

# BRUSSELS FORUM 2009

## *20 Years after the Fall of the Iron Curtain*

**Anne Applebaum**

**The Washington Post**

I was once told never to do this in front of a microphone because it makes a very annoying sound, but I think maybe my microphone is far enough away. Thank you very much for inviting me. Thank you all for being here. As you know from your programs, this is the panel entitled “20 Years after the Fall of the Iron Curtain.”

What that means, for those of you who were here in this morning's panel with Minister Lavrov, that on this panel you are allowed to talk about history. You are, indeed, encouraged to talk about history, particularly because if there is a part of the world in which perceptions of the past shape the present, and continue to shape contemporary politics more than this one, more than Central Europe, then I don't know what it is. Although I don't expect we're going to argue over details, sometimes it is important to get to the bottom of what really happened, what we really did and what took place over the last two decades in order to explain the present.

I will start by making a few remarks of my own, and then I will introduce our extremely distinguished panel who, among them I tried to count - not very successfully - but they have something like 120 years of experience in public office. All of them are very distinguished. All of them remember 1989 and will be able to talk about it very well.

I'd like to start just personally by reminding everybody that a lot of things look obvious in retrospect. And 1989, in retrospect, sometimes people say, well, of course it was going to happen the way it did, of course Germany would be reunified. I have a personal memory which is that, in November of 1989, I was actually, in fact, sitting on top of the Berlin Wall. And I was sitting there watching as West Germans -- you saw the bit on TV where they popped open the bottles of champagne and sang “Deutschland, Deutschland” and so on.

After that, everybody got a little bit tired and they weren't clear what they were supposed to do next. And people, as a way of entertaining themselves, started to jump off the Wall from the West into the East to tease the guards who were still standing

there. And the East German guards ran and they threw people back over the Wall, as it were. And it was all very amusing, I suppose, but actually it wasn't that pleasant an event. And years later I said to an East German historian, you know, in retrospect, none of us thought of it at the time, but maybe people could have started shooting because, actually, it was rather tense. There were thousands of people on the Wall. There were East German armed soldiers in the no man's land. Maybe something could have happened.

He said, you know, it's funny you should say that, but I've read the archives and while you were sitting on the Wall the East German leadership was meeting and discussing whether or not to start shooting. So there could have been a Tiananmen Square. Many other things could have happened. As Minister Schauble knows, it's quite possible that East German unification might not have happened. Many people were against it, including the leaders of Britain and France at the time, as well as the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, it was a success in many ways, as we all know.

At least in Central Europe there was no bloodshed. We now really do have a Europe without borders, at least in part. We have integrated economies. We have democracy in some places where there had never been democracy before. Much of this, I'll remind you, and I'm sure the panel will talk about this, was possible because what happened after the Wall fell was that the East wanted to join the West. It wasn't as if Western Europe was so desperate to have new members, as Carl Bildt was reminding me just a minute ago. The EU was not desperate to expand. NATO was not interested in having new members at that time. And it was only the drive from Eastern Europe and from the Baltic states to join the West that made this possible.

However, there were decisions made at the time which remain important today. And, of course, the most obvious ones were -- many things could have happened. We could have redone the architecture of the international community -- we did not. Instead, what we did was we expanded existing institutions. And one of the things this panel will talk about is whether that expansion, the expansion of NATO to include new members, and whether the expansion of the EU didn't create problems for those institutions. Is the EU really the right institution to have 27 members? Is NATO the right institution to be organizing all of European security and defense? And, of course, the expansion of those institutions created other kinds of problems, which we will also talk about.

And, as I said, we have a very experienced panel. We have His Excellency, the President of Latvia, Valdis Zatlers, who was a member of the Popular Front of Latvia in 1988 and 1989 before the Soviet collapse. He recently, in 2007, became President of Latvia and served in the middle in a very interesting position. He was a leading physician and leader of -- what we like to call in our trade a civil society leader in Latvia and, so, he can talk from that perspective.

We have Carl Bildt, the Foreign Minister of Sweden, who probably needs no introduction to this audience, although I'm sure he'd like one. He's the former Swedish Prime Minister. He has been co-chair of the Bosnian peace talks at Dayton. He is a man who is so deeply involved in the affairs of Central and Eastern Europe that his tenth wedding anniversary party, which I attended last summer, happened to be in August, a day or two after the invasion of Georgia. And the party, which was meant to celebrate other things, turned into a kind of Georgia crisis meeting. And that's how personally and how deeply involved he and his wife and his friends are in this region.

We have The Honorable Wolfgang Schauble, who has been in public life since 1972, elected to the Bundestag from the CDU at that time. From this panel's point of view he was, in 1989-1991, Minister of the Interior in Helmut Kohl's Cabinet, and he led the negotiations on East German re-unification. He is, once again, the East German -- sorry, Freudian slip! He's the German Minister of Interior once again.

And we have, of course, Senator George Voinovich, who has spent 40 years in public office. He has been in the House of Representatives. He has been Governor of Ohio. He has been a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Again, from the American point of view, he is from Ohio; he's from the heartland. He can give you a perspective from a part of America we don't always hear from. And, again, from the point of view of this panel, the most important thing about him is that he was a supporter of NATO expansion from very early days, and was an important actor in that in the Senate.

I think we'll start right away with a question. The purpose of NATO expansion was stability, to create and to extend stability into Central Europe. Certainly, from the perspective of some of the countries represented in this room, this was a wild success. However, has that expansion created some problems as well? Has it created a zone of further instability in the East, in Georgia and the Ukraine? Has it created, in Russia, a perception of threat? Well, we know that it has because we heard that this morning. I will start by asking Senator Voinovich, who was a proponent of expansion, to begin by answering that question.

### **George V. Voinovich - Member, US Senate**

Well, my feeling is that it makes Russia a little bit uneasy, but it sure makes the countries that are in NATO feel much more secure. And with the recent behavior of Russia, I'm sure that many of them, particularly from the Baltic states, are very happy that they are in NATO.

I was a captive nations guy when I was Mayor of the City of Cleveland. When I was Chairman of the National Governors' Association we pushed a unanimous resolution through for the Czech Republic and for Hungary and for Poland. And then when I came to the Senate I worked on the Big Bang. And it's interesting that I'm here, because I'm not an expert in this area. But one of the happiest days in my entire life is

I had a vision that I would be in the room in Prague when Lord George Robertson announced that Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and the three Baltic states were taken into NATO.

And I think all of us that study history know that -- I thought I'd go to my deathbed, and the Wall would be up and the curtain wouldn't be torn. I don't know how many in this room felt that, but that's the way I felt. And I have to tell you that when it happened I said to myself, the thing I'm going to do is to try and get these people into NATO because, if we can get them into NATO, then we don't have to worry about the big bear growing claws and going out and asserting its influence. And I think, right now, that's what's happening. And I think the real issue right now is what do we do about some of the things that Mr. Lavrov had to say today? Do we re-engage and talk about all these problems that he feels that we have today?

### **Anne Applebaum**

Carl, was the expansion of NATO a success? Was it the right thing to do in 1989, '90, '91?

### **Carl Bildt - Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sweden**

It happened somewhat later, of course, all of these things.

### **Anne Applebaum**

Yes, sorry.

### **Carl Bildt**

Go back 20 years in time. I think it's important to say that we take everything for granted -- "it could only have happened in this way." Not the case! It was touch and go. There were two, in my opinion, historical miracles. One was the peaceful reunification of Germany. That Germany was going to be reunified sooner or later, I think that was a given. But that it was going to happen peacefully was by no means given. We shouldn't forget that what was called the GDR, was, essentially, a huge forward military position for the Soviet Union. 500,000 soldiers, 19 divisions, 5 armies - huge! And then with the political façade that was called the GDR. The peaceful dissolution of that is a historical miracle.

The other historical miracle, I would say, is the three Baltic republics. In contrast to Poland and other places that were nominally independent countries, or they're called happy members of the socialist camp, I understand, these countries had been incorporated into the Soviet Union itself, and Russia claimed, not only since 1940, but since Ivan the Terrible that this was their territories. It was by no means given that they would peacefully be able to exit the Soviet Union and enter both the European Union and NATO. Those were the miracles.

But we should not forget the big failure. We got 10 years of war in South Eastern Europe. From the summer of 1991 with Slovenia, to really 2001 in Macedonia, we didn't have our eyes on that particular. So there were enormous successes and enormous failures. Then we redid the institutions -- and I would argue we redid the institutions. The first thing that happened was not the EU and not NATO. It was the EC. We had something called the Paris Charter, I think, in the autumn of 1990 where we got all of the leaders together and said that we're going to base the security of Europe, not on the military deterrence things, but really on democracy and human rights. That was a fairly revolutionary approach, which we have forgotten somewhat.

Then we saw that that was going to somewhat more complicated, and then we had the entire process of transforming -- the European Union didn't exist. We had something called the European Community which didn't even have a single market. It couldn't even speak about a foreign policy -- that was forbidden. There were some ideas about a monetary union, but that didn't really take off. So it's really miraculous what we have achieved since then. A lot remains to be done. And it could have gone otherwise.

You mentioned Tiananmen -- that also happened in 1989. There could have been troops. There could have been killings. There could have been massacres. There could have been war. But true statesmanship on the part of the West and, I would say, an element of misunderstanding on the part of the East, did contribute to the miraculous outcome.

### **Anne Applebaum**

What about you, Minister Schauble, on this opening question? You sat in the room doing the negotiation with Eastern Germany in 1989, '90. The decisions taken almost immediately afterwards to make sure that that zone of security extended, not just to Eastern Germany, but to Eastern Europe, was that the right decision? Did we leave things out? And what about the problems that we're facing now to the east of NATO in NATO's borders in Germany and Ukraine? Could we have come up with another model that would have worked better?

### **Wolfgang Schauble - Interior Minister, Germany**

I think it was the right decision. I think the key for the development who ended in the fall of the Berlin Wall was the desire of the Eastern countries of Europe to be part of the united Europe, to be part of the West. And it began in Poland -- you never forget. And it was in Czechoslovakia and in Hungary, and it ended -- historically it ended in the GDR. And that was the reason. And the key decision was that, when Gorbachev ended the Brezhnev doctrine, not to use the material force of Soviet Union. And that was the decision. Of course, it was dangerous in some regard, but it was successful. And, therefore, enlarging EU and enlarging NATO was without any alternative.

What we didn't achieve until now is a cooperative relation with Russia. We tried to do it in the very beginning. I remember the then NATO General Secretary, my old

friend Manfred Wörner, who died too early. He started with a NATO/Russian partnership and he lost it. And I think we have to concentrate to rebuild it because we will -- as we can see, of course, any member state of NATO and EU feels much more secure and much more comfortable. But as we can see in the daily work of EU, if we have confrontation with Russia, it's always a problem we have inside the EU. And, therefore, to work on getting better relations with Russia, I think, is the most important thing, and we can do it together. We can only achieve it together -- United States and Europe, in the framework of NATO.

### **Anne Applebaum**

Thank you. Mr. President, this morning we heard a slightly different account of what happened in the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. And one of the arguments that the Russian Foreign Minister made this morning was that we chose the wrong institution. Instead of using NATO as the anchor for European security, we should instead have chosen the OSCE; that the OSCE would have been a more reliable and would be a more fair institution. As a country which was very anxious to join Western security structures, does that makes sense to you as an argument?

### **Valdis Zatlers - President, Latvia**

So, I will go back to 20 years ago when I was on the opposite side of the Iron Curtain. Most of you were on the Western side. I was on the Eastern side. And I'll have some reflections on that time.

The first one is we were encouraged to go for the goal - nobody understands why. But we never had any option than peaceful and legal way to get away from the Soviet Union. And that was the goal from the beginning - peaceful and legal - because we were illegally incorporated and occupied. So we saw a giant in, and we had to go out the same way.

And if you talk about NATO, expansion was 100% the right thing to do. We are having a lot of benefits from that. We have the safest security situation we ever had in the history of my country. But if we go a little bit back, we need some people who are confident enough, who are confident in their values. I have on both sides of me the people who were confident when nobody would trust us 20 years ago. And what Mr. Lavrov said, that NATO is the only legally binding organization for security, and that means that's the best organization, that's the most secure organization. And the shortest way for Russia would be, if they want legal binding, only just to join NATO which is a little bit -- would be a surprise.

And I met Gorbachev, as you mentioned, last summer and asked him the question -- are you satisfied with the end result of what you created 20 years ago? And his response was quick and very sharp - no! And this dialogue told me about what were the Russian intentions and what were the Latvian intentions and what were the intentions of the West Europe, at least 10 years ago, not even 20 years ago. Because if you look at Latvian-Russian relations, they really improved only after Latvia joined

the EU and NATO five years ago. That's not a paradox - this is the end result. And we feel secure.

And we look at the NATO-Russian border, because Latvian-Russian border is a NATO-Russian border - it's a peaceful border. So we have to go to that in the future too. Unfortunately, I missed a little bit today, if you speak about Georgia and Ukraine.

### **Anne Applebaum**

Senator Voinovich wanted to say something.

### **George V Voinovich**

When I heard Mr. Lavrov this morning, I thought about a couple of years ago. I was trying to get more money for the ODIHR, the Office of Democratic Institution and Human Rights in OSCE, and the Russians gave the OSCE a very bad time because they said that the money that they were spending -- we were spending money on things they shouldn't be involved in -- democracy building in some of the countries, monitoring elections and so forth. Is that what they want to do -- to be able to be in an organization and control the organization in terms of what it does? And the OSCE is a human rights organization. And I was puzzled what he had to say today about the fact that he thought the OSCE was the way to go.

### **Anne Applebaum**

Carl, this afternoon a friend of mine put to me the following conundrum. He says the mistake we made in the early 1990s was that, out of politeness, we did not tell the Russians that they lost the Cold War, that the reason why the system had fallen apart was that it was weak, and that the captive nations inside the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc wanted to leave. That failure to tell them this created a kind of false historical recollection. And so that, now, the Russian leadership remembers that it wasn't that they lost, and it ended and the system came to a halt. It was that they somehow magnanimously created a neutral zone in Central Europe which the West then aggressively filled. You know, that they gave us this gift, and then the West angrily filled it. What would you say to that description or that argument about the last two decades?

### **Carl Bildt**

Perhaps we were naïve in the sense that our hope was that we were going to see roughly the same sort of evolution in Russia itself that we saw in all of these other countries. And let's not forget that there were very impressive personalities. What Boris Yeltsin did was fantastic in terms of actually recognizing democratic development, recognizing the independence of the three Baltic states. It was mind boggling what was happening in Russia. And new democratic forces and those who followed the debate in Russia in those times, it was not entirely unrealistic to see the same kind of democratic evolution in Russia as we had in Poland or Hungary. It

might have been naïve. We should have read somewhat more of history, perhaps, but that was the belief at the time.

But I do believe that the failures that then occurred is a source of a lot of the problems at the time. I see Wolfgang Schauble, he reminds me of a story. Because go back 100 years or 200 years. We have two nations that have created a lot of evil in Europe -- Germany for quite some time, up until 1945, and then Russia. I remember sitting at a luncheon or a dinner in Luxembourg a couple of years ago with Helmut Kohl, (inaudible), someone else, and I said something that betrayed a less than complete knowledge of modern Luxembourg history. And I was immediately corrected by Helmut Kohl who started lecturing me on all of the evils that Germany, under the Nazis, did to Luxembourg. And I wasn't aware of the magnitude of it. And then Poland sounded like a lucky place, because it was really much more nasty than I thought.

But the final point that he made, which I think was very, very, very profound, was that it's only when Germany, after all that we have done, when the smallest of our neighbors see us as their true friend, that we really are part of Europe and that we can create true European friendship, peace and stability. That's wisdom and statesmanship of profound order. That sort of recognition of the burden of history and what that should lead you to do, that's really what should have evolved in Russia, and we would have been in a profoundly different situation today than where we are. Sooner or later I think it will come. But compared to our expectations 20 years ago, we now have to be saying it's going to be later rather than sooner. And we'll have to handle the consequences in the meantime, and try to help, as much as we can, Russia to come to that recognition that Germany, so successfully after 1945, managed to achieve.

### **Anne Applebaum**

Minister Schauble, do you want to comment on that?

### **Wolfgang Schauble**

I think I prefer to concentrate on what we have to do today and tomorrow. And today and tomorrow we have to engage Russia. There's no alternative. I can't imagine how we can solve, for example, the problem in Iran without cooperation with Russia. I can't imagine how we can strengthen, maybe, the Security Council in the United Nations without cooperation with Russia. And I think we have a chance.

I think we must not tell the Russians that they lost the Cold War -- they know it. But you can't really compare -- the Russians don't like to compare Russia and Germany because they think they have won World War II. And then they lost the Cold War. And the Germans started World War II, lost, and won the Cold War. And the Russians, I can imagine that they don't think that it's fair and, therefore, we have to think about it.



I would totally disagree with Mr. Lavrov of saying OECD or something. No, we need NATO. The only organization which presents security and stability is NATO, quite clearly. But the only question we have to solve is cooperative relations with Russia. I think it's possible. I can't imagine why it shouldn't be possible, in the long term, that Russia should be invited to join NATO -- why not? Why not -- if they want. I don't think it will happen in the next two years. But I think what we are doing now is to compete in regions of influence, zones of influence. And, I tell you, it's 20 years after 1989, and we will not be successful in the competition -- who has more influence in the region, in the Caucasus and so on. Only if we cope, we will solve the problems.

Of course, I'm sorry, I'm Minister of Interior. I have to think about the threat of international terrorism and all these silly things and, therefore, I depend a little bit on foreign relations and stability in foreign relations. And I don't like to get the problems in fighting against terrorist threats if we are not able to cope internationally in this region. And that is a key for solving the problem with the Islam world. And we can do it together with Russia, or we will fail.

**Anne Applebaum**

Either of the other panelists like to say something, or shall I open up the floor?

**George V. Voinovich**

I think that I agree with Mr. Schauble. The Russians are paranoid. And the fact is that -- I know our President's now talking about rebooting and a new engagement with them. And I have to believe that at this stage of the game that we ought to re-engage with them, to try and determine where we have a symbiotic relation with them, i.e. are there goals that they would like to achieve, and by working with us, we can accomplish. Now, we may find some areas where we disagree, but at least we'll define what the relationship is. And I think also that with the world economy as it is today, the worst thing we could do is break off communication. I think we need more communication today than ever before, if we're going to be successful.

**Anne Applebaum**

Carl, do you want to say something?

**Carl Bildt**

There is a lot of fields of co-operation with Russia, and if you look at it fundamentally we don't really, be that Germany or Sweden or the U.S. or whatever -- we don't have any fundamental problem with Russia. Whenever there is a problem with Russia, and there are now and then hiccups, even problems and crises, it is nearly always Russia and its immediate neighbors. It's a crisis with Ukraine, it's a crisis in Caucasus, it's a meat crisis with Poland. And since we have the security system where we cannot be indifferent to what happens there, that translates into crisis, that goes to my fundamental point, that the thing that has not been sorted out is Russia's relationships to its immediate neighbors and the choices that they, out of their democratic will, have

made. And that in itself creates problems in their overall relationships, but fundamentally managing Iran or the Middle East or whatever it is, non-proliferation and terrorism, then Russia is a partner. But this is the unresolved issue of European stability that we still have, and they have, fundamentally, to deal with for their own stable future.

**Anne Applebaum**

Mr. President, you want to say -- ?

**Valdis Zatlers, President**

Yes, and one more evidence, Latvia has about more than 30% Russian population. Living in an environment of Russian media, when you look at some events, like crisis in Caucasus, the Russian media and the BBC and CNN are like day and night. And still having this population inside, the population could get little bit different information on many issues. Having the direct border, we've still -- Latvia feels safe, secure, with no local tensions in between the ethnic groups because we are in European Union and because we are in NATO. And this is the best evidence that we are on the right track and that's a solution maybe for the other regions too. Okay, not in one day, in very -- maybe sometimes slow, maybe sometimes difficult way, but this is a solution. NATO has proved for sixty years that's really -- even Lavrov said, it's the best security organization we have in the world.

**Anne Applebaum**

On that happy note, let me start to take some questions. There are two women in the front row who have already raised their hands and winked at me so I will call on them first, but I will not neglect the back of the room. There's one right here and there's one right here.

## *Q&A Session*

**From the floor**

Hi, Minister Bildt, I wanted to follow up on your comment that it could have all happened very differently, and I should say by way of disclosure I'm a history professor and I've just written -- finished writing -- a book called "1989" that will be appearing this fall. And so I'd like to ask you about alternative outcomes to 1989. For the book I interviewed James Baker and he said the solution to any diplomatic problem contains within it the seeds of future problems. So in 1989 there was obviously a huge problem, disorder, chaos, breakdown, and there needed to be a solution. And this could have been a moment where Bush, Baker and Kohl said, you

know, the whole game is coming into our hands. This is a chance to remake the world. This is another President-creation moment, we can fix the UN Security Council, America is at the pinnacle of its power, we could do this. But Bush, Baker and Kohl weren't that kind of people. Bush famously said he didn't do the vision thing. So the solution that gets picked is to take Western institutions like the existing West German basic law, Article 23, and NATO, and move them eastwards, and it was a successful solution. But does it not also then have the seeds of future problems in it, which is what we're seeing today, in friction with Russia over NATO enlargement, and so forth?

**Anne Applebaum**

Let me have the other question now and then the panel can answer them both.

**Heather Grabbe, Open Society Institute, Brussels**

When Ronald Reagan died the Economist ran a cover with his picture and the title "The man who defeated Communism". Now many Europeans reacted to this as, huh, typical Economist, first of all claiming the credit was Washington's, but also claiming it was very much the rhetoric and the policy of one large important power which did it. Many Europeans felt no, it was all about engagement, the Helsinki Committee, civil society linkages, for example, with the Latvian dissident movement, which made all the difference. Now, twenty years on, what really is it all about? Is it about containment? Is it about co-operation? And what does that tell us in how we should try and deal with Russia of today?

**Anne Applebaum**

Anybody want to go first? Carl's name was mentioned, I think, so -- ?

**Carl Bildt**

No, I think that if -- it was talking about the decisions of 1989 specifically, which was --

**Heather Grabbe**

1990.

**Carl Bildt**

1990, later on, but -- yes, related to German reunification which was the key. Mr. Schauble is really the man who dealt with it. I think that was extreme wisdom that led -- the German reunification, using the basic law. I don't think there was much option at the time.

**Wolfgang Schauble**

I think I can tell you it was the desire of the population in GDR, to get the basic law of Federal Republic. Only in the Federal Republic, there were some intellectuals who

wanted to use the opportunity to build a new constitution, but in the GDR they only wanted to join Federal Republic, they didn't want anything else. Therefore it was not an enlargement of Federal Republic, it was only that the people, the population of GDR decided to join Federal Republic and they were allowed to do so. And we had to make it possible, but we didn't decide it, the decision was taken by the population and it was decided in the free election on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March in 1990 in the GDR and it was a decision which was enacted and it was decided between the parties and Federal Republic. The most successful campaigner in that election was Helmut Kohl, and he was elected.

### **Carl Bildt**

And the only alternative way would have been either extending the Federal law to East Germany, or there would have been reunification in another way -- eighteen million East Germans moving to West Germany to join the Federal law, those were the two alternatives at the table at the time.

### **Wolfgang Schauble**

Of course it was, in fact it was argued, even convinced our closest friends in France and UK and so on, that there was no alternative. We got every day -- and as Minister of Interior I had to cope with this problem -- we got every day thousands, thousands of people from GDR. We brought them in sport halls and so on because we had not enough houses for them. And only when we decided to enlarge the currencies, D-Mark, Deutschmark, 1<sup>st</sup> of July it stopped, it ended. And then it was clear that there will be a reunification in 1990, then it ended, and even Gorbachev -- there is a story when Gorbachev was in Bonn, I think early January of 1990, and he was together with Helmut Kohl at the River Rhine. And Kohl told him: look, Mr. President, like the River Rhine, you can't stop it. And that is with the people. And the only decision which is possible is to allow reunification. Therefore we didn't have an alternative. It was the decision of the population, the free decision.

### **Anne Applebaum**

While we're on the subject, I saw Pauline Neville-Jones back here raising her hand, and since she was, I believe, also there at the time, why doesn't she ask her question. Yes?

### **The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Pauline Neville-Jones DCMG**

I just wanted to make a comment on what's being said. Now, one thing our distinguished speakers haven't said about alternative outcomes, is that there was always the possibility of a neutral solution, and this was after all what the Russians were after. And we could have had an outcome, and it seemed to me that if you look back on it, in the first instance that seemed to be a more likely possibility, that actually that great swathe of territory between the West German border, or certainly if not the West German border then the German border, and Russia, would have been made into one vast neutral zone, and that's indeed what the Russians wanted. And it

wasn't at all clear right at the outset that NATO would indeed enlarge. And there was argument among NATO members about whether actually that was the right thing for NATO to do. And I'm extraordinarily glad that very quickly we decided that actually that was the right thing to do. Because if we hadn't done that I don't think something else would have happened, because I do not believe that EU extension to the East would have happened nearly so easily. Because it needed to happen on the basis of the stability that NATO membership brought. So I think those two things are very closely linked and now seem like the pattern of history, but it seems to me at the time, absolutely hung in the balance and not at all the outcome that the Russians were seeking.

### **Anne Applebaum**

Let me take one other comment before adding to this. I think Eugeniusz Smolar from Poland and then Angela Stent back there.

### **Eugeniusz Smolar, Centrum Stosunków Międzynarodowych [Center for International Relations], Warsaw**

Nothing was decided at that time. Let me just tell you one thing. The new American Ambassador to Warsaw came in 1991, Tom Simmons. Private meeting. Somebody said: you know we are going to join NATO? Do you know what he did? He left the room, the private meeting, because he didn't have any brief. I think very few (inaudible) know something about that. Our contacts, I was at that time in London with the British political parties, they didn't want to hear about it. This was the choice like in the case of the DDR, it was a choice made by Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians and others. And the West had (inaudible) -- can I remind you that President Bush at the time argued to the Ukrainians that the Soviet Union should remain. He actually appealed for the Soviet Union because for the United States at that time and the leadership, the most important thing was the stability and the safety of the nuclear weapon. They couldn't imagine the world when actually there could be some kind of a civil war in the Soviet Union, which was not impossible.

The second thing is, which needs to be reminded, is a long struggle. And in fact just for the sake of argument, in 1978 a friend of mine, (inaudible) wrote an essay in which he said there will be no freedom of Poland without reunification of Germany. 1978. And in the dissident community, in the opposition community, that was not controversial. The Communists attacked her for that. But that was not controversial. There was a feeling that we cannot seek liberalization without thinking hard about the unification. And one of the miracles of the twenty years if I can -- especially from the point of view of what happened in the Balkans, is look at Poland. Poland after 1989 had all -- with the exception of Sweden -- had all new neighbors. All the old countries had disappeared, and with all new neighbors Poland very quickly re-established a friendly relationship, which is quite an achievement.

**Anne Applebaum**

Okay, I follow, all right.

**Eugeniusz Smolar**

End of commercial.

**Anne Applebaum**

Okay. Someone has to not -- not only commercials in favor of East European countries. So we love you all.

**From the floor**

Thank you very much. I'm from Hungary and I just regret that our German friends now don't remember this, Hungary let out the East Germans, which I think was a turning point. But why I asked for the floor was that now we remember that the West was united, what they wanted, and I agree with all the panelists that how it turned out is fabulous, and there was no alternative. But the Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher, was running to Moscow and told Gorbachev that the West is not interested to impose the sphere of influence on Central or Eastern Europe. And French leaders, Italian leaders, were doing very same thing, and it was very close before the big changes. So I would like to very much agree with my Polish colleagues that all the power and encouragement came from our countries and of course it was unavoidable, it went very, very well, and by the way, Mr. Gorbachev was in Budapest a few years ago on our birthday celebration. He publicly said: please hold your chair, that's 1956, when the Soviet Union intervened in Hungary, he believed it was unavoidable. Thank you.

**Anne Applebaum**

There's a saying in Polish that basically means: Poland, Hungary -- two brothers. So there you have it. They agree with each other. I did say, I did call on from an American point of view back here, Angela Stent, and I would like the panel to --

**Professor Angela Stent, Georgetown University**

Angela Stent from Georgetown University. I'm actually not going to discuss 1989, but I'm going to talk about the younger, post-Communist generation in Russia. I had a Fulbright Fellowship last fall, I taught a course on U.S.-Russian relations to graduate students who were being trained for the foreign ministry and other government institutes in Russia. They speak beautiful English, they use the Internet, they're privileged, they're well educated. And let me tell you something about their views, because I think we have to realize this is a very long-term process. To a man and woman they believed that George H.W. Bush, Helmut Kohl and the others had deliberately engineered the collapse of the Soviet Union, they believed that the Georgia war was started by -- and I'm quoting -- Dick Cheney's oil company, and when they wrote papers for me they wrote things like: the U.S. and Europe should

stay out of our backyard, you know, Ukraine is ours. So these are the attitudes of young people in Russia today, many of whom were born after the collapse of Communism, so that the process of change is going to be very long. So my question, Carl, you mentioned the question, the issue, of the neighborhood, the post-Soviet space being the most neuralgic issue for Russia, how would you and the other panelists suggest that one find a more productive way of discussing this with Russia, of talking about people's interests, legitimate interests, about what will happen there in the future? Otherwise we're likely to have more conflagrations there. Thank you.

### **Anne Applebaum**

Right, so actually here we have a beautiful indication, we have an East European view of what happened and we have, through Angela's students, a Russian view of what happened. Do those two differing views and the different accounts of the past and the different perception of the present, do they continue to affect politics? And what can we do about it? Who wants to start? Mr. President?

### **Valdis Zatlers**

I think this is a real picture in Moscow and a real picture maybe in the whole Russia. So they have built up new generation's views based on their perceptions what happened. And I think, in one sentence, they think like Gorbachev that the West cheated the Russia at that time. That was not natural processes which happened in our countries as we all feel here being in this room. They said they always tried to make a picture that somebody's guiding from outside. It's a traditional Russian way of thinking. They need enemies outside, nevertheless they are big or small, they had Estonia as an enemy, they had Georgia like an enemy, just a few powerful, and indeed the big superpowers like United States just to feel influential. That's the way the Russians are thinking.

And I describe it from an episode when I was meeting the population of the city in Latvia, a NATO member state, which is majority Russian. And one of the ladies asked me the question, whether there will be at any time the NATO military bases in Latvia. And I asked a question to her, I said: do you know where the closest military base is of NATO? She said no. I said 12km from now, from that city. Because even Russian population in Latvia, they don't feel that Latvia is a NATO country. And I'll tell you why. Because they have told for generations that NATO is an aggressive organization who is going to attack next day the Russians. And until we will change this mind of Russian foreign policy and also the population, nothing will change. We will have all the objectives against enlargement just because everybody thinks in Russia that's a threat. They don't accept NATO as a security organization. Maybe on the highest level like Mr. Putin or Mr. Medvedev or Mr. Lavrov, yes, they do that. But for the population the NATO is still aggressive, trying to attack next day when we go out of this room.

**Anne Applebaum**

Carl?

**Carl Bildt**

I think it's immensely important in order to have to maneuver this issue, so to say, that we engage with the people of Russia, particularly the young people of Russia, in different ways, with the emerging middle class of Russia, that is going as tourists to Turkey or Montenegro or Sweden or Germany or whatever and seeing life and interacting, that we also -- and I do also think that we have a huge asset in the EU and in NATO, of those that were former member of the Soviet empire. Because the Latvians, and others, they speak the language. There is a cultural understanding there that is coming from a rather tragic common past, which means that they can act to a certain extent as a bridge, and then try to break through that media curtain that has been established in Russia during the last few years. Because if you look at what's there on television, if you look what the youth movement, the Nashi movement of the leading party, the message that they are getting out there, it's pretty scary.

But it is no longer the Soviet Union. There are no walls. People travel. So we should be able to break through and interact with emerging Russian society of the future to make certain that they feel that they are part of this Europe. And I do think that what's happening in terms of -- they see democracy and progress in a country like Latvia, they see -- it's not the economic success story at the moment, Ukraine, but it's a democracy. It's a democracy. There's a constitution, they quarrel over the constitution but that's some part of democracy as well. The success of these countries is immensely important for the long-term success of Russia. They might not be inspired by Spain or Germany or Sweden. But they might be inspired by Ukraine or Latvia or whatever. So we have to see all of these together, see it as a long-term proposition because we need -- Russia is part of Europe. And we will need a Russia that feels confident with a long future, and that has its neighbors as its friends, true friends, we will need that for the future stability of our Continent.

**Valdis Zatlers**

I'd like to add, you see, if we compare the Russians in Latvia and Russians in Russia, they're different. And you have in the new generation which is totally different (inaudible) in Moscow. But the younger Russian generation in Latvia has been brought up with democracy, and all the basic principles we have and share, and when they go back to Russia, they come back and say this is a different country. That's what I agree with Carl Bildt, that we have to work on that, we have to use our Russians to prove to Russia that democracy is much superior. And even they can't but see that Europe free press is much better than we have in Moscow. So there is a big difference. It's not an Iron Curtain, but there is some kind of a curtain, a very light one, between the EU and Russia. And we all know why it is so. But we have to open up more the minds of young people in Russia. Not in Latvia but in Moscow.



**Anne Applebaum**

This is getting onto an interesting subject which is the subject of democracy promotion. But before we continue, and I know Minister Schauble wants to speak to you, I'm wondering if there's any Russians want to speak? I don't recognize any, but - there's one, excellent.

**Ambassador Vladimir Chizhov, Russian Ambassador to the European Union**

Thank you very much.

**Anne Applebaum**

Could you introduce yourself?

**Vladimir Chizhov**

I'm the Russian Ambassador to the European Union. Well, it has been quite interesting to listen to reminiscences of days past, which people of my generation remember quite vividly. The promises not kept, the agreements not delivered, and of course the expectations on both sides of the former Iron Curtain. Actually it was interesting to hear a few weeks ago references to the Iron Curtain coming from a Prime Minister of an EU member state and a NATO member state referring to Iron Curtains within the European Union. But I will leave that to another discussion.

**Anne Applebaum**

It was the Hungarian Prime Minister.

**Vladimir Chizhov**

Let me focus on two main points. One is NATO enlargement. NATO was created sixty years ago in a totally different atmosphere for specific reason, which rightly or wrongly, was perceived to exist sixty years ago. We all agree it's no longer there, even the object of that policy is no longer there. But NATO has been far more successful in enlarging than it has been in transformation. We certainly believe that NATO could be an important element of your Atlantic security. I can accept that those living in NATO member states might claim that they feel secure being members of NATO. Yes, NATO might provide a certain curtain of security for its members. The main problem is that NATO is a military bloc of limited membership. There was a reference to possible -- the possibility of Russia joining NATO. Actually this question was raised in the last twenty years a few times. And every time, when it was beyond social talk and jokes, the reply from NATO was a flat no. So let's not play with that game again.

**Anne Applebaum**

If I might --

**Vladimir Chizhov**

Finally, I've listened to what President Zatlers had to say about Russians in Latvia. Of course when they go to Russia and come back they say it's a different country, because Russia, as the majority of countries in the world with the sole exceptions being Latvia and Estonia, does not have a substantial percentage of their populations as non-citizens without the right to vote. And that applies to dozens of thousands of people residing in Latvia and Estonia. And I'm surprised that this particular element of Latvian democracy was omitted in these statements. Thank you very much.

**Valdis Zatlers**

I have to respond.

**Anne Applebaum**

Yes, everybody I think has to respond. First, the President of Latvia.

**Valdis Zatlers**

I always say the Latvian story is a success story. Because if you go twenty years ago one morning, half of the population -- at that time it was 48%. We're watching the television and they got to know that they are occupants. I think this was a shock for them, a great shock, because the other half of the population knew it, the other half didn't know. And we managed this situation. Of course we have tensions immediately. But it was twenty years ago. And we managed this situation by being very consequent in our way, in twenty years, and we have in a very good position today.

And this issue about non-citizens, this is a question, would you like to force somebody to become a citizen? Or to let the individual to decide to be a citizen, not to be a citizen, to stay in the country or to leaving the country, that's the real democracy that we are performing and practicing all these twenty years. And we are not going to force anybody to become a citizen if he doesn't like that. Because we have, let's say Palestinian, he obtains citizenship in very short period of time, I would say in two years. Why? Because he wanted to become a citizen of Latvia. And he said: because we don't have any citizenship in Palestine. I want to be citizen of one of the countries and this is a free choice, this is the basis of democracy, free choice of an individual. And nobody can force, neither from Latvian side and neither from any force from outside any individual person to take the decision he doesn't want to take himself. I think this will go on gradually, we'll reduce it 1% a year, and we'll look at the young generation, 98% of them, they are citizens. This is a question of our generation, so we are not going to disturb the -- we are just waiting and let the process go in a voluntary way.

**Anne Applebaum**

I'd like to pick up actually on something else which is this talk of Russia eventually joining NATO is kind of social talk and it doesn't mean anything. We all know that Russia is still NATO's real enemy. Minister Schauble, you brought this up, maybe you'd like to comment on that.

**Wolfgang Schauble**

I don't think it's a social talk, I think it's a real issue. As I just have said, it's not a matter of the coming year but I think that the basic question is the relation between NATO. What is U.S., Europe community with Russia? We want to have not a confrontative relation, but a cooperative relation and that can include on the long term even that Russia, if Russia wants to join, I didn't know that Russia has asked for NATO membership in the last 20 years different times, I was totally surprised that you mentioned this. I never had heard. Maybe our intelligence service is not as efficient, but I didn't get this either way.

But I think the real issue is that we have to work for a mutual understanding of cooperation. Because Russia has a lot of problems, until the economic crisis, as the prices for oil and so on rise up, Russia also had, they were so strong, now they understand they need also cooperation as we all do. And we have so many problems and we should take it seriously.

Of course, I think it's important that we understand Russia doesn't compare itself with Ukraine and with Latvia. Russia does compare itself with United States of America, even with European states they don't really compare. I think we have to recognize this and to take regard on this. Therefore it's important that we use our close Atlantic relations, U.S. and Europe, to invite and to feel Russia comfortable and treat it as equal on an equal level. That is important and if we do so we can achieve, and I hope we will agree on this and we will work on this. It's not social talk, it's the most important issue in international policy in my understanding.

**Anne Applebaum**

Senator Voinovich.

**George V. Voinovich**

Yes it's, 70% of the Russian people support the government. A recent poll came out to show in the United States that 65% of the people in our country are concerned about Russia, a negative 28% increase of what it was a year or so ago. In Russia it's up 12%, they have more concerns about the United States as being an enemy and we see some bizarre things going on.

For example, the Russians in Venezuela and Cuba and so forth flying around. I don't know who's running the place but just wonder why, but it's like tit-for-tat, we're going back to a time when -- we've got to stop it. I think that we should be talking more in

this session about what are we going to do about it and see if we can't, at least get everything on the table and develop some kind of framework where we can put all the issues here and sift them out and figure out where we are. I think that's the real challenge right now and I think if we don't confront that situation I think we're going to see a situation that continues to worsen.

### **Anne Applebaum**

Another comment before I ask for final questions. No? No.

I've seen you all, there are about thirty hands raised. I'm really sorry but I know other people probably want to have dinner so I don't want to keep you. No, I know some of you don't want dinner but some of you do. So I will call on just one or two more and then I'll let the panel sum up. There is one very persistent hand over here so I have to hand it to them. I have to also be geographically fair right, so I have to, this side of the room and that side of the room.

### **Gareth Evans, International Crisis Group**

On the question of NATO enlargement and membership. It's always seemed to me, perhaps with the congenital naïveté of an outsider, in my case an Australian, that the problem has never been enlargement of NATO up to Russia's borders. The problem has been stopping there and the absolute inability, with very few exceptions, like Mr. Schauble today, the absolute inability to conceptualize the possibility of a different kind of NATO, a common security organization maybe with a global reach, which is constructed on a quite different basis, rather than premised on continued anxiety about 'The Beast from the East'. The psychological reality is that if we think in those terms and conceptualize the issue in terms it's going to be a very self-fulfilling enterprise and I fear that's exactly where we've got ourselves to. So can't we all rethink very, very seriously the wisdom of opening up the possibility, very explicitly of Russian membership? By all means setting the bar high in terms of democracy and human rights standards that we demand of other NATO members, but at least set the bar, at least conceptualize that possibility and let's have more talk of the kind that we heard from Mr. Schauble. Maybe that will be the game changer.

### **Anne Applebaum**

One more question. Let's see, there was one over here that I didn't, who's been up for a long time. I'm sorry actually it was this woman here. Sorry.

### **From the floor**

First on a very personal note having listened to the discussions here. I'm from Croatia, Croatia is joining NATO in two weeks. Am I glad! Because it obviously is, again, a very serious matter of security. But I wanted to comment on something that was said and that had to do with the importance of domestic leadership in the changes of 1989.

The reason I think why the Central -- Eastern Europe, or northern Eastern Europe succeeded, was because they actually did have alternative political leadership in waiting. That was recognized and then supported from outside unlike the case in '56 or '68 or different times previously when it wasn't supported. South Eastern Europe, where I come from, didn't have alternative leadership. James Baker, by the way, got it completely wrong when he came there and said 'this country should stay together' when the war was already happening there. It didn't have domestic alternative political leadership and that's why it didn't succeed in doing what the northern East Europeans did. I'm saying that, not in order to distribute brownie points, but because this, I think, is a very important lesson for countries or in understanding and dealing and approaching countries like Georgia or like Ukraine where I think the West, or to be more specific, the U.S., actually got it wrong and that in many ways worsened the situation there.

### **Anne Applebaum**

Alas we are out of time and my whole list of other things I wanted to talk about, like the EU, another small organization here in Brussels, we didn't really get to, but I'm sure there'll be other forums for it. Perhaps the panel would like to sum up. I do feel the progress of the conversation was that we started with '89 and somehow or other we managed to end up with Russia. Maybe the four panelists would like to make their final comments, either on anything somebody said in the room, or anything else really.

### **Carl Bildt**

Yes, one final point. I think this is going to be a year of remembering 1989, to a certain extent also remembering 1939, and there's a correlation between the two. But also looking forward. I think we should then go back to which President Medvedev to go back to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and see what have we not achieved? I mean Javier Solana is saying we should not go a Helsinki minus, we should do a Helsinki plus, but I would add, let's also go back to the Paris Charter of November 1990 and see what have we achieved on that one? And not do a Paris minus but do Paris plus, and if we can do what have we implemented and not of Helsinki? What have we implemented and not of Paris? And do a Helsinki plus and a Paris plus, that could be a worthy way of celebrating these twenty years and looking ahead for the next phase.

### **Wolfgang Schauble**

Maybe I should make one remark on what has achieved in EU. Carl Bildt started our discussion with the success we got in twenty years and in the end of 2007 we achieved to enlarge any border control inside EU, what is called Schengen. It's not very much discussed because it succeeded without any problem and therefore it's not reported in the media. It's a great achievement because it's a real end of the Iron Curtain. Until the end of 2007 you had in Brussels Airport 'EU passengers' and 'Non-EU passengers' and the people coming from Poland, Hungary and so on were 'Non-EU passengers.' We are working, and the EU is very complicated, but at the

end of the day we will get a common foreign and security policy and we achieved a lot in the last twenty years.

I hope we will use it in the way we will celebrate the NATO anniversary in some days in my home region in Strasbourg and Baden-Baden and so on. I hope we will understand and use NATO Atlantic partnership on the basis of, of course, America, the world leading power with a special responsibility, we need a strong America. But America deserves a strong European partner, a united European partner with one voice and on this basis we can cope with Russia and if we do we can work for the next success in the coming twenty years.

**Anne Applebaum**

Mr. President.

**Valdis Zatlers**

I would say we discussed a lot about successes so the next task for us is to deal with the failures. Let's say what failed or was not in the best way performed, like the Balkans. We have to finish with Balkans, that's the next task, just to have all the Europe altogether in the same organizations with the same aims, with the same goals, with the same legal framework, whatever, security framework.

The second task to find an interface of dealing with Russia with which really the both sides, the Europe, NATO on one side and Russia from the other side, feel comfortable. But I would say that what was mentioned in the morning, that we all feel comfortable with the security systems, we should not destroy them. So we have to look for the interface that makes the Russians comfortable. That's also a task, that's a challenge. But as we passed through this twenty years we had a lot of challenges, we had to be encouraged and to find a new way of mindset, how to change that. At present we are adjusting a little, a period of stagnation.

**Anne Applebaum**

Yes, stagnations, a word I remember from the late Soviet Union, but anyway. Senator Voinovich, you have the last word.

**George V. Voinovich**

Well I think we should be looking to the future and hope that ten years from now that we can celebrate as much as we've accomplished during the last twenty years, particularly the last ten years.

**Anne Applebaum**

Thank you.

[End]