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END OF EMPIRES: CHALLENGES TO SECURITY AND STATEHOOD IN FLUX

**Papers from the 9th Annual Conference of the
Euro-Atlantic Conflict Studies Working Group**
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Preface to the Conference Anthology

by Dr. HANS-HUBERTUS MACK

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Dear Participants of the 9th Annual Conference of the Euro-Atlantic Conflict Studies Group,

As a co-organizer of this conference, I am very pleased that we have again succeeded in assembling such a large number of participants in one of the European capitals to address a topic which has become important to us over the last two decades either indirectly or directly. The topic “End of Empires: Challenges to Security and Statehood in Flux” is more relevant than ever.

This topic of a transnational view of history, which always should and must be regarded in a large overall context, vividly reflects the relationship between nation states and empires. While the empire is an invention of early high cultures and civilizations, the nation state is a secondary phenomenon whose character was formed in the late modern period. Only few nation-states are the result of congregations of smaller sovereign parts; we may consider, for instance, Italy, Germany or, to a certain degree, Switzerland to be such. It is more often a case of new nation-states emerging from a collapsing empire, and there are also many examples of this in Europe. The problems that may arise in this situation are emphatically revealed in the individual panels of this year’s conference.

In addition to the historical considerations that play a role in this process, the security perspective is above all of vital importance to our conference. In my opinion, the socialization of security – as is the case in the European Union – is a third way besides the nation-state and the empire. Although nation states continue to exist formally in this alliance, they have organized themselves on a supranational scale and have ceded parts of their sovereignty. Sometimes, the European Union has been referred to as a “benevolent empire” because of its peace effect. For decades, the European Union has continued along the path of expansion and consolidation. Although some voices can be heard saying that sight should not be lost of

the pace of expansion, there can be no doubt that the integration of Europe is a cornerstone in the peaceful coexistence of the peoples in this region.

By meeting at this venue, we should each remember that dealing with all topics of our common history offers us a great opportunity. To address current and security-related topics among friends and like-minded people from the Euro-Atlantic nations and to present and take note of their different national interpretations offers us the chance to study history together and to jointly remember events that must not be forgotten. It is this which gives us all the competence to shape our common future with responsibility. Regular fora that may help to develop common basic ideas are of great internal benefit.

The form of our meeting can help us to find an innovative way to deal with the topics raised, even under difficult conditions. We should pay particular attention to allowing young academics from our countries to speak at such events and to encouraging them to get involved in the work of this plenum. In my opinion, we have succeeded very well in doing so this time in particular, and the results are promising. In times of financial restrictions, we should make special efforts in researching and teaching military history. It helps us to appropriately put our behavior in a larger context, is an “educational power” and yields us at least an indirect benefit. It helps us to understand ourselves and the events going on around us better, and it enables us to make our own judgments. In the current discussion of interpretations and the tendency to also apply economic criteria to educational activities, we should not lose sight of what efforts in education produce: a mature and independent human being.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, you have seen the host of references that can be drawn from this topic. We have spent stimulating days in academic debate; we have met; and I am sure that our hosts have done their best to make this stay in Bucharest an unforgettable experience. Our Romanian hosts have done a tremendous job. I would like to express my gratitude on behalf of myself and the Germans and wish you all the best for the future.