now. For the United States, the Russian Federation has once again become what the Soviet Union had been: the enemy. After the dissolution of the USSR, Moscow was no longer considered to be on equal footing, so NATO, led by the US, used the opportunity to expand its sphere of influence eastward. For its part, the EU, too, took what fell into its lap.

Moscow's pent-up anger was vented at the Munich Security

Conference (MSC) in 2007, when Putin fulminated over America's concept of a "unipolar world" and the "uncontained hyper-use of military force" by NATO, which had "overstepped its national borders in every way." NATO and the EU, he argued, imposed their will upon other countries while advancing their military infrastructure "to our borders." Putin would no longer tolerate being patronized and pushed around as a mere "regional power," as President Barack Obama called Russia in March 2014. The Russian president ultimately annexed Crimea and supported the separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Today, once

again, NATO faces an enemy on its eastern flank.

This frightens the Eastern Europeans. Having just escaped communism, they embraced the West, only to soon realize that unquestioning emulation did not yield all the expected results. Resistance to the zeitgeist of globalization grew, and more and more Eastern Europeans increasingly felt that the capitalist system failed to deliver them their fair share.

In other words, the beacon of the future – Western democracy and modernization – lost its credibility. In the book he co-authored with Stephan Holmes, *The Light that Failed*, the Bulgarian politi-

cal theorist Ivan Krastev wrote in somber tones of the "twilight of Europe" (see Krastev's piece on page 29).

Africa's Krastev, the Senegalese scholar and writer Felwine Sarr, has his own doubts about Western hegemony. He does not wish to further "universalize" the Western values system African elites have fallen for. He "refuses to legitimize the rat race" and wants to liberate the black continent "from all that degrades the people and extinguishes their power and creativity." He seeks to "deliver them fully from the monstrous structures of a relentless global economic order." He wants to shed what

Africa has adopted from the Europeans; he strives for autonomy and toward an "Afrotopia."

In addition to our liberal society, the trans-Atlantic defense alliance is once again up for discussion, but for reasons that differ from those in 1990. Even a German historian has questioned whether we still really need NATO and the EU. Gregor Schöllgen would like to dissolve these two "anachronistic monsters"; as far as he's concerned, they are mere "reminders of a closed chapter in world politics." As Schöllgen lays out in essays published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *The German Times*, we need a new beginning.

But why? Because the EU and NATO no longer function as they once did. They are failing to find common solutions to the problems of our time. On the issue of asylum for refugees, most EU countries have shown a frightening degree of egotism, while climate change fuels fierce debates. The Brits are leaving the EU, while the US president has pronounced NATO "obsolete."

Ever since this verdict, a certain specter has haunted the security policy debate. Could the US actu-