

# REPORT FOR THE 'LEADERS FOR PEACE' FORUM

by Ambassador Pierre Vimont



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## FOUR TRUTHS FOR PEACE

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At the first Roaming University for Peace (RUP) held by Leaders for Peace in Abidjan, the President of Côte d'Ivoire, A. Ouattara, spoke about Félix Houphouët Boigny's belief that "peace is not a word, it's a behaviour." We could perhaps go even further by talking about a *culture* or *spirit* of peace.

I believe this culture is based on four pillars: the grave situation facing the World, the quest for Peace, the understanding of violence, and the need for dialogue.

#### ***The fire of war burns on***

After the end of World War II, my generation believed they would never again experience the horrors of war. Those horrors destroy everything - people and families, ideas and values, love and hope. The fire of war may have shifted, but it burns on.

Today, the gravity of the world has led us to fear a return of the worst. Imminent threats abound: rivalries among great powers, the weakening of multilateralism, an excess of nationalism and protectionism, the permanence of terrorism, religious tensions, the deconstruction of Europe, climate change, the arms race, regional rivalries, migration and so on. There are, however, two pieces of good news: the overall consensus on climate change and the increased representation of women in politics. But these are not enough to turn the current trend around. Emmanuel Kant's "perpetual peace" remains a utopian concept.

This observation was the catalyst for the creation of the NGO, "Leaders for Peace". Peace has again become a pressing imperative.

#### ***Peace does not simply fall from the sky; it requires a concerted effort***

Peace does not come naturally. It requires work. It must be learned. It must be taught. Charles De Gaulle used to say that peace was achieved in three steps: "detente, entente and cooperation". A certain knowledge lucidity and awareness of the threats is needed for the spirit of peace to return. Each nation has several schools of war, but schools of peace are less common.

Our endeavours for peace must first focus on culture to understand others, speak each other's languages, learn each other's history, and show respect. The importance of context for diplomacy makes it somewhat incompatible with the likes of Twitter. Obviously, culture should not curb initiative and innovation, the creation of new and less conventional diplomatic pathways and ideas. The habits of diplomacy must be avoided. Antonio Guterres regards this as a concrete objective in his determination to reform the UN.

The quest for peace affects all generations, but must begin with young children. This is the idea behind the Smart Peace Prize awarded by Leaders for Peace. We wanted to encourage initiatives that promote a spirit of peace in infrastructure for children around the world.

The pedagogy of peace must be a collective ambition. It is the aim of our “Mobile University of Peace”. Leaders for Peace has developed five programs for each stage (an executive conference, youth lecture theatre, the peace lab, lectures, and the duty to follow up) that form the sessions of the three-day MUP. The work for peace must be backed by groups who have previously been excluded, including women and young people.

To “reconcile the reality of competition with the imperative of coexistence” (Kissinger), we really need to work at it.

### ***Violence and war go hand in hand***

Peace and violence go hand in hand. They can assume different forms, but have the same character. Both have the same ambition: to destroy what they perceive as their rival. One must triumph over the other.

Each justifies the other’s existence. Each can surpass the other.

Once this close relationship has been recognised, it is clear that violence lays the path for war. Fighting for war peace first means combatting violence in all its forms.

Hatred takes on new forms, while violence changes in appearance. This is the case, for instance, with a new kind of violence: digital violence. Anger, suffering, fear and anonymity are factors that exacerbate this type of violence.

The peace we want is not the “peace of Munich”; we want a peace that seeks an antidote to violence in civilisation. The work for peace must be applied to the source of the violence, in particular to inequality and the desire for recognition. The dividends of peace must be distributed to all if we want them to renounce violence.

### ***Dialogue is multilateralism***

In politics, bilateralism is often confused with the ratio of power, and when it stumbles, unilateralism is the only possible outcome. Obviously, dialogue - smart dialogue - with the adversary is the most difficult kind, but it can also be the most rewarding. It is a gamble. Multilateralism, on the other hand, is less risky; it is a generalised form of dialogue, which can avoid confrontation.

The truth is that in order to resolve conflict, diplomacy and politics are ultimately more effective than military intervention (take Iraq or Libya, for example). Diplomacy can be the science of multilateralism. It can also be an art, as described by Dominique de Villepin: “Diplomacy is an art in itself, which begins from within each individual”. To achieve diplomacy, we must dismiss Manichaeism and sectarianism.

Today, multilateralism is being challenged by unilateralism among a few major powers, but also in some cases by the powerlessness of multilateral organisations. Ultimately, however, it is better to reform those structures than abandon all forms of dialogue. This concerns the Security Council as much as it does the WTO or UNESCO.



It is why Leaders for Peace has led missions in New York and Geneva to explore ways to improve multilateralism. In the Genevan ecosystem, there are a number of reasons not to lose hope.

The 2019 Leaders for Peace annual report, written by Ambassador Pierre Vimont, focuses on the renewal of multilateralism. It will be discussed by Leaders for Peace at our annual conference in Paris on 13-14 May 2019.

**Jean-Pierre Raffarin**





## 2019 REPORT

### FOR THE 'LEADERS FOR PEACE' FORUM

In line with the work carried out since its creation, the Leaders for Peace Forum is pleased to publish its latest annual report, which continues to pursue the objectives set from the beginning: analyse the state of the world by as closely as possible to the reality in the field and where decisions are made, and highlight issues that the Forum deems important for the promotion of peace and stability in the world.

This year, in the framework of this dual approach, the report focuses on two themes:

- A discussion of **multilateral order** since 1945 in an era when its very survival is being challenged. In these tense times, the report intends to reaffirm the importance of multilateralism and examine the means of giving it a new driving force. Based on the efforts already made to overcome the current obstacles, the report will attempt to learn from the successes and failures observed, and work to restore more effective multilateral governance.
- A more specific analysis on the issue of regional security, considered one of the possible approaches to revive multilateralism. With this in mind, the report focuses in particular on collective security in **Europe** to judge whether the spirit and principles that led to the Helsinki Accords in 1975 can find a new *raison d'être* today and under what conditions such a project would be able to succeed.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Multilateralism, brought in after 1945, has come under strain. Faced with increasingly complex challenges, it appears to have lost its effectiveness. Given the growing number of players on the international stage, its legitimacy is being contested. With the rise in nationalism in many countries that blame their economic and social problems directly on multilateral action, the reactions often appear imbalanced.

Are we to conclude that multilateralism is dead? This would be a mistake because, despite its weaknesses, the current multilateral order has promoted a world based on law, and advanced the cause of peace and prosperity more so than is generally acknowledged. Calls to return to a form of exclusive national independence appear to ignore that multilateralism and sovereignty – far from competing with one another – must use their complementarity to establish a form of sovereignty able to deliver stability and growth.

To find the path towards a new driving force, international order needs to act on several levels. First, it needs to revive the process of inclusion to overcome the opposition between the West and partners from the South who bemoan western preponderance. It also needs to reinforce its preventive action to manage looming crises sooner. And finally, it needs to establish a new political space to overcome isolation and convince national opinions that it is genuinely addressing their concerns.

In addition to these issues, another possible way to revive multilateralism would target collective security at a regional level. This approach could replace efforts for peace as part of a long-term strategy able to address the underlying causes of today's conflicts. It could also adapt its action to take into consideration the diversity of the parties involved (States, civil society, non-State players).

When applied to Europe, this collective security approach could revive the spirit of Helsinki which has gradually faded since 1975. It would require European partners to work together to form a security architecture for the entire continent while at the same time encouraging them to establish short-term measures to recreate a climate of trust among them.

## KEYS TO REVIVE THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND MULTILATERALISM

Rarely since it was introduced after the end of World War II has the world order been so shaken and come under so much threat.

Founded by the victorious powers at the end of World War II and largely inspired by the United States, world order attempted to address the weaknesses of the multilateral system introduced in the inter-war period which failed to prevent the rise of tensions and return of war on a worldwide scale. Starting in 1945, it was built gradually over the years, expanding the core of the first international institutions. This multilateralism gradually became stronger, more diverse, and more complex to the extent that it became a system of governance in its own right responsible for the world's challenges in all fields (security, development, trade, human rights, environment, etc.). It has also become regionalised through institutions that have taken on the objectives and actions of multilateralism at their level.

For many years, the results were in line with expectations. The end of the Cold War, the decrease in poverty under the effect of economic development (which was spectacular in Asia, but no less remarkable in certain African and Latin American countries), advances in science and technology – all these developments combined to create a feeling of irreversible progress, a guarantee of prosperity and stability for all.

### Challenges to multilateral order

The landscape is now falling apart. Nothing that made the success of the world's liberal order following the war holds true.

- To begin with, the notion of **order** appears to be challenged with the rising number of conflicts around the world. The effectiveness of the multilateral system is in doubt.
- The **universal nature** of multilateral governance is now contested by new emerging nations that point to the imbalance caused by initial choices made in the interests of Western powers. The South no longer accepts the vision of multilateralism as it was established by the North.
- The **liberal inspiration** that long dominated has clashed with the realities of national powers that are increasingly authoritarian and portray themselves as defenders of their sovereignty against multilateralism.

Together, these developments on the world stage will result in a hybrid system with no real leadership and permanent tension between the globalisation of risks and the increase in conflict. Is this simply a laborious transition phase that multilateralism needs to go through in order to come out the other end stronger,

or are we witnessing the slow disintegration of the system born in 1945? It is difficult at this stage to say. At any rate we are currently witnessing the increasing fragmentation of world order, which struggles to address three basic developments that are thwarting its effectiveness:

- **the centres of power** throughout the world have multiplied,
- the challenges have become more **diverse**
- **national sovereignty** is increasingly being asserted.

### *Multilateralism in a multipolar world*

New centres of power are beginning to emerge around the world, each who want to have their say and are determined to play their role in crises in which their national interests are involved. These are the new players on the world stage, at a global level (China) or a regional level (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran in the Middle East; Brazil and Mexico in Latin America; South Africa and Nigeria in Africa). They have increasing influence on today's crises. For lack of recognition on international bodies, they shape their own channels of influence and action and are vital components in conflicts they consider a threat to their interests.

International organisations are struggling to adapt to this new reality, and even give the **impression they are losing legitimacy** and increasingly out of touch with the changes taking place. The United Nations Security Council, which remains the central body for settling crises and promoting peace, is today characterised by an increasing incapacity to make decisions. The **reasons for the blockage** are already known: increasing difficulty to agree on texts regarding current crises, in particular owing to the **repeated use of veto power** by certain permanent members; **overuse of special envoys** whose efforts in the field, despite their merits, result in growing discouragement; generally speaking, **the attitude of major powers** who often support positions that contradict the basic principles of multilateralism they are supposed to defend.

Behind this observation is the **new geopolitical balance** of multipolarity that the United Nations governance is **struggling to take into consideration**, having failed to open up and make its decision bodies more representative of the new balance of power in the world. Attempts made to redefine the composition of the Security Council or the use of veto power have not, for the moment, succeeded, owing to a lack of firm commitment by all the permanent members of the Security Council. In addition, the current US administration's criticism of the Council is counter to the very principle of a multilateral approach. Coming from the country that inspired and founded multilateralism, this challenging and the preference shown for a bilateral and transactional route clearly only complicate the search for a solution.

These blockages are reminiscent of the situation during the Cold War. But the phenomenon today has taken a more complex turn because of the growing number of stakeholders in these conflicts and the nature of the differences at stake. These differences are no longer strictly ideological as they were in the days of confrontation between East and West, but are based on a logic that stems from the national

interests of the countries concerned. The current disorder in its own way shows that the multipolar world has not yet succeeded in creating a new and more suitable form of multilateral order that would guarantee greater stability.

### ***Multilateralism faced with new challenges***

These difficulties are exacerbated by the impression that world order is out of phase with today's realities. The existence of **new issues and new players** clearly requires the international system to make an effort to adapt, which it has not yet managed to do effectively.

As such, by taking **environmental** issues into account specialised agencies and negotiation conferences have been established within the multilateral system dedicated to combating climate change. But the international agreements that emerge from this decision-making process are laborious and their implementation too often stagnates or is seriously delayed. The commitments included in the Paris Agreement during COP 21 are still largely ignored in reality and the bodies set up to monitor their progress lack the means to enforce these commitments. In the field of **security**, new threats introduced by "**cyber attacks**" have been detected by the United Nations, but their efforts so far to establish rules acceptable to all have failed. In terms of limiting **weapons of mass deterrence**, the emergence of new military nuclear powers and considerable technological advances, which have exponentially increased the speed and accuracy of these weapons, now require a new generation of strategic agreements. But such negotiations are currently stalled.

At the same time, current conflicts are seeing a growing number of **non-state players** taking a leading role in the development of these crises. Be they armed militias, hybrid civilian and military groups, municipal authorities whose powers are often increased owing to the powerlessness of the central government or administrative authorities exercising de facto power on the ground, these phenomena, which are increasingly observed in current confrontations, are making it difficult for international institutions to adapt to **asymmetrical conflicts** and to a certain form of **privatisation of violence**. Should we choose direct armed confrontation over those that flout the rules of conventional warfare? Or should we instead find new types of actions and accept the principle of negotiations with parties who are not internationally recognised?

### ***Multilateralism faced with national sovereignty***

At a national level – in other words, at the other end of the decision-making chain – we find **internal political forces** also opposed to the globalised order, and increasingly perceived as promoting a process that generates inequalities between and within nations. Referred to as populists, illiberals or simply nationalists, these movements assert the return to **exclusive national sovereignty** in the name of the challenge to the multilateral order it holds responsible for current economic woes (loss of purchasing power, decline in services public, deindustrialisation, etc.). In many countries, the arrival to power of nationalist leaders with social anger directed against the multilateral system opens a new challenge that is much harder to control because it confronts the diplomatic world with political and social

movements that fall within another logic of power relations. More fundamentally, it obliges multilateral order to better take into account the concerns of civil societies and engage in dialogue with them.

The phenomenon is not entirely new; examples in the past of diplomatic positions influenced by domestic policy considerations are numerous. What is unique is that **the globalisation movement is at the heart of this challenge** and is leading more and more national leaders to bend their international positions to take these social upheavals into account. The reorientations observed in American diplomacy since the **election of President Trump**, the copycat effect he has had on other diplomats inspired by the same nationalist impulse, the importance taken by the **issue of immigration** in multilateral discussions to respond to the tensions of national public opinion are largely the result of revolts of internal political forces that are increasingly unwilling to accept the inequalities and disparities caused by globalised order. The popularity of political leaders who openly challenge the principles on which **refugee support policies** have been built since the Geneva Convention reflect this growing pressure to free themselves from the rules established by international order. The same is true in **the area of trade**, where the inspiration for free trade, which has long governed international agreements, is weakened by calls for reciprocity and the protection of social groups affected by unfair competition.

Multilateralism is no longer seen merely as a source of progress and prosperity. It is also seen by the people as a straitjacket that restricts national interests and this inclination is exploited by nationalist-inspired political movements. Broadly speaking the trend is economically inspired but it is also reflected in the political field as we saw in the debate around **the peace agreement in Colombia** and, in the **Netherlands**, the association agreement with the Ukraine. Naturally, the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union and the difficult debates surrounding Brexit in the British Parliament are a striking illustration of how a multilateral system such as that of European integration can become a focus of contention in the political debate.

### Is multilateralism worth saving?

The overwhelming sense that multilateral order is in disarray may be cause for concern for some and hope for others, depending on whether the current divides are seen as the forerunners of deep transformation or, on the contrary, a slow disintegration. Some, referring to the observation made at the time by Antonio Gramsci<sup>1</sup>, would prefer to see this as one of those moments inevitably open to disorder when history hesitates between the end of an ancient world and the emergence of a new one.

#### *Is multilateralism still relevant?*

Although we are able to predict with certainty the future of the multilateral system, it may nonetheless be useful to question its relevance even in today's world.

1. "The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters."  
from *Prison Notebooks*.

Criticism of its inefficiency by its detractors may indeed call into question the very principle of its existence, now considered unsuited to the new challenges of the global world. **Should we therefore condemn multilateralism or, on the contrary, assert the need for international governance?**

Many critics of multilateralism view the system as outdated and are ready to move on. Some great powers encourage us to share these views arguing that over the years confusion has set in between the end and the means and that **multilateralism**, by developing too many processes and procedures, **has gradually become an end in itself**. This criticism is not unfounded. Multilateralism over the years has sometimes resulted in bureaucratic mistakes that have ended up replacing true policy making. Through weariness, excessive pressure or lack of creativity, the multilateral system relies too often on proven diplomatic recipes that no longer have the impetus to provide innovative solutions.

#### ***Achievements not to be underestimated***

However well founded, this reproach actually justifies the current drift in favour of a return to bilateral power relations and purely transactional agreements. It reinforces the idea that **power prevails** and that an agreement is a zero-sum game. It also tends to ignore the **beneficial contributions** multilateralism has made in codifying the basic principles of international society to limit the law of the strongest and lay the foundation for true collective security. It is not only multilateral methods that are put into question; it is also the very principles that underlie the multilateral system from the defence of human rights to the promotion of sustainable development and the fight against climate change.

This underestimation of the benefits derived from multilateralism only reinforces the current drift that leads to the increasingly open questioning of international law or agreements long considered as significant progress. Conventions **prohibiting the use of chemical weapons** are less respected, as we see in Syria where it is difficult to keep track of the repeated violations of these laws. Humanitarian law is today largely flouted, especially in the ongoing civil wars in Syria, Yemen or South Sudan. **Humanitarian aid** is even becoming the focus of direct political confrontation, as in the Venezuelan crisis. Decisions handed down by the **International Court of Justice** and arbitration tribunals are openly contested. Even the **formal agreements** made with the **Ukraine** in 1991 to secure its new sovereignty, and those with Iran in 2015 to oversee its nuclear program were brutally challenged.

A certain form of **consensus** that has so far prevailed in multilateral circles **is beginning to erode**. What was once considered as “acquired” is now disputed, such as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for the **Sustainable Development Goals** and their funding or the **Paris Agreement** on Climate Change. The parameters of peace, long accepted by all, such as the **Middle East peace process**, are now slowly being challenged in a form of general impotence and, in the absence of real discussion, fear that the debate will result in a decline in the achievements of the past. Nowadays, silence is increasingly preferred to a genuine exchange of arguments. The risk is that the principles and rules of law, hitherto considered intangible, are gradually losing their strength with the additional danger that nations are slowly becoming accustomed to this new state of affairs.

### ***Multilateralism and sovereignty***

Multilateralism remains the best guarantee of stability. It can even be argued that its current weaknesses, which increase tensions and crises, largely confirm this observation. The global world in which we live cannot forgo cooperation among States because the interdependence of their respective interests constantly requires a minimum of coordination. Whether it is bilateral, regional, continental or universal, it reflects in each case a reality where the **national public power** alone no longer has **sufficient means to face the challenges of our time**: financial crises, terrorism, climate change, energy transition, health pandemics, technological innovations, and migratory flows are all developments that need to be tackled by a collective effort. The best method to ensure its success may be subject to disagreement, but the very principle of cooperation is now difficult to dispute.

The progress of multilateralism has long been opposed to the desire of States to protect their sovereignty. But in reality, **multilateralism and national sovereignty are not competing interests**; they **complement** one another. At the base of State independence is their ability to control the events that impact the two essential public assets of peace and prosperity, which are at the root of the social contract with their population. But the reality of power struggles in today's world proves daily that this capacity can only be exercised in today's hyperconnected world and with the interdependence it implies through strong international cooperation. This truth is valid for all, including the greatest powers who cannot forgo alliances and allow themselves to rush towards forms of autarchy. Current military conflicts such as trade wars demonstrate daily that the most powerful nations quickly reach the limits of their powers when they are isolated.

Therefore, the **problem of multilateralism** lies not with its principle, whose justification seems every day more strengthened in the face of the challenges of the globalised world; it is **how it functions** and the **weakening of the political will of nations** to defend its action. The causes of this current situation are known and have already been mentioned: the hesitations of America to continue to assume its role of world leader, the return of the power politics embodied by the rivalries between the major global players, the increase in the number of players, the complexity of the challenges that our planet faces today. These factors together have resulted in losing sight of the potential of multilateralism and the contribution it can make to ensuring stability. We need to **return to the origins of multilateralism** in order to restore its original impetus and effectiveness.

### **Towards a driving force for multilateralism**

The weaknesses of multilateralism have not gone unnoticed. Repeated efforts have been made to overcome them. But the results for the moment have not lived up to expectations; blockages remain and the conflicts that have proliferated in the world for nearly twenty years give the impression that multilateralism has lost control.



What can be done to remedy the situation? Given the three shortcomings of the system described above, one possibility would be to propose specific and concrete actions:

- **a revival based on inclusion** to address the increased number of players,
- **greater preventive efforts** to rise to the challenges of our time,
- **the establishment of a new political arena** to engage in dialogue with civil society

### *A revival based on inclusion*

It is essential to address the fragmentation of the international community. The **new players on the international stage** must be recognised for what they are, that is, players of the new multilateral order who must be given their place in line with their increasing role and, consequently, be encouraged to assume their new responsibility in multilateral governance.

One of the ways to achieve this could be more systematically to involve those countries that are not often solicited in the framework of multilateral initiatives, but which are nevertheless likely to make a useful contribution. In addition to the traditional permanent members of the Security Council, the contribution of other nations could be more regularly sought. This practice already has **precedents**: we saw it, for example, during negotiations of the **nuclear agreement with Iran**, where Germany was associated from the outset with the two permanent European members of the Security Council and continued to participate in the discussions when the other three permanent members joined the group. Other innovative formats have also appeared on other issues, in Asia with the **“Six-party talks”** for North Korea, and in Africa with certain neighbouring countries in the **Great Lakes region**.

The same could be done for other current crises, such as in the **Middle East**, where countries in or close to the region could play a useful role, given their knowledge and links in the region. An enlargement of the **Quartet**, currently in charge of the peace process, could help to give it a new lease of life at a time when the forum seems deadlocked. It could also do the same in the current efforts to overcome the crisis in **Yemen** or pacify the **Horn of Africa**: the call for partners such as China, India or South Africa could provide new blood to the process.

**This search for partnerships** would introduce more original formats than the traditional use of P5 or P3 members. It could **renew the usual thought patterns** and explore new ways to overcome the current blockages. This approach, already in place with some regional organisations such as the African Union, could be extended to encourage a growing number of countries to take their share of responsibility in crisis management. At the same time, it would have the advantage of establishing new ways of working together and thus changing certain preconceived ideas. This would initiate a process that could take the first step towards reorganising and recomposing the United Nations bodies and agencies.

### ***Greater preventive efforts***

In the same vein, another line of thought could focus on **conflict prevention**. This priority is shared by all. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has made it one of the major themes on his political agenda, and everyone agrees that it is better to stop the onset of a crisis **at its source** rather than spend more energy putting out the fire. In addition, the characteristics of the current conflicts, which are often **proxy wars** with ramifications so complex that they no longer allow for an agreement to be made, argue for rapid action when the first tensions arise and a spiral towards the bottom threatens.

The difficulty lies in the **implementation of this principle of action**. In its report last year, the Forum suggested some avenues for thought: strengthen analysis work upstream, establish pre-alert systems, and draw lessons from past crises in order to act in time. These proposals remain valid, but any preventive action, particularly in situations of civil war, is always at risk of being accused by the country concerned of **interference in its internal affairs**. In the face of fallout from the borders of civil conflicts such as Venezuela or Syria, it is difficult for neighbouring countries not to react: borderless trafficking of all kinds and the mass exile of refugees can destabilise entire regions. But this legitimate concern to safeguard one's own stability **cannot justify** the hidden goal of **regime change**, as has been seen all too often in the past.

This contradiction must be overcome if the objective is to promote the principle of prevention, but it must be done with discernment. One of the ways to guard against the risk of interference is to **define recognised criteria** to determine the type of action to be taken. In particular, to define a line of action that is realistic and as incontestable as possible, the priority should be given to the **regional dimension** taking into account the **risks of destabilisation** in the region, the **threats of intervention** from neighbouring countries, the actual or potential **mobilisation of regional organisations** and the **mediation efforts** already undertaken. This approach could **avoid the immobility** that too often threatens multilateralism. This is one of the priorities of the current United Nations Secretary-General in establishing the basic principle of action to overcome the growing paralysis of the system.

If conflict prevention is recognised as a priority, we must find the means to promote it. One possible option might be to establish a simple and flexible **crisis management unit** with the United Nations Secretary-General, including staff representative of the different regions of the world, to put together a pool of policy officers that can be called on when the risk of a crisis arises. The advantage of this system would be its speed and its ability to establish an international presence in the field as quickly as possible to provide advice, offer mediation and rapidly seek a path towards dialogue. This would not exclude the possibility of subsequently appointing a special envoy under the conventional United Nations rules for a longer-term process. But such an operational and mobile management structure would, at the first signs of tension, be able to highlight the attention paid by multilateral organisations to a potential crisis and signal their willingness to work to prevent any escalation of the crisis.



### *The establishment of a new political arena.*

In this overheated world we are witnessing today, the growing interaction between the internal and external dimensions of political action is emerging as the new reality of globalisation. The need has arisen to integrate this new phenomenon represented by the **upsurge of internal political debates in the international system**. As already mentioned, domestic concerns are increasingly coming to the international negotiating table while global discussions are now at the heart of domestic policy debates. **Competition from emerging countries**, with its impact on American or European industries, and the **consequences of tensions** in the Middle East, Latin America and Africa on **migration flows** to the United States, Europe or certain Asian countries are now issues that flow freely among multilateral forums and the political circles of each of the nations of the world.

The multilateral system has become aware of this **interpenetration**. It has not yet drawn all the consequences in its approach to these issues and provided them with answers to meet the expectations of public opinion. With this concern in mind, we must be innovative and create a political space open to public debate on the issues of multilateralism.

**In multilateral forums**, the aim is to incorporate into the discussions **the key elements of national debates** to avoid giving the impression that diplomatic negotiations are disembodied and too far removed from the daily concerns of citizens. Immigration, climate change, fair trade, and sustainable development are all issues that need to be negotiated bearing in mind their possible impact on the domestic policies of partner countries. **Diplomatic methods and practices** must be improved to better integrate the priorities that are central to domestic policy debates. Preparing diplomats prior to summit meetings remains indispensable to allow a serious discussion between leaders. But it must be articulated more closely with the discussions held with leaders, which are increasingly influenced by considerations of domestic politics. The difficulties encountered last autumn with the conclusion of the negotiations on the **“UN Global Compact for Migration”** illustrate the limits of diplomatic work when it loses sight of the oppositions and the essential terms of a debate that is increasingly influenced by domestic concerns.

In the political life of nations, the issues of multilateral action often remain unknown, poorly explained or misunderstood. Here, a **pedagogical effort** is needed to translate into simple language the existing divergences, the stakes of the clashes in progress, the constraints that arise and the choices to be made. Raising public awareness of what multilateral organisations can do to find solutions to their daily problems remains the most direct way to overcome the opposition against multilateralism by defenders of national sovereignty. This work is primarily the responsibility of national governments, but the representatives of the multilateral system should not be left out of this long-term task.

Multilateralism must open up to this new reality. It cannot continue to exist in isolation and must open its action up to civil societies in Member countries. This renewed approach must focus on:

- **the content of the discussions** which must be more in tune with the problems experienced by citizens,
- **multilateral procedures** that need to be more open and transparent to facilitate the understanding of debates,
- **decisions** that need to take more account of the urgency of the action to create empathy with national opinions and show that the organisations are attentive,
- **communication** should produce regular flows of information to better explain the progress made and the difficulties encountered by multilateral order.

***By way of conclusion: to achieve a true commitment to multilateralism.***

All these proposals are not designed to change the situation overnight. The task of reviving multilateralism is a long-term one. The objective here is to define a method and a state of mind to help the multilateral system to overcome the blockages step by step. Behind this idea is also the more ambitious goal of giving the players of the international system the desire to work together again. The challenge of multilateral order carries with it **the risk of “every man for himself”** and the temptation for some global players to promote **“alternative multilateralism”** with convenient allies. This approach is not entirely without merit. It could provide these powers with a sphere of influence which is no doubt smaller but more comfortable than in global organisations. It could also enable them to set principles and rules tailored to their own unique interests. But the danger for the multilateral order would then be to **lose its universal vocation** and to see the principles, rules and actions built during the last fifty years slowly disappear.

It is therefore essential to **regain the political will** that has guided the establishment of multilateralism in the past. To this end, the main global and regional players must agree on the ways and means of a recovery. At a time when multilateral order is searching for the means to transform, **it is policy that is most needed**. The recommendations made here are only intended to facilitate this awareness and to define a possible path to foster a new driving force to multilateralism.

## REGIONAL COLLECTIVE SECURITY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF STABILITY

Stability and security go hand in hand. Throughout history, this combination has proven its importance for the preservation of European and world order. In their own way, the peace treaties concluded in the past centuries between European monarchs constituted the first often uncertain efforts to establish a form of stability. The **Treaty of Westphalia**, at the end of the Thirty Years' War, was even presented as the first example of a collective security pact, even though the concept was still far removed from the general mentality of the time. More recently, two military alliances, in Western Europe (**NATO**) and in the East (**Warsaw Pact**) have, in their own way for forty years through the balance of terror, perpetuated a form of stability on the European continent without putting an end to a deeply antagonistic confrontation between the two blocs.

In the world that followed the Cold War period, it was first thought that the end of the confrontation between East and West would result in an era of stability marking the triumph of the Western vision and the consolidation of the multilateral order defended by the West. But this illusion faded at the dawn of the new century with the shock of the **attacks on 11th September** 2001. The ensuing series of conflicts and disorder (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Sahel, etc.) has progressed in parallel with the emergence of new centres of power led by regional or world players, that have begun to shape multilateral order according to their own interests. The **instability** that resulted appears to be **growing** out of control. It leads us to question **whether multilateralism is able** to restore a minimum of **stability**.

In the light of the experience gained over the last sixty years, the options in this area for the multilateral system are not infinite. It can either **reform its governance** through a thorough review of its organisation and functioning, or **seek to provide answers** to the underlying problems that continue to fuel tensions today. This second path involves a long-term effort to address, on a case-by-case basis, the challenges of the global world (from the environment to education, sustainable development and public health) by striving in each of these areas to move forward tenaciously without ignoring the complexity of this ambitious roadmap. Clearly, **the two paths** of reform **must go hand in hand**, in the hope that their respective progress will contribute to consolidating the overall approach.

In this perspective, the question then arises as to whether the **collective security approach** could **reinvigorate multilateralism** and a return to stability. The notion of collective security, as interpreted during the Cold War, has lost much of its relevance in the context of the globalised world. It is nowadays less encouraged even though some lament the calm it provided during the period of the confrontation between East and West. Clearly the renewed quest for collective security that has been adapted to the challenges of our time will have to find new forms. More specifically, taking into account the realities on the ground, two questions must be asked: the first is

to **better define the potential content** of collective security today; the other is to assess whether a **regional approach** in this area would be the most effective option for achieving such an objective.

## Collective security today

Over the years, the concept of collective security has become increasingly broad. In its original meaning, the concept was essentially a military-type agreement whereby the signatory States recognised that the security of each nation was everyone's business and warranted reciprocal commitments and collective assistance. These arrangements could be universal or merely regional in scope.

### *The integrated approach*

Over time, this concept of security has expanded to include **challenges other than military threats**, taking into account the increasingly diverse nature of modern conflicts and their causes. Today, promoters of the collective security objective no longer hesitate to extend the definition of the concept to include concerns such as **economic and social development, the rule of law, good governance, human rights or the environment**.

The reasoning behind this extension is based on the observation in recent years that **crises rarely find lasting solutions**, as the international community fails to seriously tackle the **root of the conflict**. Multilateral institutions have been able to develop, supplement and sometimes even improve conflict resolution processes; they have generally been less convincing about **so-called post-conflict processes** in the absence of strong mobilization to get to the source of these crises. However, the causes of most of these armed clashes are bad governance, poverty, drought caused by climate change, malnutrition and displacement, religious intolerance, ethnic rivalries and other scourges. It has become clear that in order for collective security to act as a stabiliser, **an approach that uses all the instruments of international cooperation** is needed.

Faced with the obstacles encountered in putting an end to ongoing crises, **an idea that is gaining ground** is the use of collective security agreements, promoting a sometimes forgotten or previously underestimated concept. The increased number of players engaged in conflicts that transform into proxy warfare, the complexity of the national interests at stake and the alliances formed or broken between them, and the diversity of the problems at the origin of these conflicts make the actions of multilateral organisations and their representatives more and more problematic. The increasing interweaving between these different tension factors is establishing the conditions for the effective use of an integrated approach.

### *A possible return to grace*

In this context, the issue of collective security can use its *raison d'être* as the guiding theme to offer an overall view and map out a path towards peace. In this respect, the Middle East is a clear illustration of the consequences of a lack of

perspective in the ongoing efforts to resolve crises in the region. The current conflicts in Syria and Yemen are caught in the rivalry between the United States and Russia, Iran and Saudi Arabia, and the aims of other regional players. These aims infiltrate all aspects of the crisis and produce a multiplication of blockages. Despite the current attempts to negotiate in various forums (the Astana<sup>2</sup> process, Geneva work under the auspices of the United Nations, the Istanbul Summit<sup>3</sup>) and the establishment of local agreements to relieve tensions, these efforts are struggling to produce tangible results. With no serious political perspective able to restore peace in the region, a sense of **stalemate** prevails and discourages even the best intentions. In such a context, the option of a **stability pact for the entire region** could support the **long-term vision** that is currently lacking. This positive solution to the crisis would provide a perspective beyond current confrontations and a framework for dialogue between the various nations of the region. In particular, it could make it more acceptable and thus consolidate interim arrangements such as local cease-fires and evacuation zones when the prospect of a **longer-term agreement for a permanent security regime** is also engaged at the same time.

No one can ignore the difficulties of such an undertaking as clashes continue and none of the protagonists seem willing to show their openness. But setting a more ambitious goal, **taking into account the very source of the conflict**, would introduce a new way of thinking that can help unlock the situation.

It is just as clear that similar approaches in other parts of the world could also promote stability by taking into account their own security needs. In **Africa**, the difficulties encountered in enforcing peace or ceasefire agreements in the **Central African Republic** and **South Sudan** prove how fragile these arrangements are. They call for a commitment to long-term objectives by the direct protagonists of the conflict as well as neighbouring countries, which could trigger a virtuous process of non-interference by neighbouring countries and initiate a stepwise approach that could initially lead to the disarmament and demilitarization of armed groups. In addition, there could be sustainable international assistance to lift these countries out of their development problems. This is the same approach that needs to be promoted in **Asia**, where a solution to the crisis in **Afghanistan**, or even in **Myanmar**, will, in order to be effective, need the agreement of neighbouring countries and concerted action to establish a stability pact capable of establishing lasting peace.

## The relevance of the regional dimension

The examples presented above give weight to the idea that, to enhance their chances of success, such collective security processes are likely to favour a regional framework. It is at this level that security challenges can be perceived most acutely. It is also at the regional level that a sense of belonging to the same community makes sense through the common interests that the countries in that region have

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2. The Astana process includes Russia, Iran and Turkey.

3. The Istanbul Summit brought together the Heads of State and Government of Russia, Turkey, Germany and France.

forged over the years in the economic, commercial, social, cultural or even religious domains. The increasing number of African Union or sub-regional organisations in recent years in Africa to install peacekeeping operations (Somalia, Sahel) or use mediation to find solutions to difficult political crises (Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea) have proven that regional partnerships can be a serious basis for effective multilateral cooperation.

***What could such regional collective security agreements contain?***

Drawing on past experiences, such as the Helsinki Accord, for Europe, and taking advantage of regional organisations such as the African Union or ASEAN, regional cooperation as part of a collective security agreement could be divided into three areas:

- **Security** where **the main principles of multilateral order** are reaffirmed (respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States, non-use of force, non-interference in the domestic affairs of other States, etc.) and **monitoring mechanisms** could be established to ensure compliance with these rules. The provisions could be made more ambitious later if the parties agreed. Where possible, **disarmament and demilitarisation mechanisms** for non-State armed groups, whose members could be gradually reintegrated into the national armed forces, could be foreseen. Such arrangements have in the past had varied success. These experiences would benefit from being better taken into account to make these programs more efficient.

Beyond this, **other security commitments** made by the States party to these agreements could be considered as confidence-building measures. They could include **exchanges of information, joint manoeuvres, pre-alert mechanisms** or **liaison procedures among general staff** to prevent any risk of incidents (deconfliction). If desired by the parties, this security regime could also deal with **nuclear security aspects**, either to head down the path of an entire denuclearization zone at the regional level, through the prohibition of any presence of nuclear weapon such as in Latin America, or to provide for the **limitation and control** of existing **civilian nuclear programs**, taking into account their proliferation risks. In any case, the system would evolve depending on the consolidation of trust between regional states.

- **Cooperation** in the broad sense would cover all areas in which the countries of the region would like to work together (trade agreement, transport, research, environment, energy, etc.). In this area, multilateral organisations could assist and make specific commitments, including long-term ones, to provide assistance in the areas identified as priorities to restore order in the countries concerned.
- Finally, the **dialogue between civil societies** would open a wide range of cultural or academic exchanges and establish joint cooperation bodies at all levels (parliaments, local authorities, associations) to foster such contacts. Here again, the multilateral system could make a useful contribution to launching such programs through financial support and sharing experiences in other parts of the world.



There is nothing revolutionary about this type of framework. It has already been tested and has demonstrated its ability to spread a **spirit of cooperation** conducive to relieving tensions. It would also be an opportunity to mobilise and strengthen regional multilateralism to foster action more in line with the cultures and mentalities on the ground.

#### ***How to implement such a process***

There is no doubt that the choice of this “top-down” approach is not self-evident. It is most often made in a **context of violence and mistrust**, which is little conducive to a long-term vision. This is why it must **advance step by step and act on several levels**.

The objective of collective security must address three types of audience which each require a different approach:

- Dialogue among States can be either formal or informal. It may involve **official intermediaries** or **private mediators** if the approach is initially considered risky, or even provocative. It is in any case well chartered territory, where the practices are well established and where the national and multilateral players know how to act.
- **Dialogue with civil societies** is more complex. It requires knowledge of the contacts which is not necessarily the case at the beginning and may require searching for legitimate representatives. It can also take different routes, either informal and **discreet** (unannounced meetings) or more **formal** in nature (conferences). In this respect, governments can act directly or subcontract the task to other **public players** (parliaments, local assemblies) or **private** players (associations).
- **Dialogue with armed groups** is obviously the least simple. When presented in organised form, armed groups are often subject to a **ban on contact** (Hamas) or even **sanctions** (Hezbollah). When they come directly from the field like certain “warlords”, they represent a reality that is even more difficult to grasp. This is the preferred domain for **private mediation**, natural auxiliaries of official diplomacy that is unable to act directly.

By using the possibilities offered by these different players and acting on these three levels, the public authorities and the multilateral system can put forward a regional security plan.

It is also necessary to **regulate this approach** to familiarise people with the problem of collective security and convince local and regional players of its relevance.

At present, the first steps are often left to the **initiative of private mediators**, most often working in tandem with the public authorities and sometimes even supported by them. This approach has the **merit of being cautious**, allowing informal testing of how receptive the various parties are to dialogue. However, it has the disadvantage of too often subordinating the commitment of such an approach to the **good will of non-public players** and not encouraging official diplomacies to be more proactive. A better division of tasks could help to get out of these periods

of expectation that often occur during prolonged crises. In this collective effort, the essential thing remains that the initiators, States and multilateral organisations, all advance their action by making the most of the full range of instruments and channels at their disposal: formal or discreet interviews with the authorities of the countries of the region, mobilisation of civil society, confidential contacts with non-state groups.

On this basis, one can then consider **modulating diplomatic action** at different levels:

- **arrangements on the ground** to reduce violence through cease-fires or evacuation zones,
- **diplomatic dialogue** to allow the idea of a regional agreement to mature,
- **raise awareness among civil society** of the regional plan,
- **regional conference** to negotiate the final security pact.

The advantage of this approach lies in its ability to offer an overall perspective where each partner enjoys the benefits. In addition, by offering short-term results capable of relieving tension while working for long-term sustainable stability, this approach provides the means to **avoid a situation of “frozen conflict”** and give hope to the possibility of finding a lasting solution to confrontation.

The idea is not without risk; it assumes the series of events will unfold smoothly and requires the goodwill of all. Faced with the increasingly complex nature of current crises and the entanglement of alliances and interests, these are the approaches that are most likely to succeed.

## IS COLLECTIVE SECURITY A REALISTIC APPROACH FOR EUROPE?

In order for the multilateral system to regain its ability to act effectively in preventing and resolving crises, the regional collective security approach is one of the possible responses suited to today's confrontations.

**But does this collective security approach make sense in Europe today?** Is it conceivable to take such an approach on the European continent, given its history, the balance of power and the specific nature of the confrontations there?

### A long history of collective security

Throughout the Cold War, placed between the two great rival powers, the European continent has been home to two collective security systems - NATO and the Warsaw Pact - which in their own way symbolised the East-West confrontation and the deep division that seemed irreversible at the time.

#### *The Helsinki process*

However, the first attempts to overcome this division began to appear in the mid-1960s. It then took a bigger turn in the early 1970s with the Ostpolitik defended by the German authorities. The most concrete result of this policy of *détente* came to fruition in 1975 in the **final act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe**. Based on **ten principles of action** that remain as relevant as ever<sup>4</sup>, this agreement defined the **three areas of cooperation** for the future (political and military, economic, scientific and technical, circulation of people, ideas and information) and set up an organisation, the **CSCE**,<sup>5</sup> to promote dialogue between the two parts of Europe.

This system was maintained thereafter despite the persistence of division in the heart of the European continent. Cooperation grew steadily through the multiplication of trade and the gradual opening of societies. The upheaval of the geopolitical landscape following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 naturally changed

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4. The ten principles of the agreement are as follows:

- Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty
- Refraining from the threat or use of force
- Inviolability of frontiers
- Territorial integrity of States
- Peaceful settlement of disputes
- Non-intervention in internal affairs
- Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Equal rights and self-determination of peoples
- Co-operation among States
- Fulfillment in good faith of obligations under international law

5. Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

the entire Helsinki process. Military alliances were radically transformed with the **disappearance of the Warsaw Pact** and the **enlargement of NATO** to Eastern and Central European countries. These same countries **joined the European Union** and increased the number of its members from 15 to 28 within less than ten years. As for the CSCE, it has given way to the OSCE<sup>6</sup> while also enlarging its composition. In its own way, the Helsinki process has thus contributed to the new European order.

### ***New post Cold War tensions***

However, it would be wrong to think that, in this new security order, the European continent has become immune to tensions, internal unrest (Ukraine, Georgia, Macedonia, etc.) and even armed clashes: the long Balkan crisis of the 1990s, the conflict in Georgia in 2008 and, more recently, the confrontation in Crimea and then in Eastern Ukraine, where fighting continues today, have shown the persistence of catalysts to destabilise European multilateral order.

This is due to two characteristics of security in Europe:

- **The presence on the European territory of the armed forces** of the two great military powers of the world who intend to maintain a predominant influence on the continent;
- The willingness - explicit or otherwise - on the part of these same global players to maintain in one way or another the spheres of influence to guarantee their own security.

The consequence of this balance of power is reflected today in an upsurge of tension. These take various forms: the existence of **“frozen conflicts”** - in which negotiations of various forms have not yet provided a satisfactory response; an **armed clash** in the eastern regions of Ukraine that the Minsk Group and OSCE observers are unable to end; the introduction of **economic and financial sanctions** against Russia, particularly following its intervention in Crimea, which seriously hampered any efforts for dialogue.

At the same time, urged by their American ally to increase their public spending, and anxious to take more responsibility in the field of security, European countries are mobilising to build a real defence system to strengthen their industrial base and operational capabilities. Perceived as a possible risk of increasing autonomy, this commitment of Europeans actually does more to create more uncertainty and ulterior motives in the minds of US and Russian leaders than it does to help ease tensions. This leads to misunderstandings and a general climate of mistrust that prevents any real dialogue.

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6. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

## The elements needed to reinvigorate collective security in Europe

Based on the ideas put forward above to promote renewed collective security, several courses of action could be taken by Europeans focusing on three objectives: establish a **long-term vision**; promote **dialogue between civil societies**; initiate the **first measures of confidence**. Implicitly, the idea is to slowly assemble the constituent parts of a larger system that will take shape over time.

### *Contribute to a joint discussion of a long-term vision of European security*

An initiative for collective security in Europe must have a target. On such an issue, there is evidently no consensus. Efforts in this direction in the past in the framework of the OSCE or at international conferences have never come to fruition. More recently, in August 2018, the President of the French Republic relaunched this thought process in his speech to the French ambassadors. These differing ideas generally come from different visions of what could form a **new European security architecture**, designed to learn from the differences in perception and the crisis of confidence that emerged with the post-Cold War era. The prospect of extending the European Union toward countries of Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans or the Caucasus have been seen in Moscow as an intrusion into what Russia considers its sphere of influence. At the same time, the annexation of Crimea by Russia and its support to Donbass separatism were considered by members of NATO and the European Union as a challenge to the borders following the end of the cold war and reflect a desire to change the geopolitical balance within the continent.

It is vain to hope to resolve this divergence of views quickly. But it would be beneficial for all to be able to begin a **common discussion of the various components of a future security architecture**: the concept of threat as perceived in each camp, the notion of sphere of influence, the missions entrusted to the armed forces, the role of conventional and nuclear weapons, particularly in the light of the questioning of the 1987 agreement on intermediate nuclear forces, the rules to regulate cybersecurity, the protection of polar areas and the security of space. Other topics could be added to this list, including the often-held idea of a **vast economic area** stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok that has never really been analysed in depth. Such discussions could be held in **unofficial forums** (think tanks, research institutes) whose work would then be relayed to state bodies who would follow up these initial thoughts. The first contributions to the definition of the future organisation of the European continent would thus be part of the European political landscape. The process will be long and no doubt difficult, but starting quickly can help to begin restoring confidence.

### *Encourage contact between civil societies*

In this same perspective and at the same time, other measures likely to dispel mutual distrust should be encouraged. The **exchanges** between Russia and the countries of the European Union among **officials, parliamentarians, local elected officials, students, and researchers** would help to interpret the nature of the misunderstandings and overcome certain prejudices. Reviving the dialogue between

civil societies would especially mark the **renewal of the spirit of Helsinki**. We could hope over time that this movement of *détente* produces the same effects as in the past.

Initiatives are frequently announced in this area both bilaterally and by the European Union, which has made contact between civil societies one of its five guiding principles for relations with Russia. But the logistics have trouble keeping up, owing to a climate of mistrust created by the various series of sanctions. **Stronger commitment on both sides** is needed to advance a non-controversial plan and help patiently restore trust between the various partners.

***Establish initial confidence-building measures in the short term***

The proposals mentioned above are part of the long term. Their effects, which we can expect to be positive, will become known only slowly. Restoring a climate of trust calls for **more immediate actions**, which are likely to more visibly mark a **change of spirit** and a beginning of openness.

Several initiatives could be envisaged:

- **The celebration in 2020 of the 30th anniversary of the Paris Charter**, which reflected the commitments of the Helsinki Final Act, could be an opportunity for all European countries, brought together through their highest leaders, to solemnly **reaffirm their support for the 10 principles of Helsinki**. This could offer European leaders the opportunity to momentarily set aside their differences and create a more positive political climate that can trigger a new state of mind. It would establish a diplomatic space conducive to the revival of initiatives where, in recent times, a feeling of resignation has set in.
- In this same vein, new efforts could be envisaged to **relaunch negotiations on certain frozen conflicts**, particularly in countries where recent elections have been held. In both **Armenia** and **Moldova**, there may be openings that should be seized by the different diplomats involved in negotiating groups. This same desire could be shown in **Ukraine** after the presidential elections. These elections could open a window of opportunity, especially for the local population of Donbass, to produce concrete goodwill gestures on the ground likely to ease the tension and restart the talks of the Minsk process.
- The **economic aspect** should not be forgotten. It could provide a serious ground for dispelling mistrust by redoubling its efforts to advance discussions with Russia on some of the business issues that are currently bogged down (for example, **compensation** for the damage suffered as a result of the **EU-Ukraine Association Agreement** or the energy transit regime through Ukraine). In the same vein, the resumption of contact between the Russian authorities and the European Commission to plan the beginning of **cooperation between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union** would serve as a gesture by EU members that would be appreciated in Moscow. Such a sign would indeed mark a significant change, given the lack of consideration so far by institutions in Brussels for the Eurasian organisation.

- Other **cooperative actions** of a non-confrontational nature could still be envisaged in areas where mutual interests exist: **pollution control**, collaboration on future **Arctic** roads, the **future of cities** in the era of artificial intelligence, **transport** networks, etc.
- There remains the difficult issue of **European sanctions** against Russia. In this field, it would be futile to hope for signs of flexibility from either side. It would be worthwhile, however, for informal discussions on both sides to explore the room for manoeuvre to ease current constraints. By going over the various categories of restrictive measures put in place since 2014 and the reasons behind them (Crimea, Donbass, the downing of MH17, the Salisbury bombing, incidents in the Sea of Azov), contacts could be made to define the terms of an initial compromise. Thus, gestures of the Russian side showing an opening about the tragedy that occurred when the **Malaysian plane was shot down** in the summer of 2014 could result in the European Union lifting sanctions taken following that event. This double concession would necessarily be limited in scope; but it would confirm a **change of spirit** and could mark the beginning of a constructive process.

Such a list of actions would be in line with the approach discussed above to promote regional security and stability. It would borrow from the various areas put forward following Helsinki (policy and security, economics and civil society) and could use various channels of dialogue (diplomatic, private, academic, associative, etc.). Finally, it would act with a dual aim, attempting to provide a **long-term perspective** for European security while seeking in the short term to elicit gestures of openness from both parties.

The same cautionary note as the one made with regard to the overall discussion of regional collective security is obviously required. Nothing serious can be achieved in the European context without a **clear political choice** from all European leaders and without a shared desire to **leave behind of the current climate of mistrust and recreate the conditions for a real political dialogue**.

For its part, this report simply offers possible action to combat the feeling of inevitability that sometimes appears to set in, and **revive multilateral diplomacy in Europe**. The goal of a collective security regime for the entire European continent may seem ambitious. But it is probably the most appropriate approach considering the scale of the challenge facing Europe. It is a question of **rediscovering the opportunity missed** after the fall of the Berlin Wall to lay the foundations – this time successfully – for real stability in Europe. The **political will** needed to make this initiative possible must still be mobilised.

