

Introduction

New Cold War or Unfinished Post-Cold War Settlement?

Laurien Crump

Retrospectively, the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War did not herald the ‘End of History’,¹ as was predicted at the time, but rather the beginning of an era that some now call the ‘New Cold War’.² Although the term is inappropriate – where are the power blocs, the ideologies, the nukes? – it is safe to say that the Cold War still resonates today. There is a crisis in European security, with Russia pitted against the West, the divide between Eastern and Western European EU-countries seems bigger than was anticipated in the 1990s, the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty – so painstakingly achieved in 1987 – has been abrogated, and other crises, like the one in the Middle East, remain unresolved.

At the same time, the current Paris peace talks between Russia and Ukraine are an ironic echo of the Paris summit in November 1990 which heralded the end of the Cold War under the *aegis* of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Some of the protagonists are still the same as at the end of the Cold War, such as France and Germany, as well as of course Russia, but the latter in a very different guise. Great Britain is conspicuous by its absence. Writing this article about an hour after the Conservatives’ landslide and historic victory in the United Kingdom, it is safe to say that one of the institutions that helped shape the post-Cold War era, namely the European Union, is no longer taken for granted. The ‘Prefab Solution’ of NATO and the European Union building the post-Cold War architecture, as Mary Sarotte calls it, is threatened by the West.³

Perhaps the ‘post-Cold War settlement’ is, therefore, indeed ‘unfinished’, as the authors of a convincing OSCE-report on the future of European security argue based on workshops with former diplomats.⁴ There is nothing *new*, but a lot of *unfinished* business instead. With Russia reasserting itself from Ukraine to Syria, it is questionable whether there is really ‘No Place for Russia,’ but its place has certainly remained unresolved after the Cold War.⁵ Gorbachev’s ‘Common European Home’ never came to fruition, and Russia was indeed ‘left on the periphery of the new Europe.’⁶ The Ukraine crisis could, as such, be interpreted as a symptom and a consequence, but not the deeper cause of Russia’s disengagement from the European security order of 1990.⁷ Less was resolved in 1990 than we thought at the time.

With the benefit of hindsight, liberal democracy proved by no means victorious, as Francis Fukuyama predicted, and the accompanying Western triumphalism was misguided. Populism is on the rise in Eastern and Western Europe alike. The distinction between fact and fiction is increasingly blurring in the West, too, with leaders, such as the American President, Donald Trump, and the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, on the rise. The Western institutions, ideas, and values that were so self-evident during the Cold War have become challenged since it ended.

An Ambivalent Celebration

The celebration of the Fall of the Berlin Wall is therefore an ambivalent one. It is, however, an excellent opportunity, to take stock of the end of the Cold War and its repercussions today. Both of these are central to this special issue, which grew out of a conference on the same theme held in Utrecht on 9 November 2019, exactly thirty years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall. I am thrilled that all of the exciting speakers at the conference agreed to contribute to this special issue, and that the focus on eyewitnesses is represented by an interview with the distinguished Dutch diplomat, Lambert Veenendaal, on the End of the Cold War and the CSCE's summit in Paris.

The conference was organized under the aegis of the Cold War Research Network, which was initiated by Giles-Scott Smith from Leiden University, Ruud van Dijk from the University of Amsterdam, and myself from Utrecht University. The aim of this network is to

bring

together researchers and students who are interested in the latest approaches to Cold War history and its place in twentieth century international history. That is exactly the purpose of this special issue, too, which is why it is such a unique opportunity to use this issue of *Atlantisch Perspectief* to reflect on the end of the Cold War and its repercussions. This would not have been possible without the support of the Province of Utrecht and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), which generously contributed to the conference – the latter through my VENI-grant.

New Cold War History

The End of the Cold War also heralded a new kind of historiography. With the archives of the Central and Eastern European countries rapidly opening up, different perspectives on the Cold War emerged, not only geographically, but also thematically and conceptually. The Cold War was more global, more cultural, and perhaps even more ideational than assumed at the time. A wide range of new primary sources became available to historians, which revealed the Cold War as less bipolar and more multidimensional than it had hitherto been considered to be. This comprehensive approach towards the Cold War, which embraces the use of a wide range of sources and dimensions, culminated in the so-called 'New Cold War History.' This approach is paramount in the abovementioned Cold War Research Network, as well as in the articles in this special issue.

Starting with an overview of the repercussions of the Cold War, Federico Romero shows how the Cold War reverberates in Europe and beyond. Marina Perez De Arcos then zooms in on the end of the Cold War and German reunification. By using recently available primary sources, she offers a fresh look at the role of individuals, institutions and ideas at the end of the Cold War. The new perspective on the end of the Cold War in Europe is further reinforced in the interview with Dutch diplomat, Lambert Veenendaal, whose inside-view on the 1990 pan-European negotiations provides a unique and personal take on multilateral diplomacy at the end of the Cold War. Just as German reunification seems pivotal to the end

of the Cold War in Europe, the city of Berlin can be seen as a focal point. In his article Giles Scott-Smith uses not the perspective of written sources, but the lens of the camera, to shed new light on the division of Germany through the medium of film.

But the new sources have taught us that the Cold War was global, too. They do not only give more credit to the Soviet role, which is central in Sergey Radchenko's original and thrilling account of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's role in the ending of the Cold War. They also emphasize to what extent issues such as the Middle East were intertwined with the Cold War, and remain so up to the present, as Lorena De Vita convincingly demonstrates in her article. Also turning away from written sources, Rutger van der Hoeven's article ranges from the Cold War up to 9/11 and beyond, to show how iconic photographs capture the imagination – and the memory – of mankind across the globe.

The Cold War accordingly reverberates in archival sources, interviews, films, and photographs, ranging from The Hague to the Middle East, and Moscow to the moon. The term 'New Cold War' is perhaps a misguided anachronism, but this special issue shows that New Cold War History is very much alive.

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¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

² E.g. Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: Putin's Threat to Russia and the West* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

³ Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe. New and Revised Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 119-149.

⁴ Christian Nünlist et al., *The Road to the Charter of Paris: Historical Narratives and Lessons for the OSCE Today* (Vienna, 2017). <http://osce-network.net/file-OSCE-Network/Publications/RoadtoParisCharterFINALREPORT.pdf>, accessed on 13 December 2019.

⁵ William Hill, *No Place for Russia: European Security Institutions Since 1989* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

⁶ Sarotte, *1989*, cover.

⁷ Nünlist, *The Road to the Charter of Paris*, 8.