‘This Time of Our Responsibility’: The Cold War at Ditchley

By Thomas Cryer

1 Introduction

For perhaps the most frequently utilised term of twentieth-century geopolitics, the ‘Cold War’ is remarkably poorly defined. It should not be forgotten that George Orwell coined the phrase in 1945 to criticise the ideologies, social structures, and beliefs of *both* the United States and the Soviet Union and the likely resultant stalemate, which would leave the globe on the permanent precipice of war. By the 1950s, the term was popularised within America to naturalise the policy of ‘containment’: limiting Soviet advances without resorting to war. As the financier Bernard Baruch declared in a speech to the South Carolina Legislature in April 1947 which popularised the term: ‘the peace of the world is the hope and the goal of our political system; it is the despair and defeat of those who stand against us.’ Conversely, the term was never used within the USSR until the Gorbachev era, the USSR believing that as a peaceful nation it simply could not contribute to a state of war. The ‘Cold War’ consequently represents a masterpiece of historical periodisation and geopolitical simplification, creating a Cold War lens that, for better or for worse, clarified and catalysed foreign policy decisions on both sides of the ‘Iron Curtain.’

Of course, the ‘Cold War’ immediately brings to mind Soviet-American confrontation. Famously, the USSR was identified in the American diplomat George Kennan’s February 1946 ‘Long Telegram’, perhaps the most impactful piece of foreign affairs analysis in history, as ‘a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with the U.S. there can be no permanent *modus vivendi,* that it is desirable and necessary that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed, the international authority of our state be broken, if Soviet power is to be secure.’ Yet recent historians including Odd Arne Westad have worked extensively to diversify our understanding of this ideological conflict, highlighting how nations across the Global South achieved independence, suffered immensely in revolutionary and civil wars, and found their sense of post-colonial identity by co-opting and exploiting these tensions.

Both Ditchley’s Anglo-American ties and the difficulties of securing Eastern bloc participation meant that it predominantly reflected pro-capitalist voices from the major liberal democratic trans-Atlantic powers. Ditchley has yet to have an Annual Lecturer from a former Communist state and Ghana’s Kofi Annan remains the only Annual Lecturer to have come from a current member nation of the Non-Aligned Movement. As late as June 1985, the largest hitherto gathered Ditchley conference discussed ‘East-

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West Relations with the New Men in Moscow' with twenty-three British participants, seventeen American participants, seven from Western Europe, three Canadians and one Australian. As Nathaniel Ocquaye (Archives Intern, 2021) has illustrated, even by 1993 Ditchley could discuss 'Western Relations with the P.R.C' without any Chinese participants, the first only coming to Ditchley in 1998.

Naturally, Ditchley discussants discussing the Cold War continually echoed that sobering fear of armed confrontation that led Sir David Wills to form Ditchley in 1958. As the Commander in Chief of the U.S. European Command General Lauris Norstad announced in Ditchley's second Annual Lecture, 'The Dimensions of the Atlantic Alliance': 'threats, crises, disarray—these mark this time of our responsibility.' Within America, these warnings reflected the evaporation of a 'free security' previously guaranteed by its vast distance from Europe. By contrast, during WWII President Roosevelt took to holding his televised fireside chats in front of giant maps of the Pacific, showing potential bombing runs and emphasising that this was a 'new kind of war' where 'we cannot measure safety in terms of miles on any map anymore.' Mere months after the end of WWII, *Life* magazine printed a map of America 'as it might appear a few years from now, with a great shower of enemy rockets falling on thirteen key U.S. cities.' It predicted that more than ten million people would be killed within thirty-six hours. The defense against this threat consisted of making it 'apparent to a potential aggressor that an attack on the United States would be immediately followed by an immensely devastating air atomic attack on him.'

With hindsight, it was the stark action-reaction logic of such assessments, borne of a perceived pressing need for speed, action and resolve, that the extended deliberation offered at Ditchley often worked to complicate. As Ditchley's first Director H.V. Hodson warned in a September 1963 Director's Note, uncertainty was 'not a valid excuse for inaction: the need was to use a period of uncertainty to mould the environment of the problems in such a way as to advance progress towards ideal long-term solutions.' Hodson's defiant search for long-term solutions is evident in Ditchley's unique archive of Directors' Notes, of which around forty concentrated on Cold War topics. By bringing together discussants from numerous Western bloc nations, Ditchley discussions revealed the subtle differences in opinion between such countries, particularly illustrating a consistent European questioning of the starkest American catastrophism.

Ultimately, emphasising the Cold War's ideological consequences also asks vital questions of modern Ditchley: how can an institution whose discussion was for many years dictated and defined by such perspectives adapt to a new multipolar era? Have recent discussants welcomed the chance for new geopolitical perspectives, which undoubtedly make decision-making more complex and discussion more arduous? How best should Ditchley examine the fate of former Communist states and invite speakers from such countries in the future? And, most importantly, how best can Ditchley evaluate its Cold War conferences and analyse recent events to prevent a comparable ideological confrontation from ever occurring again?

2 'More Attente Than Détente,' 1962-1972

2.1 1962-1972, The Historical Context

When Ditchley held its first conferences in the immediate wake of the Cuban

Missile Crisis, it was widely believed that the 'Cold War' had steadily relaxed since the late 1940s. This was primarily a legacy of the 1950s, during which the inescapable, constant changes of the post-war years appeared to have settled, particularly within Europe. The detonation of a Soviet nuclear bomb in 1953 drew both sides towards nuclear parity, whilst the ultimate failure of anti-Soviet resistance in East Germany in 1953 and Poland and Hungary in 1956 indicated the strength of the USSR's control over Eastern Europe.

Following the death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953, Nikita Khrushchev's premiership also saw a turn against the starkest Stalinist dogmas. In February 1956, his 'Secret Speech' to the Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) revised Stalinist conceptions of inevitable world wars, capitalist encirclement and the need for total mobilization, instead prioritising 'peaceful coexistence' and suggesting that Soviet citizens could be encouraged to work for the good of the state through material incentives. In 1962, Khrushchev personally intervened to allow the publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,* an explicit criticism of Stalin's terror and the gulag. Within America, much of the McCarthyite scare's mass panic had dissipated and President Eisenhower delivered on his 1952 electoral promise to extract American forces from Korea, which soon became America's 'forgotten war.' Notwithstanding concerns over the recently revolutionized People's Republic of China and a simmering crisis in Indochina, there was consequently no singular foreign arena to hold voters' attention.

The landmark of post-Cuba détente came on August 5th 1963, when the three nations owning nuclear weapons – the U.S., USSR, and UK– signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, banning test detonations of nuclear weapons overground. As observed in the Director's Note from a conference on the nuclear deterrent held a month later, this Treaty evidenced that in this 'new era of East-West relationships both vigilant strength and readiness to seize opportunities of peaceful progress were necessary.' Crucially, the Treaty represented perhaps the last time that Britain negotiated as if it were still a great power, as its empire continued to dissolve in the decade ahead. For many Soviet observers, decolonisation seemed to confirm the twentieth-century's trajectory towards world socialism—Khrushchev paid substantially more attention than Stalin to the 'global south,' seeking to outmanoeuvre western imperialism by gathering a steadily growing coterie of USSR-aligned postcolonial states whose support in the UN would turn the USSR into a *bona fide* 'member of the world club.'

Yet the Global South simultaneously sought a degree of cooperation distinct from either bloc. In 1955, 29 countries representing 54% of the world's population met at the Bandung Conference in Indonesia. There, they stated their united opposition to neo-colonialism and encouraged further Asian-African cooperation, a goal that lead to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement. This movement also captured the imagination of many within America, the African American novelist Richard Wright noting at Bandung, 'a racial and religious system of identification manifesting itself in an emotional nationalism which was now leaping state boundaries and melting and merging, one into the other.' In short, from as soon as Ditchley launched in 1962, the Cold War lens was already collapsing from underneath.

2.2 1962-1972 at Ditchley

Many early Ditchley participants pointed to a 1960s 'mini-détente.' For example, in 1964 the Canadian diplomat Arnold Heeney QC opened Ditchley's third Annual Lecture, 'Friends and Relations,' by arguing that the current situation's 'most notable feature' was 'the relaxation of tension in East-West relations.' Only a few years later, the former Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home's 1968 Annual Lecture, 'An International Weather Forecast', described a 'trend towards coexistence which is positive. Perhaps this is optimism, perhaps faith, perhaps they are the same thing.'

Nevertheless, there was a widespread sense that this rapprochement complicated decision-making. Heeney argued that in the immediate post-war years 'the objectives of Western diplomacy were stern, but they were not hard to agree upon… it was not difficult for any of us to know what friendships to cultivate, what relationships to claim.' The Atlantic Alliance now 'miss[ed] the familiar, if unpleasant, certainties of those years.' Of course, this partially reflected growing hopes that a more geopolitically settled Europe warranted fewer military interventions, aiding multilateral negotiation and even cooperation. Indeed, Douglas-Home suggested that Khrushchev had decided that 'the aim of international Communism, which is to cause confusion to a point where influence can be asserted or physical take-over made possible, can no longer be furthered by a nuclear threat.' If the USSR were to further 'dilute' its ideological hostility, Douglas-Home predicted that 'then gradually that easement will be reflected in the United Nations and this body could then become an instrument for co-operative and collective peace, rather than a passive register of a cold war.'

As Thomas Cryer's piece on Anglo-American Relations at Ditchley asserts, Ditchley's American participants could always be relied upon to convey a more sober perspective. On July 18th 1969, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson's former National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy came to Ditchley to give his Annual Lecture, 'The Americas and Europe: Rhetoric and Reality.' Bundy argued that until 1964 the international community 'learned many different lessons, and they do not all talk in one tongue.' The Cold War's third phase, running from 1964 to 1970, was a 'time of waiting,' of 'some détente, but rather more attente.' America was preoccupied with Vietnam, and Russia by a 'cautious collegium' [i.e. Khrushchev's less belligerent CPSU] which had no desire to 'reopen the war of nerves.' The result was 'immobilism' in Europe, meaning that peace and stability were

ARNOLD D.P. HEENEY, 1902-1970

Born in Montreal, Quebec in 1902, Arnold Heeney had a storied career in the Canadian civil service, particularly as a diplomat.

After being educated at the University of Manitoba and St John's College, Oxford under a Rhodes Scholarship, Heeney studied for a Bachelor of Civil Law degree at McGill University. His first government post came as the personal secretary to Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1938. By 1940 he was the first person to be *both* Secretary to the Cabinet and Clerk of the Privy Council, organising the work of the critical Cabinet War Committee during WWII.

In 1949 Heeney became undersecretary of state for external affairs, before serving as the ambassador to NATO. He also served as the Canadian ambassador to the United States from 1953 to 1957 and from 1959 to 1962. On that latter occasion, he argued that Canada was tied to America 'in every possible way' whilst also emphasising Canada's 'strong attachment to the crown as an institution and to the Queen as a person.'

By the time of his 1964 Ditchley Annual Lecture, Heeney was chairman of the Canadian section of an International Joint Commission focused on boundary waters and pollution before being asked in 1965 to write the prominent report 'Canada and the United States– 'Principles for Partnership.' Upon Heeney's death in 1970, the former Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson described him as 'one of Canada's most outstanding citizens', arguing that 'Canada is a better place for his life and his work.'

internationally more secure. Bundy nevertheless emphasised that America itself was experiencing a 'test of internal stability… more searching and more shaking than anything we have known since the Great Depression.' America's political centre was 'hard-pressed' and were it to collapse, 'the commitment of the United States would become doubtful, because of a new American radicalism, or undesirable, because of a new American reaction.'

This threat was exacerbated by the relaxation of European nations, whom Bundy speculated 'may prefer not to have a serious foreign policy anymore.' Americans had for too long attempted to steer Europeans, whilst Europeans 'allowed this American rhetoric to serve as a substitute for the reality of decisions by Europeans.' Ultimately, only Europeans could stabilise and defend Europe's geopolitical balance, state European opinions on arms control agreements with the USSR, or build an interconnected continental economy to encourage East-West trade. As a Ditchley Director's Note two years earlier warned, for Europe not to chart its own course was to risk 'a reciprocal isolationism in America provoked by Europe's unhelpful and indeed scornful indifference to America's world burdens.'

Of course, one consequence of European stability was the belief that external actors' options were increasingly limited. This was evident in Eastern Europe, where May 1970's conference 'Relations with Eastern Europe' noted the 'conflicting strains involved in the maintenance of party unity and party control in an increasingly complex society, the government and efficiency of which demand modern methods incompatible with the doctrinaire rigidity of the past.' Believing this pressure to be innately self-perpetuating, participants agreed that 'changes would have to come from within.' Western policy makers accordingly had to 'neither be apologetic nor provocative.' Another group predicted that whilst cultural and economic exchanges would intensify, there would be 'no basic change in relations' aside from increased communications between both Germanies following *Ostpolitik* – the Federal Republic of Germany's Chancellor Willy Brandt's policy of normalising relations. Participants consequently deemed it unlikely that détente would 'fundamentally alter' Europe's political landscape.

China, however, represented far more of a question mark. From the proclamation of the People's Republic of China on October 1st, 1949, it had been something of a known unknown, hastening both blocs' increased concern with East Asia. As Nathaniel Ocquaye has shown, this uncertainty was replicated at Ditchley, which has held 22 conferences on China since its first in 1964. The Director's Note from November 1964's conference 'British and American Policies Towards China' described China as the 'central problem of the Far East.' The region's issues were not solely Chinese-created but were 'all to a greater or lesser extent exacerbated, and their solution frustrated, by the influence and activity of the Chinese People's Government and the Communist creed it upholds.' The P.R.C. was 'a paradox… both weak and strong.' Compared to the USSR and U.S., it had a weak industrial base and fell substantially behind in nuclear weapons, conventional forces, and military technology. Accordingly, participants adjudged that the P.R.C. believed Communist domination of East Asia to be inevitable but envisaged it as 'occurring through indigenous revolution when the time is ripe rather than, on the East European pattern, through external military action.' In the year that America's first troops landed in Vietnam, the note sagely warned that the P.R.C. believed that 'provided no new factor is introduced, these objectives will be achieved sooner or later.'

By 1970 'Conference on Sino-Soviet and Sino-Western Relations,' America's intervention in Southeast Asia had gone decidedly awry. Group B still hoped that China's main preoccupation was 'the governance and development of China: the preservation of a unitary state – no easy task.' It gave 'substantially less assistance to Communist insurgents than it could provide if the spirit really moved.' The risk, however, was the 'lower size and visibility' of America as a countervailing regional force as calls for President Nixon to withdraw more troops from Vietnam increased. Further, Group C discussed 'The Sino-Soviet Relationship' exclusively, highlighting the so-called 'split' in this relationship that developed since the P.R.C. denounced Soviet 'revisionist traitors' in 1961. By 1969, this escalated into a seven-month territorial dispute over Damansky Island on China's North-Eastern border.

Group C predicted that 'no alliance on the old terms would be possible or even desirable.' The prospects were 'neither for reconciliation nor for war, but for the kind of hostile but cautious competition normal to the dominant power of the central balance.' China had adopted a 'Bandung phase [i.e., a non-aligned approach] in foreign policy' after splitting from the USSR, concentrating its military aid in regions of the Global South including Tanzania, Palestine and the Dhofar region of Oman. Indeed, Group C further warned that Maoism had become 'the polar star of romantic revolutionary left-wing youth in the West and the third world', with 'not inconsiderable' political consequences.

Still, the overall trajectory following the 1960s suggested that a fragmented Communism 'seemed (rightly) less formidable, and somewhat discredited.' There was 'more room for manoeuvre in a triangular balance than there was in a bilateral one,' with China becoming 'available' for Western diplomatic overtures. This could, however, provide 'room for miscalculation and uncertainty,' Group C concluding that a further deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations was an 'intolerable danger.' The Sino-Soviet relationship therefore represented in microcosm the overall theme of the 1960s: a series of guarded yet ultimately creative lurches towards multipolarity and rapprochement, some attente counterbalanced by a growing undercurrent of détente. The consequent complexity and opacity of such Cold War policies meant that domestic support slowly ebbed, particularly within America. For a decade that emerged from the rubble of the Cuban Missile Crisis, however, such hesitant progress cannot be understated.

3 Ditchley During Détente, 1972-1979

3.1 1972-1979, The Historical Context

The 1970s proved to be a decade of sporadic attempts to understand and react to the complexities of Cold War policy-making which were continually frustrated by long-building domestic difficulties. In 1971, the Nixon administration observed that 'the post-war order of international relations—the configuration of power that emerged from the Second World War – is gone.' America in the 1970s was engaged in a prodigious feat of soul-searching, chiefly caused by its loss in Vietnam. Old ideas, beliefs, and goals seemed to have eroded, encouraging a domestic isolationism which primarily emphasised that one Vietnam War proved was enough. Meanwhile, the breakdown of Bretton Woods and growing demands for a 'New International Economic Order' from the Global South following 1973's oil crisis brought a long-underway process of globalisation into centre-view. Geopolitically then, the 1970s awakened to a 'complex interdependence' that challenged old conceptions of political organisation and national sovereignty.

Nor was the USSR immune from domestic economic crises. After coming to power in 1964, Leonid Brezhnev instigated several economic reforms which were all gradually moderated as the economy experienced what was later labelled an 'Era of Stagnation.' Brezhnev represented a new generation of leadership who never experienced 1917's Revolution, a generation encouraging 'real, existing socialism' rather than utopian longings. Unlike Khrushchev or Stalin, Brezhnev's caution reflected his relatively weaker grip on power. As Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski quipped, 'under Lenin, the Soviet Union was like a religious revival, under Stalin like a prison, under Khrushchev like a circus, and under Brezhnev like the U.S. Post Office.' This was also a period of simmering dissent: dissidents distributed human rights periodicals including the *Chronicle of Current Events* throughout the Union; Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 triggered a significant backlash and the discovery of drafts for Solzhenitsyn's epic *The Gulag Archipelago* resulted in his expulsion to Germany.

The 1970s was nonetheless the classic period of superpower détente. As Group B of October 1972's 'The Bases of Foreign Policy' conference concluded, the USSR's 'original revolutionary impetus had to some extent yielded precedence to the global ambitions of a Great Power.' The Helsinki Act of 1975 effectively certified the post-WWII geopolitical status quo in Europe whilst two Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, an Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and an Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War helped mellow the arms race. U.S.-Soviet trade doubled from 1971 to 1973 and cultural interchanges blossomed. Both sides consequently became *relatively* more sophisticated and comprehending about the other's societies. Nevertheless, the essential ideological disagreement remained. As the Director's Note from June 1978's conference on 'Eurocommunism' observed, 'Sir Harold Wilson appeared puzzled throughout the sessions why communists usually presented themselves to him with such jolly faces.'

Ultimately, détente was also a predominantly European phenomenon that did little to prevent another decade of considerable suffering caused by interventionism in the Global South. Argues the historian Charles Maier, 'the result was a decade of destabilization between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s, as the volatility in Asia, Latin America and Africa, as well as the racial and student conflict in the Atlantic world, undermined the stalemate earlier achieved in East-West relations.'

One notable exception was American rapprochement with China. By October 1972, a group discussing Sino-Soviet Relations at a further 'Bases of Foreign Policy' conference found 'a consensus that Sino-Soviet tension has helped to bring about a period of manoeuvre, negotiation and accommodation in relations.' Nixon adopted a conscious policy of engagement following the Damansky Island dispute, becoming the first sitting President to visit China in February 1972. He dubbed it a 'week that changed the world,' believing that this new alliance would nudge the USSR towards making its own concessions and help to bring the Vietnam War to a peaceful resolution. By February 1979, a Director's Note from the 'US/EEC Relations with the Eastern Bloc' conference declared that 'the Chinese are easier and more effective to deal with than any of the East European countries' and that, following the official normalisation of Sino-American diplomatic ties, the 'development of a wide range of relations with China is desirable.'

Finally, the 1970s' economic issues accelerated the decline of Britain's Cold War commitments, which ended not with a bang but with a whimper. By 1971, the majority of Britain's Asian and African colonies achieved independence and its bases in the Far East and the Persian Gulf were finally surrendered. Coming precisely as the Cold War's centre of gravity shifted towards Asia, this withdrawal represented a telling indication of Britain's priorities shifting evermore towards Europe as it finally acceded to the EEC on January 1st, 1973. As the historian Sean Greenwood notes, it was 'an incontrovertible turning point. The fig leaf which had obscured the threadbare British pretensions to globalism fluttered to the ground.'

3.2 1972-1979 at Ditchley

Throughout the 1970s, Ditchley convened several discussions regarding 'The Meaning and Effects of Détente.' These were pre-empted, however, by NATO Secretary-General Dr Joseph Luns's September 1973 Annual Lecture 'Europe and the Americans', which warned that 'we are by no means yet out of the woods.' Luns described the 'essentially untouched' 'fundamental incompatibility' between communism and capitalism as a 'most serious peril.' Throughout the 1970s, this 'hawkish' analysis compounded fears that political leaders were 'losing their nerve,' wishing to turn defence spending towards improving living standards. Luns thus cautioned that European nations had to 'continue to shoulder the burden of providing for our security,' warning that democratic societies 'will not find this easy. We shall be urged to relax long before it is safe to do so.' Luns' overall tone was idealism without illusions, arguing that 'we shall not succumb to these temptations providing that there is sufficiently wide public understanding of the realities of the world in which we live, and of the continued effort which is called for.'

When time came to discuss 'The Meaning and Effects of Détente,' the first of these conferences of July 1974 only stressed that détente was itself a markedly vague term. Some participants believed détente to be the first step in a twenty-year process to foster further cooperation; some believed it to be an inevitable and irreversible consequence of Soviet economic decline and/or global economic interdependence; and some believed it to be 'merely the search for a *modus vivendi* between two rival powers whose basic hostility would continue… so that détente amounted to no more than the establishment of a degree of control over some aspects of their competition.' Indeed, détente's critics feared that the USSR 'got a *de facto* peace treaty without the disadvantages of a formal one' and that the CPSU's need to retain domestic control ensured that they would always stress ideological confrontation and the progress of global revolution.

By contrast, it was American 'neo-isolationism' and European tendencies to 'reject rather than copy America's ways of doing things' which were stressed by 1975, in addition to Middle Eastern instability following the Yom Kippur War and 1973's oil crisis. Participants warned that a younger generation who never experienced the early Cold War's 'real military threat' were unlikely to provide adequate defence budgets. It was even suggested that the underlying Soviet objective behind détente 'was to bring about unilateral cuts by the West.' Indeed, by June 1975, two months after North Vietnamese forces overran Saigon, participants further emphasised that a 'younger generation, which tended to moralise rather than to understand issues of *realpolitik,* found the concerns of the older generation irrelevant.' Western policymakers had to 'not accept that there was no Soviet military threat, but rather educate Western opinion on its nature.'

Again, Ditchley in the 1970s discussed East Asia extensively, particularly at two conferences on 'The Pacific and East Asia.' As Group A of the first of these conferences noted in May 1972, 'America's agonizing experience in Viet Nam has profoundly influenced the shape of United States policy, not only directly but by weakening domestic support for a policy of global responsibility.' The tragic results of America's Vietnamese intervention would 'profoundly affect the future of East Asia as well as [sic] United States policy and position.' The U.S. had increasingly abandoned containment, instead 'work[ing] within a larger framework that takes account of the other major powers in the area with the objective of encouraging peaceful trends and initiatives and maintaining equilibrium.' The Pacific was, in short, no longer an American lake.

Nevertheless, multiple groups argued that no great power sought to extend its regional control via military means directly—Vietnam evidenced the difficulty of doing so. The conference nevertheless warned that China 'now embarked on a more active foreign policy,' playing an active part in international organisations and 'seeking to improve communications with the U.S., in part to help create a counterweight to the Soviet Union.' Notably, Nixon had visited China two months previously. Creative cooperation was indeed the conference's ultimate theme, with an 'effort to achieve an equilibrium of peaceful processes' being suggested as a fruitful alternative to 'a balance of power policy in traditional terms.'

Ditchley participants still struggled to discern the P.R.C.'s precise aims, however. In June 1973, Group C of the second 'The Pacific and East Asia' conference adjudged that Chinese thinking about foreign relations 'might still be at an early stage.' Its main regional priority was to 'secure the withdrawal or exclusion of the political influence of all the rival great powers, especially the United States.' Nevertheless, it was contended that Beijing lacked the 'Stalinist' outlook, particularly outside of East Asia, and was 'content with the friendship of local powers rather than their complete submission.' By this conference, Nixon had been re-elected, in part due to his promise of significant troop withdrawals. By March 1973, the last U.S. combat troops left Vietnam following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords. Group C consequently agreed that for America 'the most important problem was the maintenance during the forthcoming period of transition of the sense of confidence and security in these Asian and Pacific States which had become dependent upon the United States.' The next decade, concluded the group, would be a period of 'quiet crisis.'

This thesis received an update at February 1978's conference 'The Balance of Power in Asia', held a year and a half after Chairman Mao's death. The overall tone was guardedly cautious given domestic instability and international opacity. Group A of this conference noted the 'erratic and sometimes convulsive nature of China's entry into the modern world,' with expectations having 'taken a great leap forward' which created an imbalance between expectations and performance which was 'already wide and is likely to grow.' Sino-Soviet relations 'have been and are bad, and will continue to be so.' Again, participants recognised that America had repudiated strict military containment for a more moralistic, popular albeit occasionally erratic foreign policy. Accordingly, it 'now faced much greater difficulty in formulating and articulating a general policy towards Asia.' Group B observed that:

> 'Issues were now more global and less regional in character; relations with both the Soviet Union and China were more mixed than they had been, comprising both competition and co-operation; there was a constant attempt to balance China with Russia, so that the USA gained most from the process; and at the same time the U.S. government was still trying to retain the alliances and associations of the 1950s where these survived. No wonder a coherent policy was hard to articulate.'

Finally, by the late 1970s, discussions regarding Europe were correspondingly pessimistic. The Director's Note from June 1978's conference 'Eurocommunism' recognised that Eurocommunism was 'exercising a corrosive influence on Soviet domination of Eastern Europe' but maintained that change in Moscow itself was 'perhaps beyond the lifetime of anybody present here.' Whilst recognising those Eastern European nations including Albania and Romania who increasingly frustrated Soviet wishes, the conversation still circled back to the basic necessity of an East-West status quo, the report concluding that 'the ghosts of Sonnenfeld and Kissinger hovered under the table, but no one wanted to play footsie with them.' Indeed, Group B of the February 1979 conference 'US/EEC Relations with the Eastern Bloc' noted 'substantial concern about the direction of present and future trends.' Once more, it was 'essential that parity be actively maintained in a military balance which has thus far preserved security in Europe for a generation.'

Nevertheless, it was warned that even parity would not 'prevent certain Soviet actions in taking advantage of targets of opportunity particularly in the developing countries.' These often owed more to internal factors: nationalism was the 'impetus for most of the instability in the contemporary developing world, which is in no way monolithic and comprises widely divergent groups of countries.' Group B therefore concluded that it was of 'crucial importance not to equate every instability or upheaval as a gain for the Soviet Union or the West.' Leaders acted upon 'pragmatic calculations of their own national interest when dealing with the Russians and many nations 'once thought to have been 'lost' to Soviet control have typically reasserted their national independence and moved away from Soviet influence.' This was to finally endorse a concept of linkage proposed by Group C which hinted at how détente allowed policymakers in the 1970s to peer, even if ever so briefly and hesitantly, beyond the Cold War lens:

> 'Its purpose is to achieve a goal and not to make the Soviet look bad. It could be said that linkage arises from the nature of the competition between East and West, it cannot be avoided or abolished. For the relations among great powers are not separate strands that could be pulled out separately. Even if they cannot be woven together into Kissinger's intricate web of dependence and interdependence, it would certainly seem appropriate, from the Western point of view, that they be woven together as artfully as the varied talents of a multiplicity of Western weavers allow.'

4 The End of History, 1980-1989

4.1 1980-1989, The Historical Context

By the middle of the 1980s, however, détente appeared a distant memory. Several simmering Soviet interventions in the Global South, including in the Horn of Africa and Nicaragua, were finally compounded by direct intervention as Brezhnev deployed the Soviet 40th Army into Afghanistan on December 24th, 1979. In seeking to remove Hafizullah Amin, the former second-in-command of the Afghan Communist Party whom Brezhnev feared planned to switch allegiances to the U.S., the Soviets acted upon the Brezhnev doctrine—the belief that a threat to any Communist state was a threat to all and thus a legitimate cause for intervention. The resulting tensions caused President Jimmy Carter to withdraw SALT II from consideration by the Senate; to create an economic embargo against the USSR; and to boycott 1980's Moscow Olympics. The 1980s opened too with the repression of the Polish trade union Solidarity in 1981 and the shooting down of Korean Airlines flight 007 in 1983.

By Reagan's Presidency, the 'Reagan Doctrine' accordingly called for directly rolling back communism in the Global South (e.g., in the Philippines, Nicaragua, Angola and South Africa); intensifying the arms race to place the Soviet economy under pressure; and creating a missile defence system to protect the U.S. from ballistic missiles–the Strategic Defense Initiative, nicknamed 'Star Wars.' Whilst presented as a defensive program, 'Star Wars' ostensibly made a nuclear war 'winnable' if Americans could effectively knock Soviet missiles out of the atmosphere. America's domestic mood was best summarized in the November 1983 television film *The Day After,* which gripped nearly 100 million viewers (the highest of a TV film in history) with the lives of survivors of a nuclear confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It proved an effective mobilization tool for a growing anti-nuclear movement in both America and Western Europe and was screened by Reagan in the White House to great emotional effect. That same month, NATO launched 'Able Archer 83,' an unnervingly realistic simulation of a DEFCON 1 nuclear attack that many in the Politburo feared was a precursor to genuine nuclear confrontation.

Domestically, the Soviet Union faced several cascading crises. First, its leadership encountered a stark generational issue as Politburo members who had politically 'come of age' during WWII advanced in years. Following Brezhnev's death in November 1982, his successor Yuri Andropov ruled for only 15 months (and healthily for only 3) before his own death in February 1984. His successor, Konstantin Chernenko, was 72 when elected and already in poor health, dying only eleven months later in March 1985. Second, the USSR's Eastern European satellites were economically stagnating and increasingly reliant on Western credit. They now resembled the tail that wagged the dog, costing the USSR approximately 20-25% of its GNP. Third, intervention in Afghanistan had been a disaster, with the UN protesting Soviet intervention 104-18, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation demanding Soviet withdrawal, and the deployment of troops reaching 108,800. As a Ditchley conference of 1984 noted, whilst the USSR could easily find ideological justification for wars of liberation in the 1970s, many more 1980s conflicts were linked to religious or tribal differences: ideology could no longer be a 'guiding compass' for Soviet decision-making.

The result was a guarded acceptance, as Ditchley participants at October 1982's conference 'The Soviet Union: The Internal Situation and Its Implications for the West' phrased it, that 'neither super-power wants war, that there is no bilateral political issue dividing the United States and the Soviet Union which in itself could justify resort to war.' The Director's Note from June 1984's conference marking the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Marshall Plan thus noted a 'general support for 'gradual normalisation of relations' which nevertheless required 'watchful, sympathetic, cautious firmness.' The West had to be 'firm without being truculent.' The Director's Note from May 1986's conference 'Divided Germany and the Future of Europe' likewise posited that 'both courses had to be pursued in parallel, difficult though it might be to strike the right balance at any given moment.' With further discontent expected, the consequences of which were entirely unpredictable, 'the art would lie in using such happenings to weaken the Soviet grip without precipitating disaster.'

4.2 1980-1989 at Ditchley

The highly-strung tone of Cold War discussion in the 1980s was evident from Ditchley's first conferences of the decade. The December 1980 conference 'The Strategies of the East and West' recognised that NATO faced a 'massive Soviet military effort across a very broad spectrum of capabilities' which was 'motivated less by a specific strategic plan than by a deep-seated general view, rooted in Russian tradition, that the USSR ought to equip itself with simply as much military power, in amount and quality, as it can acquire and sustain.' Another group feared a 'growing wave of 'Marxisant socialism, particularly in Africa.' Some participants argued that Reagan's America was 'abetting Soviet efforts by aligning itself with reactionary forces on the losing side of historical tendencies,' a conclusion that was 'sharply disputed.' Whilst fresh emphasis was placed on a consistent, credible, and effective utilization of human rights, the conference concluded with all too familiar fears that Europeans weren't paying 'their fair share' and that 'crises could be dealt with in better ways.'

At the June 1981 conference, 'The Soviet Empire in Europe', Group A maintained that the USSR would 'risk almost any other priority or posture' if its East Europe interests were threatened, yet that the 'increasing unpopularity at home of overseas commitments which drain the Russian economy' meant that Soviet interventions in the Global South were declining. It was believed, nonetheless, that the USSR could 'firmly control' Eastern European dissent. The West had to 'encourage liberalisation without risking armed conflict' and to avoid 'shy[ing] away from a struggle of ideas… one battle that it could win.' Indeed, the group recognised that Reagan's administration provided 'a more assertive tone than in debates on these matters in the past.' Participants at October 1982's conference 'The Soviet Union: The Internal Situation and Its Implications for the West' further supported this bold approach, recommending 'a calculated long-term policy of utter, blunt clarity with regard to areas where vital Western interests are at stake, combined with calculated

DITCHLEY CONFERENCES OF THE 1980S

December 1980 - The Strategies of the East and West.

June 1981 - The Soviet Empire in Europe.

October 1982 - The Soviet Union: The Internal Situation and its Implications for the West.

May 1984 - The Means of Settling International Disputes Peacefully in Present Times: Insulation of Disputes from the Superpower Rivalry

June 1984 - 35 Years Since the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine: The Continuing U.S. Commitment to the Stability and Defense of Europe, and the Significance of this in the East/West Relations.

September 1984 - The Soviet Union and China and their Asian Neighbours.

March 1985 - The Next Four Years in East-West Relations.

May 1986 - Divided Germany and the Future of Europe.

June 1986 - East-West Relations with the New Men in Moscow.

April 1987 - Americans Views of the Soviet Union: How to Handle East-West Relations.
February 1988 - Perestroika and Glasnost: Stocktaking Towards the End of Mr. Gorbachev's Third Year.

April 1989 - Western Policies in Response to Reform and Innovation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

June 1989 - Political and Economic Reform in China.

30th June 1989 - Annual Lecture XXVI- The French Revolution and the Development of Western Democracy, delivered by François Furet, Director of the Institut Raymond Aron, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris.

December 1989 - The German Question: Divided Germany's Dual Relationship to the Soviet Union and to the West.

ambiguity in dealing with the Kremlin about its problems in the Warsaw Pact area.' 'Both carrot and stick were necessary' simultaneously. This would expose the Warsaw Pact's domestic discontents, forcing the USSR to 'face reality by denying them 'life support systems' in the form of credits, economic help and anything else that would allow them to postpone painful decisions on their military over-extension and level of spending.'

As the Soviet-Afghan War raged on, however, Ditchley participants acknowledged that the relative clarity of East-West relations in Europe calmed the situation disproportionately. By contrast, a 1984 conference 'The Soviet Union and China and their Asian Neighbours' expressed 'little hope of a settlement' in Afghanistan. This conference noted a 'growing stress on ideology and Messianic attitudes' in the Global South, with the U.S. concerned about Soviet military strength and the USSR fearing that the U.S. would 'not accept it as an equal.'

As for an increasingly reforming China, this conference accepted that 'the critique of Mao was far more thorough-going than the de-Stalinisation campaign of Khrushchev, and this has left China at present in a state of crisis of self-confidence.' The consequent 'absence of an acceptable ideology' was 'felt deeply by the present leadership' and the aging Deng Xiaoping's imminently predicted death created an 'inevitable unpredictability.' The Sino-Soviet bloc had nonetheless become 'an aberration' and participants generally agreed that China had 'become much less interested in developing relations with the Soviet Union, as the Soviet Union had little offer while the West had a great deal, notably in technology.'

Towards the second half of the 1980s, Ditchley predominantly discussed domestic reform within the USSR itself. Undoubtedly, participants were rarely giddily optimistic. The aforementioned 1984 conference's recognition of 'deeply held ideas and beliefs which make it inconceivable that the USSR will adopt certain reforms,' particularly among a Soviet elite needing to justify the CPSU's leading role over a disparate populace, remained commonplace. Yet, critically, it was accepted that there was no longer 'an inspiring motivation or ideal for the sake of which people would engage in vast development schemes and undergo hardship.'

But the alternatives were not clear. As late as the 'The Next Four Years In East-West Relations' conference held in March 1985, the month when Mikhail Gorbachev became the USSR's leader, there were disputes over whether 'a new and vigorous leader could make a significant difference.' Many believed that the CPSU would not let 'any one man acquire sufficient power to be a danger to them.' Most participants consequently 'felt that there was little prospect of [sic] evolution of the Soviet Union's present band of authoritarianism to at least a more benign version.'

Further, the Director's Note argued that the bloc was 'not likely to collapse.' Despite 'increasing strains,' the USSR would 'hold it together with force.' A year later, a conference on 'Divided Germany and the Future of Europe' noted that 'in terms of whether the glass of freedom for Eastern Europe was 'half empty or half full'… the glass must be seen as half empty, with a prospect of emptying further.' National reunification was 'out of the question' but 'the social and cultural dynamics of the German situation would remain alive' and the Director's Note concluded that 'changes in the situation may arise from unexpected sources.' The key was that 'any attempts to change it by drastic means might lead to something worse,' one participant sagely warning of 'changes of mood which can sweep away whole areas of the political landscape.'

June 1986’s conference on ‘East-West Relations with the New Men in Moscow’ again discussed domestic reform within the USSR. The follow-up to March’s conference, Ditchley’s largest up to that date, this conference ‘reached the physical limits of Ditchley’s capacity–so strong was the demand for participation.’ The Director’s Note still observed ‘a good deal of doubt whether there was anything really new in their cast of thought,’ and questioned whether Gorbachev’s leadership was ‘securely settled,’ yet alone strong enough to pass drastic changes. There was ‘general agreement about the great problems facing the Soviet Union’ yet most agreed on the ‘unlikelihood in the near term of decisive changes of course.’ Nevertheless, the Conference Essay (a report distinct from the Director’s Note, penned by a conference participant) noted that ‘far more participants had a sense of impending change.’ They widely agreed that Gorbachev acknowledged these ‘beneath the surface issues’, one referring to ‘tender shoots [of reform] which might blossom or wither and perish.’ Nevertheless, it was finally maintained that ‘no-one at Ditchley imagined that Gorbachev wishes to promote either capitalism or political pluralism. The logic of the system is such that he could scarcely survive as leader if he did.’

As if to test this contention, in June 1987 Gorbachev presented his ‘basic theses’ for economic reform to the CPSU’s Central Committee. These outlined the policy of ‘perestroika’–allowing state enterprises to determine production levels based on consumer demand; making them self-financing; ruling out government support and passing control to workers’ collectives. By 1988, Ditchley participants consequently argued that it had become ‘increasingly hard to argue that the Gorbachev era amounts to little more than an outward change of style.’ Perestroika was ‘the comprehensive reform not only of organisation but of traditional attitudes’ and glasnost (Gorbachev’s policy encouraging democratic openness and transparency) ‘both a tool and an objective in its own right.’ Participants even noted Gorbachev’s ‘references to capitalism’ which ‘hinted at ideological re-thinking.’ Indeed, ‘no-one saw any serious rival for his [Gorbachev’s] position.’ Gorbachev was acknowledged to be ‘a man of ideas, indeed a man who believed, rather like Lenin, in the power of ideas to win through despite the odds.’

The difficulty was foreign policy, which the conference conceptualised as flowing from three spheres: the Russian Empire, Eastern Europe, and the Global South. Nevertheless, it was noted that ‘the glue that had bound all three circles was coming apart.’ There was a ‘great deal of ambiguity,’ especially regarding Soviet-Warsaw Pact relations. It was particularly feared that glasnost would undermine Eastern European socialist regimes by allowing domestic dissent. Indeed, Gorbachev showed decentralising and centralising proclivities at

FRANÇOIS FURET, 1927-1997

Born in Paris in 1927, François Furet was a prolific historian of French history, primarily focusing on the French Revolution.

Furet had been a card-carrying member of the Communist Party until the Hungarian uprising of 1956 yet thereafter directly challenged Marxist readings of the French Revolution as a class struggle. As Mark Lilla noted in the *New York Times,* ‘in a sense, Furet was always writing about Communism.’ Furet emphasised a ‘conceptual’ history owing greatly to philosophy and influentially called Communism an ‘illusion’ in his 1995 ‘The Past of an Illusion: An Essay on the Idea of Communism in the 20th-Century,’ one of the first major works in French on the topic. Publicly, Furet played a vital role in the broader shift of French intellectual life during the Mitterrand era (1981-1995) from Marxism and structuralism to democratic liberalism. As his University of Chicago colleague Nathan Tarcov argued, ‘he was responsible, more than anyone else, for the revival of liberal thinking in France. He championed the European concept of liberalism, one that honors democracy, individual rights and a mixed economy.’

Furet’s Annual Lecture came in the middle of a spell as the chairman of the influential Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. His greatest honour, however, came in his election to the prestigious *Académie Française* in March 1997, only three months before his death.

once, rhetorically and ideologically emphasising Eastern Europeans' national sovereignty whilst reiterating the Brezhnev doctrine and encouraging further economic integration. Areas for concern included Poland, which was 'in a state of stalemate (which might or might not result in a renewed explosion,' Hungary, which 'some felt would be the next flash-point,' and Romania, where Ceausescu's rule stumbled forwards 'with a continuing risk of instability when it broke.' As for the Global South, participants generally believed that Gorbachev's reforms acknowledged that in the future 'the competition for hearts and minds in the developing world would be won or lost in the world's market places, not on its battlefields.'

Ditchley's final debate of the 1990s revolved around the West's response to Gorbachev's reforms. Consistently, Ditchley participants maintained that lasting reforms had to be endogenous and self-motivated. June 1986's 'East-West Relations with the New Men in Moscow' conference emphasised the 'impossibility of being dogmatic about the exact way in which the Soviet Union should be handled.' April 1987's 'American Views of the Soviet Union' conference likewise recognised that the West had to be 'flexible and pragmatic and ready itself to contemplate change, while holding firmly to its own principles,' whilst February 1988's conference 'Perestroika and Glasnost: Stocktaking Towards the End of Mr Gorbachev's Third Year' still concluded that the West 'could do little to influence events within the Soviet Union.'

Even by April 1989's conference 'Western Policies in Response to Reform and Innovation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe', the Director's Note warned that America could best lead by example and that 'prudence and vision should be the watchwords, the vision being drawn from an examination of ourselves and what we stood for.' In short, 'East Europeans themselves were the best judges of how far they could go. They should not be over-persuaded.' As the international relations scholar Philip Windsor's review of this conference noted, the East-West relationship was 'still more like one of an improving neighbourliness than that of domesticity.' Indeed, Windsor warned that 'a West which was held together by its own common view of the Soviet threat might now face a crisis of identity in the absence of that threat.' Windsor argued that the challenge was to find a new language, to 'provide not only for the translation of the new potential into actuality, but also for the West to re-define itself in a global context, and to create a new synthesis in the dialectical relationship between Martha and Mary, prudence and vision.'

The 1980s received an appropriate capstone in the June 1989 Annual Lecture of François Furet, a historian of the French Revolution, 'The French Revolution and the Development of Western Democracy.' A lecture timed for the French Revolution's Bicentennial conveniently offered Furet an opportune moment to reflect upon recent events including, in that month alone, the Polish trade union Solidarity's electoral victory, the dismantling of portions of the Iron Curtain in Hungary and the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations. Furet accordingly commented that Europe was witnessing 'an irreversible process: the end of an idea that was one of the pillars – perhaps the principal one – of the European Left during the last one hundred or one hundred and fifty years.' He argued that protest within Eastern Europe had resulted in 'an extraordinary reworking of the Communist heritage,' a turn precisely towards the abstract universalism of the French Revolution which the Bolshevik's Revolution believed it had 'out-distanced and thus obliterated.' Consequently, Furet argued that the 'entire European world' from Portugal to Poland was 'in the process of rediscovering its democratic values and principles.' The political supremacy of representative democracy, founded upon the division of power, had become something approaching a European norm. Furet's was, therefore, an unashamedly idealistic argument, suggesting that 'the guardian angels of the Europe we are trying to construct are neither military glory nor the grandeur of the state nor the end of history, but more modest and modest spin – the liberty and well-being of individuals.' This required a 'different kind of popular will' outside of the nation-state's parameters, a common consensus that could encourage the European Community's growth as an 'idea and an ambition' as well as a 'strong and prosperous market.' This promise would make Europe 'truly united by a common political tradition.'

5 'New Partnerships' and 'Common Interests'- The Post-Cold War Transition, 1990-2001

5.1 1990-2001, The Historical Context

In the following years, the pace of history appeared to have gone berserk. There soon followed what one 1991 Ditchley participant called a 'bonfire of the certainties.' Following the failure of a CPSU hardliner coup against Gorbachev in August 1991, every Soviet Republic agitated for and gained independence by the end of the year. In September 1991, a Director's Note observed that this 'precipitated such a bewildering series of developments that at one time it seemed possible that Ditchley might have managed for once to achieve a conference that was too timely to be useful.' By Christmas Day, 1991, Gorbachev resigned, lowered the Soviet flag from the Kremlin for the last time and passed control to Boris Yeltsin before formally dissolving the Union through Declaration 142-H on Boxing Day.

The process was unerringly swift. As early as September 1992, a Ditchley Essay on 'The States of the Former Soviet Union' could note that 'memories of the Soviet regime and Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* already seemed remote.' Indeed, few nations have ever received as much scrutiny at Ditchley within a short time frame as this recast Russia did in the 1990s, as shown in the conference timeline below. These discussions primarily covered two issues. First, as the former NATO Secretary-General Lord Carrington's Annual Lecture of 1990 asked, 'once a counterrevolution starts, can you stop it?' Ditchley participants were always wary of a Russian backslide into Communism, whilst still predominantly agreeing with Carrington that 'when you take the lid off a boiling kettle, it is a brave man who tries to put it on again.' Second, participants perennially sought the goal highlighted in the American diplomat Thomas R. Pickering's Annual Lecture of 1994: a 'new partnership with Russia… shaped by common interest, free of mindless distrust and in support of a common future' which Pickering perceived to be the 'challenge of the century.'

DITCHLEY CONFERENCES OF THE 1990S

13th July 1990 - **Annual Lecture XXVII**- Towards a New Concert of Europe, delivered by The Rt Hon the Lord Carrington, KG, GCMG, CH, MC, PC.

May 1991 - A Re-Definition of American Foreign Policy Priorities, with Special Reference to Europe.

September 1991 - The Soviet Union: Developments and Trends in Domestic Affairs and International Relations.

10th July 1992 - **Annual Lecture XXIX**- Europe in the 90s, delivered by Dr Kurt Biedenkopf, Minister-President of Saxony.

May 1992 - Central and Eastern Europe, with Special Reference to Economic and Political Relations with the West.

September 1992 - The States of the Former Soviet Union.

March 1993 - Western Relations with the P.R.C.

June 1993 - Developments in West, Central and Eastern Europe.

1st July 1993 -**Annual Lecture XXX**- Cold War, Chill Peace, delivered by Professor Sir Michael Howard CBE MC FBA.

January 1994 - Russia's Search for a Post-Communist Identity.

June 1994 - The Russia in Europe's Future: Engagement not Containment.

April 1995 - Germany, Five Years after Unification.

October 1995 - China after Deng: Policy Implications.

January 1996 - Russia: Progress and Prospects.

June 1996 - The Prospects for Democracy in the Balkans.

April 1997 - Russia and its Neighbours.

January 1998 - China and its Neighbours.

October 1998 - NATO's Eastward Relationships.

June 1999 - The Instruments of Security in the 21st-Century.

June 1999 - The Prospect for Russia.

The renamed Russian Federation initially struggled to define its new global role. With its satellite republics independent, an economy in crisis, an infant democracy to protect and the recurrent threat produced by a growing Islamic insurgency in Chechnya, this was entirely predictable. As one Ditchley participant observed in 1994: 'the British surrendered an empire over half a century; Russia lost hers within a week.' Yet faith remained in the Russian nation. As President Yeltsin declared in 1991, 'the Russian state, having chosen democracy and freedom, will never be an empire, or an elder brother or a younger brother. It will be an equal among equals.'

Undoubtedly, there was a keen awareness that US-Russian relations would be confused: in the words of Gorbachev's senior advisor to the U.S. 'we are going to do a terrible thing to you – we are going to deprive you of an enemy.' By 1994, however, the ascent of Yevgeni Primakov to prime minister marked the predominant ascendancy of an aspirant 'great power' policy. Russia, Primakov detailed, had to choose between 'reliance on cooperation [with America] as an equal partner… or reliance on a 'monopolar' world in which the Russian Federation is given the role of a country with a very limited range of interests and tasks.' Primakov argued that Russia had to act *like* a great power as an independent counterweight to America, corralling multipolar forces through the Commonwealth of Independent States. Counterbalancing American hegemony remained a primary incentive behind Russia's subsequent policy into the Presidency of Vladimir Putin.

By contrast, few could suspect America of celebrating to celebrate its perceived unipolarity quietly. George Bush's 1991 State of the Union was characteristically triumphant, announcing that 'we gather tonight at a dramatic and deeply promising time in our history, and in the history of man on earth.' In Bush's framing, the Cold War did not just end. It was won. The chief tension at Ditchley, however, was between two perspectives elucidated in the political scientist William Wallace's Conference Essay of 1990: 'conservative optimists' and 'liberal pessimists.' The former argued that 'modest adjustments both of assumptions and institutions would be enough to cope with international developments over the next decade', the latter that 'some fundamental rethinking and reorganization would be necessary.' The former encouraged working alongside other nations (including former Soviet states) within international organisations; the latter direct, rapid and by consequence potentially unilateral interventions to end global conflicts and impose democracy during this malleable geopolitical moment.

Of course, the political scientist Francis Fukuyama's 1990 best-seller *The End of History and the Last Man* most famously suggested the latter. But there were other concerns. Responding to Fukuyama, the political scientist Samuel Huntington famously predicted a 'Clash of Civilizations,' a 'descriptive hypothesis' that future conflict would predominantly be dictated by religious and cultural differences between 'the West and the Rest.' Huntington's prediction that many nations would opt to 'modernize but not to westernize' reflected a more profound concern that without the Cold War's stark ideological divisions America would have limited control over other nations' ideological positions, if such coherent stances even existed anymore. A nation could thrive off neo-liberal institutions and economics with a decidedly undemocratic politics; a case in point, for many of its critics, being China.

The end of the Cold War also catalysed three broader changes that eroded national sovereignty and greatly concerned Ditchley participants: it accelerated economic globalisation, precipitated an increase in geopolitical challenges and key political actors unaffiliated with nation-states and led to doubts concerning the future of post-war multilateral institutions. Problems, in short, spread without rhyme or reason. The military historian Professor Michael Howard's 1993 Annual Lecture consequently suggested that the international community had to 'approach world problems not with the universalism of the lawyer, but with the pragmatic triage of the surgeon on the battlefield, who divides his patients into those who do not need help, those he cannot help, and those he can and must help.' Importantly, this was no longer just a triage based on purely military concerns. Indeed, the Director's Note from 1992's conference 'The States of the Former Soviet Union' observed that 'it was noteworthy, and telling, that among the main subdivisions of the conference's debates the calmest – even perhaps the dullest, I venture uncomplainingly – was the security field… how striking a reversal of the likely pattern of any Ditchley conference on the region in the past!'

5.2 1990-2001 at Ditchley

Of course, East Germany was the 'guinea pig' for Europe's democratic transition. In December 1989 participants met to discuss this 'German Question,' only three weeks after the Berlin Wall had been 'opened.' Ditchley displayed little end of history triumphalism, however, the Director's Note observing that the economies of the GDR and other Eastern Europe countries were 'in an even more disastrous state than had been generally realised.' There was a risk of 'total breakdown'– the 'chaos scenario'– and economic ties to the USSR would be 'difficult to unravel without further disruption.' The GDR would inevitably need strong fiscal support amidst the shock of marketisation, the Note suggesting a policy of moving 'with measured tread.' Ultimately, there was a strong sense of powerlessness noted by participants, who duly recognised that 'history was now being made in the streets, not by governments.' Hopes were expressed for further integration, both of Germany and the European Community. Nevertheless, the essay concluded that German reunification was in fact unification into something entirely new, distinct from Bismarck or Hitler's Germany. This new Germany would be 'smaller, more prosperous, less resentful, solidly democratic, non-militaristic, and embedded in new European structures.'

Most Ditchley participants adopted a tone of sober optimism when assessing the European picture, frequently following Furet in attaching great hopes to the European Community. In June 1990, Ditchley participants discussed 'Elements of Change in International Relations,' taking it as a basic premise that the Cold War was over. The Director's Note suggested that progress towards European Community expansion would continue, offering to Central Europe 'the light at the end of the tunnel.' The non-Europeans present even 'took for granted Soviet/Russian credentials, if and when democracy was established' to join the European Community itself, even speculating that the European Community could act as America's successor in leading Europe.

The more detailed discussions, however, contained many disagreements. Here, William Wallace's Conference Essay elaborated the dichotomy of conservative optimists and liberal pessimists mentioned above. Both sides recognised that the East-West divide was 'not only that between the free world and the unfree, but between the rich world and the poor.' Likewise, Europe and America's relative roles and responsibilities remained undecided—Wallace perceived the most evident common theme to be that 'if it was the US itself which faced some of the hardest problems of adjustment to the global necessities of the 1990s… then the rationale for those adjustments would have to be spelt out by others.' The Europeans might have 'lost their appetite for playing a world role' (is there a word missing there?) but the post-Cold War alliance would require 'new patterns of collective leadership, with all the hard bargaining and straight-talking about each other's weaknesses and about our own which that would entail.'

The German politician Dr Kurt Biedenkopf's Annual Lecture of 1992 likewise stressed the 'new challenges that will replace the old ones.' Biedenkopf, the first Minister-President of Saxony, a newly created state in former German Democratic Republic territory, argued that 'new risks and problems, new tensions, nationalisms, regionalisms are arising that seemingly had been put at rest permanently… by an order that proved not to be stable enough and not to be in accordance with European history.' His chief message was quintessential Ditchley: that peace was not a 'self-stabilising condition, but the result of permanent effort.' This was particularly so in Eastern Europe, a region of nations with

KURT BIEDENKOPF, 1930-2021

Born in the Rhine-Neckar region in the modern Rhineland-Palatine in 1930, Kurt Biedenkopf was a jurist, academic and Christian Democratic Union politician.

Following a series of degrees in political science, economics, and law, Biedenkopf was first appointed a lecturer in Trade, Economics and Employment at Bochum's Ruhr University in 1964. By 1967, he became the youngest rector of a university in West Germany, shortly after which he became chairman of the government's Commission for Workers' Participation.

Biedenkopf's national political career commenced as secretary general of the centre-right Christian Democratic Union from 1973 to 1977, during which he became a prominent opponent of Chancellor Helmut Kohl. By 1990 Biedenkopf was elected as Minister-President of the Free State of Saxony, a new state formed from the south of the former GDR. In this role, he became a figurehead for the interests of East Germany, winning elections in this formerly socialist stronghold in 1994 and 1999. Before retiring from politics in 2002 he was instrumental in replacing Kohl with Angela Merkel. Until his death in August 2021, Biedenkopf was a respected authority on demographic change and monetary union at the European level.

limited experience of national autonomy. The region was threatened with 'an explosion of regionalisms and nationalisms, an explosion that, with the breakdown of the Soviet Union and its internal structures, threatens the entire fabric of economic and legal systems that are the prerequisite for a functioning society.' Unlike Moscow, the European Communities could not suppress separatism and dissent militarily: their 'far along the road and irreversible' integration had to be catalysed by incorporating societies 'built on the foundation of feudalism' into a 'legal and political system capable of decentralisation, capable of admitting, allowing, supporting and even furthering regional and personal autonomies.' For Biedenkopf, this was a historical 'mutation', but one that needed to be rapid nonetheless.

There was also a stark awareness that escalating problems would likely outpace the European Communities' eastward expansion, particularly to peripheral zones including Ukraine. Christopher Civic's essay discussing a May 1992 conference on Eastern Europe sagely recognised 'the threat of a possible revival of Russian expansionism.' Civic argued that 'many Russians had not accepted the existence of an independent Ukraine as a permanency' and that any conflict there would be 'highly dangerous for the rest of the region.' A year later, another Ditchley Essay opined that despite 'the nagging feeling among many Ukrainians that Russians, deep down, have not yet accepted Ukrainian independence, the independence of Ukraine is now a reality and there is no indication that Russia will resort to armed force to undo it.' Yet Thomas Pickering's Annual Lecture the following year, 'The Russia in Europe's Future', too warned that Russian opinions of Ukraine were chiefly of a 'patronizing and unrequited fraternalism.' Whilst Pickering also doubted that Russia would intervene imminently, this 'continuing failure of Russians to appreciate the aspirations for independence of the Ukrainian people' still held the 'potential for peril.'

Civic also recognised the risk of democratic backsliding within the broader region, although he observed that 'there were not so far, any charismatic "men on horse-back" [i.e. populists] in sight.' 'Horses were there, but no riders to mount them.' Nevertheless, the eventual possibility of 'one or more authoritarian regimes – not necessarily particularly vicious but lacking important democratic features' was acknowledged, although participants found little agreement concerning the West's possible response. Indeed, Civic declared that the West's 'clear, concrete interest was missing'—if Central Europe could no longer stray away to Communism there was no need for 'wooing' the region. Civic concluded that 'in that sense, the meeting resembled a family reunion after a long separation. The absent relations, often invited but never before able to come, had at long last turned up. The better-off hosts were glad enough to see them but at a loss exactly what to do with them.'

If Europeans found this complexity bewildering, Americans found it doubly so. A May 1991 conference held in partnership with the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations noted a common belief that the Cold War's conclusion 'destroyed the premises on which US foreign policy has been based since the war.' There was even a strong argument that 'Europe in particular would revert to type and dissolve into catastrophic internecine strife from which the US would be well advised to hold aloof.' Again, the prospect of an EEC stretching 'as far as the Urals and beyond' found 'little support' from Europeans, who viewed Russian accession as potentially 'de-stabilising.' The *Financial Times* journalist Jurek Martin's Conference Essay expanded on this, noting that:

> 'The American tendency was to find the European vision narrow, circumscribed and lacking a sense of historical opportunity as the Soviet empire crumbled. The

European defence was that sensible, incremental policy adjustments might make a lot more sense than leaps in the dark.'

If one geopolitical issue epitomised the difficulties created by this disparity, it was the fate of the former Yugoslavia. As early as October 1972, Ditchley participants predicted that tensions between Yugoslavia's ethnic groups would grow upon the death of the unifying figurehead Josip Broz Tito, which finally came in May 1980. By the early 1990s, the secession of Slovenia, Croatia and then Bosnia led to counteractions from the Yugoslav army, which increasingly became the force of ethnic Serbs. The region's complexities and the difficulties of Western involvement were first apparent in a June 1993 conference vaguely entitled 'Developments in West, Central and Eastern Europe.' By this point, the UN General Assembly had compared Serbian and Montenegrin actions against Bosnians to a 'form of genocide.'

A particularly trenchant Conference Essay was written by *The Economist's* deputy editor Nicholas Colchester, who opened by declaring that Europe and North America were 'drifting apart from each other, are turning in upon themselves, and have lost the will to build upon their victory.' Colchester lamented a double irony—that just as 'intervening on the side of civilized behaviour in the Balkans no longer entails the risk of a huge war, the civilised nations do not have the collective strength for it.' A 'collective will to decide who should die, and for what, has proved hard to muster.' Whilst the 'new world order' had an 'encouraging start' in the Gulf War, Yugoslavia was 'as devilish a test of international willpower as could be devised.'

Many at the conference discussed why no intervention occurred: individual states lacked the collective will or the national interests at stake; NATO was not prepared for 'early, timely military intervention'; success was innately unlikely; and few voters would accept that casualties were justified. Colchester further argued that some believed the European Community to be 'yesterday's dream,' to have 'sapped the will of their individual members to assert themselves righteously.' Colchester thought otherwise, believing that few individual members *wished* to assert themselves righteously. For one, it was 'hard to see that Britain has been straining at its European leash.' Furthermore, some blame lay with America as it was 'not easy at present to discern themes around which any genuine popular US enthusiasm for NATO and its burdens could be stimulated.' Still, Colchester bemoaned that the conference 'throughout had a throbbing undertone of dismay, even of shame, about the awful wreck of Yugoslavia. We all knew that the outside world had made mistakes and had failed at the key early stages to grasp the scale and danger of the upheaval.' The whole debate, Colchester concluded, centred around one message:

> 'That in a world changing faster and in more complex ways than for decades past, and moreover with some of the habitual pressures towards cooperation superficially weakened by the character of the changes, it remained of cardinal importance that both sides of the Atlantic should work consciously, energetically and candidly at the task of dialogue between them. The risks that understanding would be imperfect, and that the world's affairs would thereby be damaged, was probably higher now than most of us had been accustomed to suppose; and the work of Ditchley and the Chicago Council together was therefore of enhanced value.'

Participants were hardly more optimistic at June 1996's conference 'The Prospects for Democracy in the Balkans.' The Director's Note concluded that 'the gunfire and the pain of the collapse of Yugoslavia had echoed through several of our conferences in the past four years, with emphasis on anxious concern that the chaos and the killing should end.' It warned that 'inter-ethnic or inter-religious divisions marked much of the region' and that Communism's legacies 'created conditions in which pluralist democracy and the rule of law, slow-maturing plants at best, could not easily flourish.' Noting a 'pernicious feeling that perhaps boundaries were not immutable' that fostered irredentism among minorities and fears of fifth columns amongst majorities, the Note advised that 'successful pluralism was utterly essential if the Pandora's Box of re-drawing state boundaries was to stay shut.' The eventual goal, indeed 'perhaps the most powerful lever of constructive Western influence', would be European Union accession. Participants warned, however, that recent democratic irregularities revealed that most formerly Yugoslav states lacked the democratic institutions needed for accession.

Looking further East, Russia itself remained an area of utmost concern. Noted the diplomat Thomas Pickering in his 1994 Annual Lecture, 'in this third year after the end of the Cold War Russia remains at the centre of our concern, as it did for the forty and even seventy previous years.' Pickering argued that Russia had to rapidly emulate the two key developments of 20th-century European history – the abandonment of empire and democratisation. To do so simultaneously, he argued, was 'like playing three-dimensional chess against an ultra-fast time clock, requiring simultaneous moves of many pieces on many boards all at one time.'

Writing in January 1994, the Director's Note of Ditchley's first conference on post-Soviet Russia, 'Russia's Search for a Post-Communist Identity', described it as a 'landscape of enormous, even chaotic complexity.' This conference met following Russia's first parliamentary elections in December 1993, a notable achievement which had nonetheless benefited both extreme parties – the Communists (the CPRF) and the Liberal Democrats (the LDPR). According to the historian of the USSR Geoffrey Hosking's Conference Essay, this reflected both the economy's 'deeply depressing' state and the constitutional crisis of 1993, wherein a stand-off between President Yeltsin and the Russian parliament had to be resolved by military force. Ultimately, this simmering discontent led to the nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky attaining the highest voter share, Hosking noting 'massive elected support for a wild-sounding demagogue offering fantasy.' The resulting change of government raised doubts as to Russia's transition to a market economy; its ability to construct a society upon the role of law; and its capacity to exist as 'just one state among others, living in harmony with its neighbours and with the international community.' Participants further noted that education, mass urbanisation and the weakening hold of 'traditional addiction to autocracy' were all destabilising Russia.

These structural issues were exacerbated by philosophical differences, particularly over 'profound questions of identity.' Few Russians agreed on their nation's boundaries: their national feeling only 'seemed to be most aroused when there are enemies in the offing, whether real or imaginary.' Fundamental social and political institutions now had to be 'created on scorched earth and at a time of deep crisis,' despite the alienness of intermediary institutions within Russian politics. Hosking warned that 'for any nation simultaneously to pursue de-colonisation, democratisation and the transfer to a market economy would be extremely hazardous. For Russia, because of its past traditions, it may well prove impossible, certainly in anything short of a very long-term future.'

By January 1996's conference, 'Russia: Progress and Prospects', Russia's internal affairs seemed more discernible, the Ditchley Note observing that 'economic change – if not yet its political counterpart, though in the long-run free politics and free markets were not readily separable – was by now irreversible.' It observed, however, that Russia still had not 'settled onto a consistent and coherent view of its interests and priorities in foreign policy.' Its options were to either be 'a nation-state at ease with a market economy functioning in a global environment, or the wounded, aggrieved remnant of an authoritarian empire.' Its limitations were particularly clear after the 'massive blunder' of the Chechen War, which demonstrated that Russia 'scarcely posed any menace of its own, externally or internally.' Nevertheless, participants feared that Russia's future trajectory could be defined by 'some big non-linear event' such as the 'dramatic emergence of a charismatic political figure.' Whereas 1994 had looked for 'at best, some special Russian version of muddling through,' it was now concluded that 'our long-term optimism was a degree or two stronger.'

Ultimately, the overriding tone of Ditchley discussions of Russia in the 1990s was plain, simple uncertainty. In April 1997, following the last conference of the 1990s on Russia, 'Russia and its Neighbours', the Director's Note observed a 'range of alternative perceptions which included a hankering to rebuild lost empire, an instinct to look East and South, and a readiness to accept that the past was gone and that the future lay with the West.' The Note nonetheless maintained that it was still in the West's interest to sustain dialogue 'in a style of sympathetic understanding and non-patronising respect, with patience and without over-reaction to inevitable rough passages. Russia's task in identifying and locating herself after the post-Communist cataclysm was still an enormous one, and the timescales were bound to be long.'

Finally, the collapse of the Soviet Union only disguised equally important changes in China, where martial law was declared in May 1989 to curb its own wave of protests around Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Many Western powers reacted strongly, as was evident in the Director's Note of 1993's conference 'Western Relations with the P.R.C.' This pointedly argued that 'the Tiananmen massacre had shocked world opinion and repelled free-world countries,' warning that the Cold War's conclusion removed the 'special purchase which a bipolar framework had given to Chinese leverage.' Domestically, however, Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour of 1992 had reasserted his reforming intentions. The Conference accordingly described the P.R.C. 'as almost always, complex, shifting and opaque.' Undoubtedly, there was 'sweeping growth on the back of surging individual enterprise and de facto privatisation' but participants expressed doubts about this growth's sustainability. The Conference Essay noted the absence of ideological grounding for this growth, noting that 'economic principles which essentially rely on individual choice and enterprise are being trumpeted by a propaganda machine accustomed to encouraging uniform behaviour.' The Director's Note also observed that 'peaceful and imaginative advance towards mature political pluralism' was 'out of the question' given 'leadership inadequacy and apprehension.' The West's best option was incorporating China into multilateral power structures to stabilise the East Asian equilibrium and encourage the peaceful evolution of Chinese political culture.

In 1995, Ditchley participants met to discuss 'China after Deng,' the Chinese leader having just reached his 90th birthday. By this point, most Ditchley conferences on China adopted a familiar course. Like many before it, this conference noted a 'key transitional period' in China's politics, society, and economy; encouraged a 'cooperative and productive spirit to integrate China fully into the international systems;' studiously sought to avoid discussing the intricacies of Taiwan whilst simultaneously doubting China's current ability to project large-scale force outside of its borders; argued that Chinese reforms had to come from within; and, finally, expressed a 'cautiously optimistic' view of China's future. More explicit, however, was the recognition of the pernicious consequences of what participants described as 'Beijing's mistaken *perception* that the

United States seeks to subvert China's political system, frustrate its economic emergence, contain it strategically, and divide it territorially.' U.S.-Chinese tension had been building since Taiwan transitioned to multiparty democracy in 1987, with American arms sales to Taiwan gradually growing. Ahead of 1996's Taiwanese presidential election, Beijing conducted military exercises in the region in July 1995, an implicit warning against electing a pro-independence candidate that led President Clinton to dispatch the U.S. 7th Fleet nearby the following year. Ditchley participants suggested several recommendations to tackle this misunderstanding:

1. Deal with the existing institutions and leaders in power. Until they change, they must be treated with respect as representatives of the nation. At the same time, deal with a multitude of Chinese institutions and officials at the central, provincial and local levels (including the judicial, security, and military sectors).
2. China will economically develop with or without the help of others. It is a question of how rapidly China modernizes and whether others intentionally cut themselves out of this process.
3. Avoid provocative actions and words that stir Chinese nationalism and contribute to making China less cooperative. This includes avoiding irresponsible language such as "containment."
4. Do not close markets to China and work with China to open its domestic market.
5. Minimize surprises to the Chinese leadership. If there is unpleasant news to be conveyed, prepare Chinese partners in advance.
6. Do not always make the People's Liberation Army bear the sole brunt of sanctions when it may not be the party responsible for transgressions in the domestic and/or international arenas.
7. Have a sense of Chinese history and culture, try to estimate situations as Chinese would, and try to anticipate reactions. This is not to say that Western policies should be made to suit Chinese interests, but rather to be cognizant of Chinese sensitivities.
8. Treat China as a normal state, requiring neither special privileges nor special penalties.

The final 1990s conference on China, January 1998's 'China and Its Neighbours', primarily focused on domestic issues, the Director's Note observing that 'problems persisted on a scale that would surely invite forecasters of collapse or upheaval in almost any other polity.' These included: 'grave agricultural and environmental problems; a huge population uprooted and workless; sharp demographic imbalances; a state-owned industrial sector grossly unprofitable (if, uncertainly, financial data were to be trusted) yet reformable only at a high near-term cost to employment; widespread corruption and crime; massive tasks of modernising adjustment facing mindsets and institutions largely ill-suited to managing change.' China 'wanted simultaneously many things hard to reconcile, and the path was bound to be painful and uneven.' Participants also lamented that predicting the future course of China was complicated 'by the mantle of habitual and often deliberately-exploited secrecy that overlays the entire scene.' Intrinsically, few had doubts that engagement represented the 'right way forward.' Nonetheless, it was warned in concluding that 'surprise-free extrapolation had an even poorer predictive record about China than about most other changing countries, and with such massive latent forces present…upheaval could be triggered in apparently minor ways.'

Much as with Russia then, the 1990s discussions on China ended on a cautious note of optimism. The sense that an entirely unpredictable major event could change the domestic trajectory of both countries was entirely understandable given the dramatic events of the past decade. Certainly, Ditchley's understanding could have been significantly improved had more speakers from former Communist states and the P.R.C. attended. Yet securing participation from the Eastern Bloc was always practically difficult. The result was often to lend a unilinear perspective which, whilst certainly intending to foster ‘new partnerships and common interests’ tended to approach both China and Russia in a problem-seeking context, presuming the essential unity of both nations. If Ditchley participants failed to heed one key lesson from the fall of Communism, however, it was to give due respect to precisely that ‘power in the streets’ that tore down the Berlin Wall. Of course, 2001 delivered a tragic reminder that extra-state actors could do much to inaugurate a new historical era, only further exposing the limitations of the Cold War ‘lens.’ If the 1990s demonstrated how difficult it was to escape the Cold War mindset then, 2001 revealed just how desperate this need for an alternative perspective was.

6 Epilogue, 2001-2021: A New Cold War?

Ultimately, the past two decades have only further revealed the Cold War lens’s continuing legacies, particularly in the Russian Federation. When Ditchley participants met in 2004 to discuss ‘Russia: A Stable and Prosperous Partner?’ they noted Putin’s channelling of ‘the widespread sense of humiliation in Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union.’ The emphasis was once again on Russian history’s specificities and salience, the negative effects of preaching to Russians and the belief that patience was an ‘essential prerequisite for dealing with Russia.’ A June 2008 conference on ‘Russia’s Future’ again endorsed this approach, noting that ‘some of the shadows of the Cold War still extended over the present-day’ but concluding by remarking upon ‘a noticeable trend towards qualified optimism.’ It was suggested that capturing these opportunities required a ‘more decisive shift of vision in our governments away from a zero-sum into a partnership agenda.’

The Director’s Note from 2010’s conference, ‘The EU and Russia’s Shared Neighbourhood’, again observed that historical misunderstandings ‘continued to burden relationships, even if many in Russia and elsewhere wanted to move on and have Russia treated as a ‘normal’ country.’ Domestically, whilst Russia’s stuttering processes of democratic and economic liberalisation frustrated European participants, the Director’s Note encouraged a phase of ‘modernisation by stealth’, much as a ‘major conceptual/architectural leap’ was seen as infinitely more desirable. Russia, it noted, ‘might be part of the problem, but it certainly had to be part of the solution.’ An epilogue that summarised in microcosm the debates and frustrations of this decade consequently concluded that both parties needed to escape the ‘Cold War still in our heads.’ Any search for shared objectives was ‘doomed as long as our perceived interests were pushing us in different directions.’

Of course, February 2014 marked a notable turning point as Russian forces moved into Crimea following significant unrest within Eastern Ukraine and the removal of the prior president, Viktor Yanukovych. Putin contended that Crimea was ‘returning’ to Russia under the democratic mandate of a referendum disputed by Western powers. As the Director’s Note from a Ditchley conference of February 2015 on ‘European Security and the Ukraine Crisis’ observed, Russian and Western narratives of the conflict were ‘in parallel universes.’ For some participants, this reflected the deeper influence of an encirclement narrative propagated by ‘dark forces operating in Moscow, leading to greater repression and corruption at home, and adventurism abroad.’ Yet the Director’s Note still emphasised that this was not a ‘new Cold War’, no matter how ‘obviously worrying’ Russia’s military build-up. It hoped that Russia’s severe economic problems would, in due course, lead to ‘policy reappraisal and more readiness for cooperation over confrontation.’

By November 2017's conference on 'Russia's Role in the World, Today and Tomorrow,' however, the Director's Note was unequivocally pessimistic, opening by lamenting that 'a jolting breakdown of trust between Russia and the West has left relations in arguably a worse state than during the Cold War.' Both parties were 'in a hole and we are still digging.' The ongoing Ukrainian conflict indicated a fundamental misunderstanding in both powers' assessment of the other. The West viewed Russia as a 'declining power, playing a sometimes cunning but poorly calculated tactical hand,' as 'cocky on the outside, threatened and beleaguered on the inside.' To Putin, however, Russia remained a great power— it was the West that was 'suffering an ideological and social malaise at home, losing meaning and direction.' Whilst Russia only represented 2% of world GDP compared to 19% under the USSR, Putin, a 'foreign policy aficionado,' was willing to sacrifice significant economic costs to maintain Russia's great power status and its inclusion within global decision-making.

The Director's Note also warned that the longer Putin was in power, the more stable Russia would be. The system was 'entrenched and, after three terms, perfectly designed to deliver the results it delivers.' Whilst it was argued that Putin was pragmatic, his 'self-proclaimed role as the last Christian emperor' perfectly suited his domestic purposes. This meant that in seeking to control Russia, being 'too ambitious in design for rapprochement with Russia could be downright dangerous. There is too little alignment of interests. There is too much misunderstanding and too many different interpretations of history.' The relationship needed 'care not flair' and 'toned-down' language. In concluding, the Note recommended that 'we should forget grand bargains on the global system and we should reject the concept of zones of influence which undermines our values and overplays Russia's strength.' It should not go unnoticed that this was essentially another call to finally repudiate the 'Cold War in our heads' that still influenced both nations' foreign policy. Yet whilst it was accepted that this post-war order was 'creaking as multilateralism struggled and U.S. ability [sic] and will to manage an increasingly polycentric world declined,' participants were 'not convinced that there was any kind of valid replacement on the horizon.'

As recognised in President Obama's 'Pivot to Asia,' the 2010s also witnessed the final, conclusive recognition that the twenty-first century would be decided in the Asia-Pacific, following what November 2010 conference on 'The Global Implications of the Rise of Asia' framed as 'the rejuvenation or return of Asia, after a 200-year blip.' This conference recognised that Asia's economic ascendancy had reorientated geopolitical gravity, yet maintained that Asian countries proved willing to accommodate themselves to existing international structures to facilitate this growth rather than rejecting established post-war institutions. A crude 'West v East' mindset consequently remained erroneous and even dangerous—America had to 'embrace change not fight it,' a difficult task that 'would require an effort of political will and maturity on all sides which would not be easy to achieve in a fragile global economic context where populism was rising in many countries and domestic public opinion might push in directions other than positive engagement.'

As for China itself, a June 2015 conference on 'Economic Growth and Political Reform' recognised that China was 'an awkward mirror to western observers through its apparent challenge to western models and values.' This conference was particularly pessimistic on this theme because it was noted that 'far from any loosening up, President Xi Jinping was now presiding over a crack-down on any kind of dissent… which cast into severe doubt previous assumptions that China would gradually open up politically as it became more prosperous.'

Chinese participants, however, emphasised that Xi's China pursued no 'particular, well-defined political model.' Instead, he sought to 'put China back in its rightful place in the world, the route to which largely went through economic success, and to restore Chinese pride.' Regarding foreign policy, this entailed a 'vested interest in regional and international stability, and in cooperation not confrontation with its neighbours and the big global players.' Participants widely stressed that China was 'not traditionally an imperialist power' and 'had usually tended to demand deference/tribute from those around it rather than trying to dominate them completely.' Ultimately then, China's future trajectory would depend upon its conception of its identity. Participants speculated that perhaps Xi's China would 'come to resemble ever more closely China's imperial, middle kingdom past, with an increasingly light dusting of socialist rhetoric.' Yet there was one key, fundamental change – 'the outside world had not had much influence on the middle kingdom for most of its history. Modern China was now integrated into the rest of the world. That was bound to have a major impact over time.'

Since 1990 then, a world divided by two ideologies had become a world united by one market. The desired pace of this transition, particularly within formerly Communist states, inevitably produced convenient blind spots, strategic amnesia, and an appropriately liberal definition of free-market capitalism. Going forward, the true test was waiting patiently for the second-order democratic, social, and political benefits of capitalism continually espoused by Western propagandists during the Cold War to arrive, particularly now that every means of imposing such by-products had been exhausted and proved largely unfruitful. If the global market now appears in steadier health than global democracy, it is the P.R.C. that will most dramatically evidence the results of this past quarter-century's global gamble.

7 Conclusion

To conclude, it is worth reiterating the words of Sir Michael Howard's 1993 Annual Lecture 'Cold War, Chill Peace':

> An era dominated by major military confrontations has ended. The huge armed forces made necessary by that confrontation are being disbanded, with all the consequent economic disruption and social stress. The political attitudes and social structures shaped by nearly a century of warfare no longer appear to be relevant. The problems we now face arise not from the threat of foreign conquest or hegemony, but from social dislocation on a vast, indeed a global scale; dislocation arising in part from the social and economic results of the wars themselves, but mainly from long-term secular trends that we cannot control and to which we can only adjust as best we can.

How prescient those words seem today, when thoughts of confrontations with Russia have been drastically side-lined by more pressing concerns including rising sea levels and mutating coronaviruses. Ditchley, due in part to the moment of its founding and in part to its unique provision for extended, complicating reflection, has been prescient in recognising the ever-growing list of complications to the Cold War's rigid bipolar lens whilst never taking uncertainty as an excuse for inaction. The benefits of the international community's struggling together despite such uncertainties has been a constant theme from Hodson's remarks of 1963 to Colchester's extended indictment of Western inaction over the former Yugoslavia. As early as Ditchley's third Annual Lecture in 1964, Arnold Heeney QC mourned the 'early' Cold War's 'unpleasant certainties.' Modern policymakers speaking of a 'New Cold War' consequently reference a mindset that never enjoyed an unquestioned dominance, even when the geopolitical environment leaned considerably more towards bipolarity.

With regards to Russia, Ditchley participants continually emphasised that for reforms to be lasting and durable they had to be passed and supported by domestic forces. Admittedly, this was often to cast a somewhat stereotyped view of a Communist Party with immense powers over Russian society and a mindset owing largely to short-sighted attempts at status preservation and the legacy of 'traditional' Russian beliefs. Whilst not underestimating the USSR's copious economic issues, participants often sounded the alarm over Soviet militaristic boasting, effectively translating such grandstanding into reality rather than interrogating such claims' accuracy. Ditchley conferences of the 1980s reveal just how unpredictable the final crumbling of the Soviet Union within this mindset proved to be. Not until 1988 did Ditchley participants fully recognise Gorbachev's reforming intents and ability to carry through such reforms, even then acknowledging that the 'power on the streets' that they struggled to predict or understand was largely beyond their control.

Since 1990, discussion of Russia at Ditchley has followed the pattern evident in Pickering's 1994 Annual Lecture, both due to its remaining a region 'at the centre of our concern' and to the West's oscillating between policies of engagement and containment. Most discussion of Russia at Ditchley has been astutely pragmatic, recognising with Pickering that the abandonment of empire and full democratisation cannot come overnight. This was why five Ditchley conferences and one Annual Lecture of the 1990s focused exclusively on Russia, a unique level of interest even when disregarding the array of conferences on Eastern and Central Europe. Equally, Ditchley participants have rightfully recognised that the Cold War lens, particularly the belief that Russia was a 'great power' with a vital say in global decision-making, remains ever-present, making rapprochement a high-stakes game. Whilst mutual misunderstanding has wholly exacerbated the long-forewarned crisis in Ukraine, the February 2015 'European Security and the Ukraine Crisis' conference's conclusion that this was **not** a new Cold War remains critical. Russia remains in immense domestic difficulty: it may merely be that the playing-out of such challenges will require patience or may, once again, erupt unpredictably and uniquely.

Meanwhile, China's inexorable rise has represented a critical countervailing current which only developed into a significant concern at Ditchley in recent years. To be sure, Ditchley participants have rarely bracketed China as an inevitable enemy, instead seeking to corral its rise to power within the parameters set by post-war institutions, particularly since the 1990s. That Ditchley's first conference on China came in 1964 is indeed impressively prescient. Yet after twenty-two conferences on China, it is still clear that further Chinese and Indo-Pacific participation in Ditchley would be welcomed, no matter the practical difficulties this entails. Despite being the world's most populous continent, Asia has only provided one Ditchley Annual Lecturer as the lectureship revolves between Europe and the U.S. and Canada. Whilst the 'rise of Asia' frame emphasised at the November 2010 conference remains key, it is still uncertain how an explicitly transatlantic organisation in both its ties and its history can adapt itself to the 'Pacific Century.' The former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's 2021 Annual Lecture, which spoke extensively of his first-hand knowledge of China, provides a useful example to emulate. Perhaps Ditchley's own 'pivot to Asia' will be heralded by the October 2021 conference on 'The Indo-Pacific'. In being purposefully timed for the convenience of those in Indo-Pacific time zones it sets a precedent for using recent technological innovations to further Ditchley's global connections.

Ditchley also recognised the Cold War's importance to the West's sense of self. Historians widely acknowledge that being in the Cold War proved a foundational plank of American identity—as John Updike's protagonist in his *Run, Rabbit Run* asked, 'without the Cold War, what's the point of being an American?' Yet the Cold War also acted as a vital cement for trans-Atlantic partnership when many underlying factors – decolonisation or economic strife, for example – threatened to tear the two continents apart. Indeed, as Lord Carrington's 1990 Ditchley Annual Lecture recognised, 'fear is a powerful cement.' If Ditchley's tendency to look outwards towards China and Russia rather than inwards to matters at home often projected a simplified image of a unified Western bloc, Ditchley's recent calls for Western self-scrutinization following President Trump's election have continuously uncovered such tensions. Whether discussing human rights or climate change, 'the West' has arguably yet to find a more effective cement than fear.

Emphasising the Cold War's remaining legacies also stresses the difficulties of establishing a new post-Cold War course, if such a singular notion can still exist. Whilst Ditchley participants always pragmatically recognised the hidden complexities of foreign policymaking, even during the Cold War's height, few have doubted that recent policy is considerably more complex. Yet Ditchley discussions clearly remain at the forefront of finding a common resolve between these divided aims and mixed political priorities. As the pre-eminent historian of the Global Cold War Odd Arne Westad concludes:

> 'If there is one big lesson of the Cold War, it is that unilateral military intervention does not work to anyone's advantage, while open borders, cultural interaction, and fair economic exchange benefit all… in a world that is becoming increasingly diverse ideologically, just as communications tie us closer together, the only way of working against increased conflict is by stimulating interaction while recognizing diversity.'

The message is as relevant now as it is immediately reminiscent of so many points in Ditchley's history, reflecting the founding ethos of an institution created to foster a dialogue that would prevent a repetition of the horrors of another recently concluded global conflict. Following the past sixty years of decaying 'unpleasant certainties', Ditchley's best possible contribution in our own 'time of responsibility' is to make today's pleasant uncertainties more certain. Doing so requires a form of extended, discussion-driven analysis that recognises the diversity and complexity of the world created in the Cold War's wake. Fostering this analysis ultimately requires a Ditchley as diverse and multi-faceted as the multipolar world that now surrounds it. In the aftermath of COVID-19 and recent events in Kabul, Sir David Wills' mission consequently remains terrifyingly appropriate. As Sir Michael Howard 1993's Annual Lecture warned, 'the failure of rival creeds does not mean that our own is bound to succeed, only that it has been given another chance.'

8 Timeline

February 1917 - Mass protests against food rationing culminate in the 'February Revolution' in Petrograd (St Petersburg).

March 15th, 1917 - Abdication of Russia's Tsar Nicholas II.

November 7th, 1917 - Armed insurrection in Petrograd sees Lenin's Bolsheviks assume power.

July 1918 - Nicholas II and his family executed in Yekaterinburg.

1923 - The Soviet Union Established.

August 23rd, 1939 - Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact sees Germany and the USSR partition Poland.

March 5th, 1946 - Churchill's 'Sinews of Peace' speech declares that an 'iron curtain has descended on Europe,' marking the symbolic start of the Cold War.

1947 - Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan launched, providing American economic aid to much of Europe.

April 4th, 1949 - Ratification of NATO, uniting 12 North Atlantic countries in mutual defense.

October 1st, 1949 - Chairman Mao Zedong proclaims the creation of the People's Republic of China.

October 7th, 1949 - Constitution of the German Democratic Republic adopted.

1950-1953 - Korean War.

May 1955 - Warsaw Pact created, allying Eastern Bloc socialist republics in collective defense.

1957 - Launch of Sputnik, the first artificial Earth satellite, exacerbates arms race.

1959 - Troops of the 26th of July Movement force President Fulgencio Batista from Cuba, causing Fidel Castro to claim victory in the Cuban Revolution.

September 1959 - First Secretary of the CPSU Nikita Khrushchev visits the United States, the first by a Soviet premier.

August 17th, 1961 - Construction of the Berlin Wall Begins.

October-November 1962 - Cuban Missile Crisis.

July 1963 - Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

18th October 1963 - Annual Lecture II- The Dimensions of the Atlantic Alliance, delivered by General Lauris Norstad, USAF. Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and Commander-in-Chief, United States European Command.

19th June 1964 - Annual Lecture III- Friends and Relations, delivered by Arnold D.P. Heeney, QC. Chairman, Canadian Section, International Joint Commission (USA and Canada).

November 1964 - British and American Policies Towards China.

July 1965 - President Johnson sends 200,000 U.S. troops to Vietnam.

June 1967 -Paths to an Atlantic Community.

January 1968 - The Middle East.

19th July 1968 - Annual Lecture VII- An International Weather Forecast, delivered by The Rt Hon Sir Alec Douglas-Home, KT, PC, DL, MP. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1960-1963; Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury 1963-1964.

18th July 1969 - Annual Lecture VIII- The Americans and Europe: Rhetoric and Reality, delivered by The Honorable McGeorge Bundy, President of the Ford Foundation and Special Assistant to the President of the United States for National Security Affairs, 1961-1966.

May 1970 - Conference on Sino-Soviet and Sino-Western Relations.

May 1970 - Conference on Relations with Eastern Europe.

February 1972 - Nixon visits China, the first visit of a sitting U.S. President.

May 1972 - Conference on the Pacific and East Asia.

May 26th, 1972 - U.S. and USSR sign Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) I.

June 1972 - Conference on the Pacific and East Asia.

January 1973 - U.S. and North Vietnam announce ceasefire in the Paris Peace Accords.

21st September 1973 - Annual Lecture XII- Europe and the Americans, delivered by Dr Joseph Luns, GCMG, CH. Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands (1952-1971).

July 1974 - The Meaning and Effects of Détente.

November 1974 - The Meaning and Effects of Détente.

February 1975 - The Meaning and Effects of Détente.

April 17th, 1975 - Final fall of South Vietnam.

June 1975 - The Meaning and Effects of Détente.

February 1976 - Communist government installed in Angola.

September 9th, 1976 - Death of Chairman Mao Zedong.

December 1978 - Deng Xiaoping becomes the paramount leader of China, launching his ‘Four Modernizations’ the following year.

January 1979 - China and the U.S. formally announce diplomatic relations.

February 1979 - U.S./EEC Relations with the Eastern Bloc.

June 1979 - The Implications of SALT II for NATO and SALT III.

July 1979 - SALT II signed.

December 24th, 1979 - Fearing a turn to America from the People's Democratic Party under its new leader Hafizullah Amin, Brezhnev deploys Soviet Troops into Afghanistan.

May 4th, 1980 - Death of Josip Broz Tito, president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

August 1980 - Polish shipyard workers strike, forming the Solidarity Union.

December 1980 -The Strategies of the East and West.

June 1981 - The Soviet Empire in Europe.

October 1982 - The Soviet Union: The Internal Situation and its Implications for the West.

October 1983 - U.S. troops overthrow the People's Revolutionary Government of the Caribbean Island of Grenada in Operation Urgent Fury.

May 1984 - The Means of Settling International Disputes Peacefully in Present Times: Insulation of Disputes from the Superpower Rivalry.

June 1984 - 35 Years Since the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine: The Continuing U.S. Commitment to the Stability and Defense of Europe, and the Significance of this in the East/West Relations.

September 1984 - The Soviet Union and China and their Asian Neighbours.

March 1985 - The Next Four Years in East-West Relations.

March 11th, 1985 - Mikhail Gorbachev becomes General Secretary of the Communist Party, enhancing freedom of speech, government transparency and press freedoms ('glasnost') and decentralising economic decision making ('perestroika.').

April 26th, 1986 - Disaster at Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Ukrainian SSR.

May 1986 - Divided Germany and the Future of Europe.

June 1986 - East-West Relations with the New Men in Moscow.

April 1987 - Americans Views of the Soviet Union: How to Handle East-West Relations.

February 1988 - Perestroika and Glasnost: Stocktaking Towards the End of Mr. Gorbachev's Third Year.

April 1989 - Western Policies in Response to Reform and Innovation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

April 15th, 1989 - Start of student-led Tiananmen Square Protests in Beijing.

June 1989 - Political and Economic Reform in China.

30th June 1989- Annual Lecture XXVI - The French Revolution and the Development of Western Democracy, delivered by François Furet, Director of the Institut Raymond Aron, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris.

November 1989 - Berlin Wall demolished and Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia.

December 1989 - Communist governments fall in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania.

December 1989 - The German Question: Divided Germany's Dual Relationship to the Soviet Union and to the West.

May 29th, 1990 - Boris Yeltsin elected President of Russia.

13th July 1990- **Annual Lecture XXVII** - Towards a New Concert of Europe, delivered by The Rt Hon the Lord Carrington, KG, GCMG, CH, MC, PC. Chairman of Christie's International plc. Secretary of State for Defence, 1970-74, for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 1979-82, Secretary-General of NATO, 1984-88. and a Governor of the Ditchley Foundation.

October 3rd, 1990 - Germany reunited.

May 1991 - A Re-Definition of American Foreign Policy Priorities, with Special Reference to Europe.

September 1991 - The Soviet Union: Developments and Trends in Domestic Affairs and International Relations.

December 26th, 1991 - Supreme Soviet confirms dissolution of the USSR.

January to February 1992 - Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour resumes reforms in the P.R.C.

April 27th, 1992 - Formal end of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as the Socialists Republics of Serbia and Montenegro proclaim the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

10th July 1992- **Annual Lecture XXIX -** Europe in the 90s, delivered by Dr Kurt Biedenkopf, Minister-President of Saxony. Professor of Law (1964-70) and Rector (1967-69) at the Ruhr University, Bochum, General Secretary of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) (1973-77), Member of the Bundestag (1976-80 and 1987-90).

May 1992 - Central and Eastern Europe, with Special Reference to Economic and Political Relations with the West.

September 1992 - The States of the Former Soviet Union.

March 1993 - Western Relations with the P.R.C.

June 1993 - Developments in West, Central and Eastern Europe.

1st July 1993-**Annual Lecture XXX** - Cold War, Chill Peace, delivered by Professor Sir Michael Howard CBE MC FBA. Lovett Professor of Military and Naval History at Yale University (1989-93), Professor of War Studies, King's College, University of London (1963-68) and thereafter, at the University of Oxford, a Fellow of All Souls College, Chichele Professor of the History of War (1977-80) and Regius Professor of Modern History (1980-89). A Governor of the Ditchley Foundation.

January 1994 - Russia's Search for a Post-Communist Identity.

June 1994 - The Russia in Europe's Future: Engagement not Containment.

December 1994 - Start of the First Chechen War.

April 1995 - Germany, Five Years after Unification.

October 1995 - China after Deng: Policy Implications.

January 1996 - Russia: Progress and Prospects.

June 1996 - The Prospects for Democracy in the Balkans.

April 1997 - Russia and its Neighbours.

January 1998 - China and its Neighbours.

October 1998 - NATO's Eastward Relationships.

June 1999 - The Instruments of Security in the 21st-Century.

June 1999 - The Prospect for Russia.

August 1999 - Vladimir Putin appointed Prime Minister/ Second Chechen War/ Islamist militia invade the Russian Republic of Dagestan, triggering the Dagestan War.

May 7th, 2000 - Vladimir Putin's first Presidency begins.

June 2001 - China's External Relations.

April 2004- Russia: A Stable and Prosperous Partner.

April 1st, 2004 - Ten nations, including seven from the former Eastern Bloc, accede to the European Union.

October 2004 - China: A Power for the 21st-Century.

July 2006 - Russia hosts its first G8 Summit.

September 2006 - Prospects for the Caucasus Region.

May 2007 - Regional Security in East Asia.

June 2008 - Russia's Future: The Choices for the New President.

October 2010 - The EU and Russia's Shared Neighbourhood.

November 2010 - The Global Implications of the Rise of Asia.

November 2011 - The Central Asian Republics and their International Partners.

September 2012 - Security and Prosperity in East Asia.

February 2014 - Sochi Winter Olympics/ Ukrainian Revolution overthrow Viktor Yanukovych.

February-March 2014 - To international protest, the Russian Federation annexes Crimea and moves troops into East Ukraine.

February 2015 - European Security and the Ukraine Crisis: A Post-Helsinki World?

June 2015 - China: Economic Growth and Political Reform.

September 2015 - Asia-Pacific: An Agenda for New Challenges.

September 2015 - Start of Russian military intervention in the Syrian Civil War.

November 2017 - Russia's Role in the World, Today and Tomorrow.

June-July 2018 - FIFA World Cup held in Russia.

December 2018 - China and the West: Different Values, The Same Global Economy.

April 2021 - Law signed allowing Vladimir Putin to run for reelection twice more, extending his potential presidency to 2036.