Conclusion: The North Americas, NATO, Europe, and German Reunification

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Cold War and Détente Policy

The years between the seventies and the mid-eighties of the twentieth century were not the best for relations between Canada and the United States. There were vast political differences between the governments and their leaders. Prime Minister Trudeau did not support the Cold War policy of the United States, especially under President Ronald Reagan. Neither did he support the Cold War policy of the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. For other reasons, the relations to France were also tense. Though Canada was a member of NATO, Trudeau’s government criticized the armament policy of the United States, in particular the nuclear mobilization, and they tried to better relations with the Soviet Union. Trudeau called this policy his “peace initiative”. He normalized diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China before the United States. His government pursued a détente policy which was similar to the policy of the Swedish Premier Olof Palme and of the West German chancellor Willy Brandt. Trudeau’s government also tried to reduce the tensions between East and West.

The government under Trudeau tried to get better relationships not only to the Soviet Union and to China, but to independent states of the third world, including Cuba under Fidel Castro. The Canadian Prime Minister visited Cuba in 1976. It is said that Castro and Trudeau became close friends (Castro attended Trudeau’s funeral in 2000). While the policy of the United States tried to isolate Cuba and to lead it into an economic disaster with the embargo of 1961. Trudeau vehemently opposed this politics.

However, there was a fundamental difference between the West German “Entspannungspolitik” and the “détente policy” of Palme and Trudeau: The West German Government had the aim to not only reduce tensions between East and West – but to resolve the division of Germany. They hoped to attain better conditions for unifying Germany by reducing the conflicts with the Soviet Union (the slogan was: “Wandel durch Annäherung”, perhaps to translate as “change by

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1 France supported the movements for an independent Quebec; de Gaulle had to shorten his visit to Canada in 1967 after he had shouted his famous sentence: “Vive le Québec libre!” See the essay of Amanda Kotowicz in this publication.

2 See the essays of Christopher Kshyk, Stephen Spence, Suzanne Zalewski in this publication.

approximation”). Whereas, the main aim of US diplomacy was to contain the influence of the Soviet Union in the world, especially in Europe.

The government of the United States was skeptical of the West German politics of Willy Brandt and his Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, as well of the politics of Trudeau. The Americans were particularly provoked by their northern Canadian neighbor and tried to keep the international importance of Canada down. Ronald Reagan, who was elected as president in 1981, and Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, believed détente policy was a form of appeasement. They supported the position that only a strong armament policy would bring the Soviet Union to their knees. Trudeau, Palme, Brandt, Genscher, and others were seen similarly by the US as to being too soft in their politics against the Soviet Union. They were sometimes viewed as political “appeasers.” Genscher felt these judgments from some of the American leaders – although not in public – when he was later Foreign Minister under Chancellor Helmut Kohl. 4

Most of our Canadian interviewees complained that the attitude of the United States was to treat the Canadian government as the younger brother who should support the American politics against the Soviet Union. However, sometimes this younger brother stepped out of line and disturbed US politics. The interviewed diplomats said that there was always a struggle for recognition of Canadian influence in global affairs between Canadian and US diplomacies. One of them is Robert Fowler, a high diplomat who served under several different Prime Ministers from Trudeau to Jean Chrétien. He believed that Canada was considered a “bystander” in world politics. According to him, the Canadian government did not promote itself enough as a world player. For instance, Canada was excluded from the negotiations after World War II in Yalta and Potsdam, although Canada was an important ally and had lost thousands of soldiers. In 1945 when the United Nations (UN) charter was being written, Canada promoted the French to have a permanent seat, but not themselves. Another anecdote was at the beginning of the G7 meetings Canada was not invited and deeply concerned about it. Only after Canada asked President Ford directly, did Canada become a member of the G7 group. Other cases of exclusion include: The preparation for the Reykjavik summit between Reagan and Gorbachev in 1986 and the “2+4” negotiations between the two Germanies and the Soviet Union, USA, UK, and France in 1990 (see below). Fowler compared the Canadian lack of involvement in the 2+4 meetings to these anecdotes. 5

4 That was a special question in my interview with Condoleezza Rice on September 17, 1999 at Stanford University.
5 Robert (Bob) Fowler in our interview on March 18, 2013.
Cold War after 1984 and its Ending

In May 1979 the Liberals under Trudeau lost the elections for the Canadian Parliament and Joe Clark, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, became Prime Minister of Canada. However, only seven months later he lost a non-confidence motion and as a result of the federal elections in February 1980, Trudeau came back as Prime Minister until 1984 when his Liberals were beaten by the Progressive Conservatives again, this time under the leadership of Brian Mulroney.

Nearly at the same time – in 1981 – Ronald Reagan won the elections and became President of the United States. The governments under Reagan, and his successor George Bush (Sen.) and Mulroney had considerably better relations than under Trudeau. The main result of these new relations was the creation of the “Free Trade Agreement” and the “Goods and Services Tax”. It is said that the Canadian diplomacy pushed the US politics to include Mexico into this Free Trade Agreement.6

In spite of these better relations between the US and Canada, there existed variances in their politics. Mulroney and his minister for foreign affairs, former Prime Minister Joe Clark, were very active in ending the Apartheid regime in South Africa, sometimes in strong contradiction to Reagan and especially to Thatcher’s politics. Our Canadian interviewees from different political wings stressed these contradictions – Heinbecker, who served under both Prime Ministers, Trudeau as well as under Mulroney, and Fowler and others who were more critical of Reagan and Mulroney. Mulroney’s policy in South Africa was in this case a continuation of the liberal politics before.7 Differing politics to the US was also the case with Ethiopia. Joe Clark visited as the first foreign minister of the West to Addis Ababa, although there was a “Marxist” and isolated government in office. In addition, Clark and Mulroney did not support the intervention of the United States in Nicaragua. Another frustration for the Reagan administration was Mulroney’s promise to increase Canadian troops in Europe, but his government refused for budgetary reasons.

When Mikhail Gorbachev came into office as General Secretary in 1985 he was not unknown to Canadian politicians and diplomats. Gorbachev had

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6 Canada was initially closed to include Mexico in the deal, but overcame this reluctance and decided to seek trilateral negotiations to create the Free Trade Agreement. See Maxwell A. Cameron and Brian W. Tomlin, The Making of NAFTA: How the Deal Was Done (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

7 However, Paul Heinbecker saw Mulroney stricter in his politics against Apartheid than Trudeau. Heinbecker describes Trudeau as being more committed to social questions than to human rights ones. Interview with Heinbecker on January 21, 2013.
visited Canada in 1983 as Minister for Agriculture of the Soviet Union. As our Canadian interviewees reported, Gorbachev impressed the Canadian politicians and diplomats by his open mind, his discursive style, and his frank questions about Canadian agricultural production and the market system. Aleksandr Jakovlev, the ambassador of the Soviet Union to Canada until 1985, was also a close political advisor of Gorbachev (and a friend of the Trudeau family). Gorbachev asked him to come back to Moscow and to support him in his fight for Perestroika.

As our interviewees stressed, Canadian diplomats tried to encourage the Americans to oblige Gorbachev and his delegation in Reykjavik in 1986. Yet, Ronald Reagan pursued his strong armament policy even shortly before Reykjavik in opposition to the Canadian diplomats.

Robert Fowler stressed, the US President dismissed Trudeau’s Peace Initiative as inconsequential. However, only “18 months later (in Reykjavik), Reagan was saying very similar things to the Peace Initiative.” He “felt that the Americans wanted to be in charge and only they would change world politics and not the Canadians” (said with a sarcastic tone). It seemed that the Americans felt superior to the Canadians in all areas of international politics. Fowler viewed Helmut Kohl as being similarly dismissive of Trudeau’s Peace Initiative calling them the “silly little Canadians.” Nevertheless, in Fowler’s opinion the Cold War ended in Reykjavik. However, this position was not held by the other interviewed Canadian diplomats. Most of them believed the Cold War ended with the signing of the “2+4” agreement. The US Secretary of State, James Baker, described his feeling that the Cold War ended not with the end of the “2+4”-process, but with the common Soviet and American involvement against Saddam Hussein in the UN vote in 1990. That was a unique position among my interviews with American interviewees.

We asked the diplomat Gaetan Lavertu and other Canadian diplomats if the armament politics of President Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher caused the collapse of the Soviet Union. Lavertu answered similar to some other interviewees:

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8 The later Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs. Lloyd Axworthy, confirmed the “very close” connections between Jakovlev and the Trudeau Family (in his interview between him and Karen Brglez and me on November 2, 2012 in Winnipeg.). He added: “In fact, I think that parliamentary trip (in 1990) I talked about, we were briefed quite actively by him (Jakovlev) and his associates of the institute.” The director of the State Archive of the Russian Federation, Sergej Mironenko, told me a short time before Jakovlev died in 2005, that Jakovlev was the godfather of Sascha Trudeau.

9 Robert Fowler interview.

10 See my interviews with George Bush, James Baker, Brent Scowcraft, and Condoleezza Rice.
Alexander von Plato (AVP): I asked Charles Powell, the advisor of Thatcher, in an interview if the politics concerning Germany by the British was a failure. And he said: Not at all. He has only two persons in mind who were successful in helping end the cold war – Reagan and Thatcher because they tried to increase the expenses for the military budget-

Gaetan Lavertu (GL): (cuts him off) I don’t believe in that. … I do not accept that view.

AVP: Ah, interesting

GL: I have the view that in the end nobody won that war. It was not a victory of the United States, assisted by Britain over the Soviet Union. What ended the Cold War in my view was the failure of the economic system in the Soviet Union and a willingness of Mr. Gorbachev to see a different system emerge in central Europe. His consent to the reunification of Germany eventually, prior to that, his decision, not to maintain the ration of doctrine of the convention of central and eastern Europe. He basically said to those countries, you’re on your own. If it had not been for that – who knows?

There were other Canadian interviewees who saw the armament policy of the Reagan administration (“Star Wars”) as only one, but perhaps an important reason for the implosion of the Soviet system because the economy could not keep up with the demands of the Soviet military any longer.\(^{11}\)

The “2+4” negotiations concerning the external conditions of German reunification was initiated in Canada, during the “Open Skies Conference” in Ottawa in February 1990 when several Foreign Ministers from East and West came together to discuss the rules of flying over borders. However, Canada was not a part of the 2+4-process. It was developed around the same time in Washington during meetings between members of the office of State Secretary James Baker and high diplomats of the Federal German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, on the one side and during the meeting of advisors, ministers, and diplomats with Gorbachev about the German Question on the Soviet side on January 25 (or 26), 1990.\(^{12}\) The Soviets wanted to stress the role of the victors over Germany. Therefore, Anatolij Cernjaev, the “founder” of this expression in the Soviet Union, spoke of “4+2” negotiations while the Germans and the Americans called it “2+4”. The Germans and the Americans did not want the

\(^{11}\) For instance, Paul Heinbecker in our interview on January 21, 20013.

\(^{12}\) Following the diary and my discussions with Anatolij S. Cernjaev, it must have been the 25\(^{th}\).
negotiations to appear to be between the victors and losers of WW2 and they wanted to avoid a repeat of the WWI Versailles Treaty.

The aims of West German and American diplomats, as well as of their Soviet counterparts, were to clear the international conditions for German re-unification. The American side wanted – as President George Bush (Sen.) declared first at the NATO summit at the end of May 1989 in Brussels – a unified Germany in peace, democracy, recognition of the existing borders in Europe, and under the roof of NATO. Chancellor Helmut Kohl had a problem with the border to Poland and wanted to recognize it only after re-unification (in opposition to Genscher, the Social Democrats in West Germany, and to the old and new Polish government). It may seem astonishing, but Kohl did not mention NATO in his 10-point speech at the end of November 1989, while Bush repeated his “4 points” only three days after Kohl’s speech. One of these points was about NATO. The Soviet side seemed to have the same aims, except for the NATO question. In that time (end of January 1990) Gorbachev, together with his colleague in Eastern Germany, Hans Modrow and his Foreign Minister Fischer, favoured a neutral Germany. Two months later, from the end of March to the end of May 1990, the Soviet President preferred a new European Security System to replace the former NATO and Warsaw Treaty. However, it was too late: the Warsaw Treaty was not a trump card any longer, and it broke down. Gorbachev signed in Washington during the first days of June 1990 that the Germans could choose their alliance themselves – and that meant in that time: NATO.

It is said that Prime Minister Mulroney always supported Kohl and the American position. However, that’s true in regards to Bush’s four points. Nevertheless, some of our Canadian interviewees told us that among Canadian diplomats and politicians several different strategies were discussed. John Noble was one of the main organizers of the Open Skies Conference in Ottawa. He gave the first welcome speech because Mulroney was delayed with a previous engagement. We asked him and our other Canadian interviewees if Canada should and could have played a bigger role during the “2+4-process.” The foreign ministers from Italy and the Netherlands had spoken out against the “exclusive club” of the “2+4” participants and wanted other European countries to be involved. However, Genscher harshly responded: “You are out of the game.” Canada saw itself as a leader of the “middle power” countries, had troops in Germany, was a victor of WW2, a member of NATO, and was connected to all Arctic questions surrounding the strategic and military problems of NATO.


14 “To take only one example, the information we received during our visit that the Soviet nuclear test site may be transferred from the far east to the (west) shocked us into a recognition of our geographic and environmental interdependences.” Report of the Committee’s Visit to the Soviet

Noble told us that there were different positions on this matter, but Foreign Minister Joe Clark was not really interested in the European question. Fowler said it was really a shame that Canada played only the role of a “housekeeper” because Canada had enough reasons to take on a bigger role within the forum. I would propose involvement in the process with a special status role, like in the case of Poland.

A former Member of Parliament, Bill Blaikie from the New Democratic Party, directed our attention to the “Report of the Committee’s Visit to the Soviet Union and the Germanies” April 20 – May 5, 1990. In this government report from June 1990 the Standing Committee wrote:

Apart from the internal issues of unification, there also many external issues that concern Germany’s neighbours and the international community, three of which we will highlight in this report: the Poland-German border, Germany and the European Economic Community and the question of a united Germany in NATO. (…) The transition years should have as an underlying objective, the uniting of Europe, with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe occupying one end of the European home and Canada and the United States the other. We see a special opportunity for Canada to participate in the design and building of new pan-European institutions.

Concerning the Polish German border Bill Blaikie himself together with his colleague Jesse Flis presented petitions in the House of Commons to support the Polish position against Kohl’s policy to postpone the recognition of the “Oder-Neiße-Border” to the first session of the parliament of the united Germany.

The delegation to the Soviet Union and to the Germanies declared in June 1990: “… we have learned that the parliaments of both East and West Germany will pass a declaration on June 21, prior to economic union, that German territory will include the present West Germany and Berlin, and no more … Apart from such assurances, the long-term guarantee of Germany’s respect for the border

15 John Noble: “Noble: Well, well I don’t think we tried very hard. Joe Clark was not that interested in Europe. Up until the time I took over as Director General of International Security he had a tendency to avoid NATO meetings.” Interview with John Noble on January 25, 2013.
16 Robert Fowler interview.
17 Report, 3.
18 Report, 4.
probably lies in an entirely different direction, namely the anchoring of a united Germany in the European Community.\textsuperscript{20}

The summary concerning the border between Germany and Poland was:

“In light of these considerations, 

The Committee welcomes the strong evidence of German commitment to peaceful and constructive membership in the community of Europe. In that connection, we declare that respect for the Poland-German order is, and must remain, a cornerstone of German unification.”\textsuperscript{21}

The Polish (and Ukrainian) Congress to the House of Commons had a significant influence on the Canadian position regarding the question of the acceptance of the existing borders in Europe by Germany.\textsuperscript{22}

Concerning “Germany and the European Economic Community” the report of the Canadian delegation to the Soviet Union and the Germanies was much shorter than the section on the Polish German border. This is probably due to the fact that membership of a united Germany in the European framework was a non-controversial issue. This is evident in the interviews with Canadian diplomats and politicians from 2013, as well as in the mentioned report from June 1990: “An essential element in the anchoring of a united Germany in Europe is its membership in the European Economic Community, which itself pushing ahead with further economic and political union.”\textsuperscript{23} Probably “anchoring” has the meaning of “controlling” in the mind of the Canadian delegation, because all the ties of a united Germany to the greater European community hinder its possible unilateralist leanings in the future. That was and is the consensus in Western Europe and the North Americas.

Concerning “Germany and NATO” the Canadian parliamentarians wrote: “There was a fairly general agreement among the Germans we met that a united Germany should be a member of NATO, at least for a transitional period. The basic arguments are, first, that given its twentieth century history, a neutral Germany is in no one’s interest; and, second, that in this period of rapid change it is essential not to upset the stabilizing influence of NATO.” I think this

\textsuperscript{20} Report, 22. The Report stressed that especially members of the (democratic) Eastern German Foreign Ministry were active in this question, for instance Dr. Misselwitz whom the Canadian delegation met.

\textsuperscript{21} Report, 23. Emphasis in the original.


\textsuperscript{23} Report, 23.
assessment is true if you look at the ruling West German politicians and official diplomats. However, among the West German population there was a majority for a neutral united Germany in that time; as well among the East German dissidents because they had the fear that the hardliners in the Soviet Union would not accept a united Germany in NATO and would, in this case, sweep Gorbachev away.24

These basic remarks in the report by the Canadian parliamentarians were also the position held among the members of NATO. However, after these basic declarations the report contains differences that did not conform to the official politics of their allies. “At the same time, many Germans, in both the GDR and the FRG and at various points on the political spectrum, insisted that unification must occur as part of a process of creating a pan-European security system.”25

The authors of the report mentioned that two concessions to Soviet security interests should be allowed: No NATO troops should be stationed on what is now East German soil and the 350,000 Soviet troops should be allowed to stay for a transitional time. Dr. Misselwitz from the now democratic East German Foreign Ministry is quoted: “We need unconventional solutions or else the divisions of Europe will only be repeated further east.”26

The memory of the war has – describes the Committee report – a powerful influence in colouring Soviet thinking about German unification, but is perhaps not the determining factor. “The real Soviet fear, we suspect, is that the settlement of the German question could have the effect, or be interpreted as having the effect, of excluding the Soviet Union from Europe. Mr. Gorbachev’s central foreign objective, declared in his book Perestroika and repeated endlessly since, is to bring the Soviet Union into Europe and the wider world community as quickly and completely as possible.”

For the Soviets, the aim of a united Germany in NATO was a controversial matter. Therefore, the authors of the report considered different strategies:

- A neutral Germany (which is in no one’s interest – see above).

25 Report, 24. For instance, the authors of the report quote Dr. Misselwitz from the East German Foreign Ministry: “In general, they (the Soviets – AvP) are very supportive of the wider European approach to security, but they have no idea how to do it. The West should give them constructive ideas, to help the Soviets feel at home. They know that the old system does not work. They are on the losing side, but the West should give them the chance not to feel like losers.” Report, 24.
26 Ibid.
• A special status like France. “But this approach is really only a variant of a neutral Germany and leaves the question of the country’s security regime up in the air.”
• Gorbachev’s consideration for Germany’s membership in both alliances (including all members of NATO and the Warsaw Treaty)

However, the alternative strategic possibilities were in opposition to the United States: “…ad hoc solutions will not work, that the question of Germany in NATO is more than the last great item of repair work of the cold war. Instead it is the first great item in building a new cooperative security system for Europe.” And: “We think the impasse over the relationship between a united Germany and NATO will only be resolved by the West wholeheartedly embracing the Soviet Union’s long term goal of participation leading to full membership in the European Community…”27

The authors of the report of the Standing Committee added: “Even if the alliances continue to demonstrate their recent capacity for new thinking, we should start building alternative structures of cooperative security that will, in all likelihood, eventually replace the alliances. This is where the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) comes into play.”28 The last paragraph concerning this point was:

In light of the foregoing, we would ask how the CSCE might best be developed as a creative and flexible institution for building confidence between the alliances and, at the same time, constructing new pan-European security arrangements. We would ask whether, in addition to having a Council of Foreign Ministers, the CSCE would be strengthened by having a parliamentary wing, such as might be provided by linking to the Council of Europe?29

Though the report of the Standing Committee knew that Canada had only “little or no say”30 in the internal affairs of uniting Germany, the authors were sure, that the “transition years should have, as an underlying objective, the uniting of Europe, with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe occupying one end of the European home and Canada and the United States the other. The report mentions, “We see a special opportunity for Canada to participate in the design and building of new pan-European institutions. In reaffirming its own relationship with Europe,

28 Report, 30.
29 Ibid., 31.
30 Ibid., 21.
Canada should shift its center of attention from military security to mutual economic and political development.\textsuperscript{31}

The Standing Committee quotes a reference at the end of the report to reiterate support for this position, by State Secretary (in German: “Staatssekretär”, not the minister) Hans-Jürgen Mîsselwitz: “It is important that North America continues to play a role or we will wind up with a Europe from Poland to Portugal that will also exclude the USSR. We want the USSR in Europe, but this also requires the balance of North America. The United States and Canada belong to the balance of the European landscape.”\textsuperscript{32}

The report concludes by stating:

In light of this rapidly changing situation, the Committee would ask how quickly and in what ways Canada should transform its military presence in Europe so as to support the building of pan-European security institutions, while, at the same time, seizing an historic opportunity to refocus Canada’s enduring economic and other relations with Europe. In cooperation with the House of Commons Defense Committee, we will continue to pursue answers to these questions.\textsuperscript{33}

As we know now, these conclusions were not the same as those of President George Bush and State Secretary James Baker, Prime Minister Mulroney and Foreign Minister Joe Clark, nor of Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher.\textsuperscript{34} United Germany under the roof of NATO was the outcome of the “2+4” negotiations, especially the negotiations between Bush and Gorbachev that took place during the summit in Washington during the first days of June 1990 in Washington.

However, the members of the Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs and International Trade were not insignificant political players; they played a large role in the Canadian politics and diplomacy making at the time. Bill Blaikie declared in his interview, that it was not unusual for the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade to take different positions from Canadian policy makers, and he continued to hold the main positions of the Report from June 1990 still in 2013. In contradiction to him and others, Paul Heinbecker, who served – as mentioned – not only under Trudeau and Mulroney but later under

\begin{footnotesize}
\item\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 4.
\item\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 33.
\item\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 34.
\item\textsuperscript{34} However, the Report mentioned that Clark has sometimes similar considerations, for instance when he said: “... the Alliance should turn outwards to embrace its old adversaries and new friends.” (ibidem, p. 29) In my opinion Genscher had also the hope to integrate the Soviet Union in European Affairs; he was skeptical to exclude Soviet Union and then the Russian Federation from Europe. von Plato, \textit{Die Vereinigung}, 207, 410.
\end{footnotesize}
Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, who was on the other end of the political spectrum from our interviewees, mentioned that the considerations of the Standing Committee were “pipe dreams”. Indeed, it is to be questioned if the CSCE was capable of fulfilling the hopes of the Standing Committee, nevertheless the strategic problems of excluding the Soviet Union from Europe and extending NATO to the East remain a large problem not only for Europe, but for the North Americas as well.

In the mid-1990s NATO extended to the East, the Eastern European countries joined NATO, and the alliance reached the borders of Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia. For the Russian side this development was and is a threat. Lloyd Axworthy was a member of the Standing Committee and a member of the visiting group to the Soviet Union and the Germanies in 1990 and Foreign Minister of Canada from 1996 to 2000. He held the similar opinion to that of Jeremy Kinsman, Robert Fowler, Bill Blaikie, and other Canadian diplomats and politicians, that there is now a “new smaller Cold War” that developed when Canada extended far past the territory of the former GDR. However, his Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, as well as the Eastern European lobby groups in Canada (and the States) appreciated the extension – and believed that there were no chances for an alternative.35

Today, we have to ask if the exclusion of Russia from Europe and the extension of NATO gambled the chance away to integrate the Russian Federation into Europe and to hinder it from unilateralist politics for instance in the Caucasus or in Ukraine. The hostile mood among the Russian population against the West in which the Russian President Putin makes his Russian great power policy cannot be changed.