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From Greece to the Gulf

The Military Security Problems and Responses

It has become clear in the past year that the focus of Western security has shifted from the traditional anxiety over the European balance to the Gulf. In fact the sense of energy vulnerability has been added to the more enduring sense of Western vulnerability in Europe and this has tended to promote an active debate within the Western Alliance about priorities. Inevitably this additional threat can only be met - at least in the short term - by the redeployment of existing military assets in accordance with a reassessment of strategic priorities. That reassessment has been in the first place an American reassessment. To dub it "unilateral" may be unkind but it certainly appears that the European Allies (and the Japanese) have had little choice in acceding to the shift of emphasis so clearly demonstrated by the transfer of maritime power to the Indian Ocean and the reorganization of the US strategic reserve into the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). Indeed in political terms the choice for America's Allies was stark: to accede as gracefully as possible or to complain and so make themselves vulnerable to increasingly strident American criticism that they were obstructing American efforts to "protect" those oil supplies on which the Europeans and the Japanese depend far more critically than does the United States.

Nevertheless there is a sense that the Western Allies are being dragged along somewhat unwillingly on the American coat-tails and it remains to be seen to what extent the Allies will be prepared to pick up the slack in Europe. The burden which should be shared is no longer being expressed in the familiar terms of European defence but much more in the relatively unfamiliar terms of defence of much wider Western interests. That will create difficulties not only because the size of the burden that is to be shared is liable to become open-ended but also because there has been added to it new kinds of tasks, tasks which not only lack coherence and definition but whose performance allows for considerable - and legitimate- latitude. What can forces allotted to the Security of the Gulf do? What threats are they intended to deter? What specific events should they be designed to respond to? These are difficult questions which can be answered in very different ways. If the intention is to contain Soviet power in South West Asia or to prevent a determined thrust by Soviet forces to secure Iran or the Upper Gulf, the investment - and so the diversion of resources away from Europe and the Far East - must be massive. If it is to dissuade the Soviet Union from embarking on a military adventure in the region, the prospect of a direct confrontation with quite small elements of American (or, better, Western) military forces would lead to a very different conclusion about the size and capabilities of forces required. If it is to reduce the likelihood of regional turbulence and to bolster or safeguard regimes friendly to the West, yet another force structure would be appropriate. Finally if the intention is to prevent the destruction or denial of oil assets by securing the wellheads and distribution networks against local forces, the force requirements - in terms of numbers, equipment, skills and training - would be different again.

To fashion forces to cover the full range of eventualities would be an awesome task and imply the diversion of American attention away from the more traditional arenas to an extent that would cause rather fundamental adjustment in political and military terms. Strategic clarity - which is singularly lacking at the moment - is essential if the West is not to fall into the Soviet trap. Setting aside Soviet actions in regions remote from the Soviet Union, the reality is that the Soviet Union, as the supremely continental power, can press at will at almost any point on its periphery and has relatively little difficulty in shifting weight on interior lines to threaten widely separated fronts. The West, operating as a very loose defensive maritime coalition, is poorly placed to respond militarily on exterior lines to constantly and perhaps deliberately shifting Soviet pressures.

There are no easy solutions but it is at least important that the West realises both the strategic advantage possessed by a continental and largely autarkic Superpower and the dangers of being drawn off-balance by feints and diversions in areas of considerable but secondary interest - secondary that is to the physical security of the states of the Western Alliance. Oil cannot be more important than national integrity.

To state an obvious if unpalatable truth, the United States does not face conventional threats to national integrity. Europe and Japan do face such threats and their instinct is to express concern at what they see as a real possibility of fundamental (as opposed to marginal) shifts of American emphasis. To restate the problem as one of sharply differing strategic priorities is probably correct. The reconciliation of these

views will not be easy but will be the central issue for the Western Alliance and Japan in the next few years. If, in pursuing an essentially unilateral reordering of strategic priorities, the United States allows the suspicion to take hold that her commitment to Europe or Japan is lessening, it could encourage the Europeans (and Japanese) to adopt an attitude of anticipatory deference towards the USSR. Yet the Europeans and the Japanese have little alternative but to agree that the strategic agenda has got larger and that they should contribute in some way to meeting these increased demands. They will forfeit American respect if they do not. The issue then becomes how best to do it - exclusively within Europe or outside?

An Allied Deployment Force?

There are powerful arguments in favour of encouraging the Europeans and the Japanese to assume more of the burden of their own defence thus releasing US forces for new tasks. It is in a sense the obvious thing to do. But we should at least consider the alternative, namely that at least some of America's Allies should be associated in some way with each item on the wider security agenda and that means contributing directly to the maintenance of security further afield - at least in the long term - so as to lessen if not remove American instincts to redistribute their assets away from Europe and Japan. What this suggests is that NATO countries should consider earmarking resources for out-of-area operations on a contingent basis, much as the ACE Mobile Force (AMF) is currently conceived. The precise contributions are relatively unimportant at this stage; the symbolism is critical. In other words the political significance of the establishment of a contingency force would tend to outweigh its military significance just as it does in the case of the AMF.

First, it would force the Allies into sensible contingency planning - as the AMF has done. Secondly, the agreement to pay a subscription to join the "out-of-area club" would confer a right to have some say in how the West should respond to events in distant regions - rather than surrendering the initiative entirely to the US. And the more that non-American elements can be made critical to the success of a joint venture, the greater the likelihood that the Allies would have to be listened to. Finally the possible intervention of what was manifestly a Western - as opposed to solely American - force might tend to defuse the more strident anti-Americanism of regional states and to give substance to Western declarations of interest in the stability and integrity of the oil-producing states. The political load would be spread more evenly.

While it is generally true that forces intended for intervention at a distance tend to look distinctively different from those designed for a European conflict, it ought not to be impossible for the Allies to earmark for assignment forces - land, sea and air - which would be regarded as useful for out-of-area contingencies. These need not necessarily be combat units. Logistic support will be critical for the success of any operation as will tactical mobility. It follows that helicopter lift, field hospitals, engineer and repair units and units to hold and distribute POL and water are all likely to be needed in addition to combat units - and will be equally if not even more important. The first step in such an enterprise is to clarify the shape and size of this ADF (Allied Deployment Force) and then to invite members to state what parts of the order of battle they would be prepared to fill. A joint contingency planning staff would have to be established under clear political direction to draw up plans. There would

be little profit in attempting to go far in terms of precisely what military function such a force would be required to perform; the tactical planning would necessarily have to respond to events as they unfold. Logistic planning - in its widest sense - would however be vital. Ultimately, if the general concept of an ADF is accepted, one would expect a clutch of logistic plans to be drafted and agreed which earmarked resources of appropriate manpower and material and provided a shopping list of assigned units to be drawn on. Questions regarding communications, route activation, air transport assets and command and control must be answered. Again the AMF precedent will be extremely useful. In the AMF context these questions have been addressed already. Finally, in terms of size, the initial strength of the ADF might be similar to the AMF(L) - about 5,000 - 6,000 men or a strong brigade with rather extensive logistic support appropriate for sustained operations a considerable distance from Europe. Questions of host nation support would need very careful examination.

An air component would be essential for strike, reconnaissance and strategic and tactical airlift. Here too the allies can help in a number of ways although the bulk of strategic lift will have to be American. Nevertheless the planners should not ignore Europe's civil aviation fleet if the crisis was judged to be sufficiently grave to warrant the taking of Powers of Direction.

On the naval side, the approach is likely to be rather different. On the not unreasonable assumption that a Western naval presence in the Indian Ocean will now have to be maintained for a very long time to come, the question is to what extent the Allies can relieve the US of some part of the

burden. In terms of carrier strike power, the answer has to be that Europe and Japan must get used to the idea that there will be one less carrier task force in the Mediterranean and one less in the Western Pacific and must attempt to plug the gap with land-based air power. However the requirements for escorts in the Indian Ocean will remain high and there is no obvious reason why the Western European navies should not co-ordinate the joint provision of up to six frigates for escort duties (calling perhaps also on Australia), a joint MCM (mine counter-measures) force and a small fleet train along the lines of Stanavforlant. At a time of crisis, the question of rapid naval reinforcement might arise but, given long passage times from the Atlantic and European waters, this is probably impractical. Nor does it look practical to try to augment US amphibious forces in the region with European marines.

The Political Context

Who are we trying to impress? There is no easy answer to this question. To some extent we - the Western Allies - would be trying to impress our publics that we have the wit and determination to adjust strategic priorities as strategic threats alter. To some extent the Europeans should be trying to impress the Americans that they understand American concern and are prepared to "share the burden" beyond Europe. We ought to be trying to impress the Soviet Union and the friends of the Soviet Union that we take seriously the possibility that military action, whether of a direct or indirect kind, might press on the West's jugular vein and that is best demonstrated by joint contingency planning and a capability for action. Finally we should be impressing friendly regimes - from Greece to the Gulf - that the Western Allies are taking new and appropriate steps to prepare to support them militarily if they are militarily threatened.

If the Allies do embark seriously on a modest joint enterprise of this kind, there is a lot of political legwork to be done. The somewhat enhanced ability of the West to protect its friends must not be mistaken locally for preparations to grab the oil in an emergency. The establishment of the ADF must not give the Soviet Union a pretext for preventive forward movement. The ADF will lay the West open to charges that it intends collectively to interfere in the domestic affairs of regional states and is busy acquiring the capability of doing so. The ADF must therefore reassure and not alarm the friends of the West.

The Problem of Scenarios

The precise contingencies that would trigger the collection and despatch of the ADF are hard to define and it may be unprofitable to attempt such definition. We can all think of scenarios - such as the Iran-Iraq War or the Revolution in Iran - where Western oil is at risk and the ADF would be irrelevant. But there are also relatively recent events - Kuwait and Oman for example - where the introduction of outside military power <u>on request</u> has been decisive. It is certainly not unimaginable that similar requests might be made in future. If they cannot be met, the delicate fabric of trust in the West could crash to the ground. We should therefore consider the establishment of an ADF both as a deterrent to Soviet ambitions (in precisely the same political context as the AMF for contingencies on the flanks of NATO) and as an earnest of our intent to move rapidly to support those who ask for Western help.

Logically there can be no such thing as a "force-multiplier". The whole can never be more than the sum of the parts; it can however be much less. The trick is to make best use of what is available by increasing

flexibility - normally, but not necessarily, by conferring greater mobility. Semantic distinctions about what are committed forces, what are in local reserve, what are in theatre reserve and what are in strategic reserve are not very helpful because all reserves can be reallocated up to the point of committal. The key point is that reserves are most useful when they can be switched at will. NATO has tended in the past to become extremely rigid in terms of earmarking reinforcing forces very narrowly for particular military tasks because it is undoubtedly a more efficient way to do things - organization, training, preparedness and movement can all be practised and made task-specific. Moreover it gives the potential recipient rather greater confidence that reinforcement will arrive and not go to another front. Yet in pursuing this objective, flexibility is very substantially curtailed to the point where it becomes very hard to imagine those reinforcements being used effectively elsewhere.

In the context of the ADF, earmarking rather than dedication would be preferable simply because the scenarios cannot be refined. It will not be easy, especially with conscript forces, to train units for their primary (European) role and their secondary (ADF) role. This argues rather strongly for the selection from the Continental Europeans of units whose roles would be little different at home or abroad - primarily therefore medical and logistic units. Regular forces on the other hand should be able to train for one primary and one secondary role in combat. This implies that the combat role tends to fall more heavily on British, American (and perhaps Canadian) forces which are in any case often technically reserves for NATO rather than committed. The British Government may be working towards the earmarking of a Field Force (Brigade) HQ for this role and the RDF's genesis is well-known.

Problems in the Mediterranean Basin

The exclusive focus on the Gulf is natural given current concern but there are a number of other disturbing trends on the Mediterranean littoral which have military overtones and undertones. Libya's moves into Chad and against Tunisia are regarded with alarm, not only by France and Italy but also by Libya's African neighbours. Qaddafi's regional ambitions seem - at least rhetorically - not to be limited to Chad and the messianic nature of his policies is bound to disturb such tranquillity as North Africa possesses. What can be done about it is a question under active discussion in Cairo, Algiers, Lagos, Khartoum and, above all, in Paris. Whatever view the French may have had of the role of military force in underpinning French interests in Africa, their confidence must be dented - not just because they have "lost" Chad and Mauritania, despite military investment in both countries, but also because the OAU itself appears to be becoming resentful of the French military presence in Africa. Yet it has to be admitted that the OAU is still painfully inadequate as a regional security organization and it is not easy to see how it can act to prevent any further attempts by Libya to subvert regional stability. This leaves France in the invidious position of attempting at considerable cost to shore up her African friends in the face of what may prove to be both a diminishing domestic consensus and opposition from other important African states. While Nigeria may prove strong enough to fight off Qaddafi's attempts to destabilize the Muslim North, she can hardly extend her protection to Niger or the CAR. Sudan may look to Egypt for help but Numeiry can only sense growing pressure from Libya via Chad to the West and from Mengistu's Ethiopia to the East. None of this is to suggest that Qaddafi is acting as a Soviet agent but he must sense considerable Soviet support for his activities and he is enabled to pursue his activities through extensive purchases of Soviet arms.

Italian concern seems to be expressed largely - and understandably - in terms of the reduction of the US 6th Fleet with all that that implies for the security of the sea lanes in war under challenge from the Soviet 5th Escadra. In Mediterranean terms, Italy is essentially a maritime power with maritime concerns. The critical question for maritime security is the extent to which the Italian Fleet is prepared now to enter into a wider definition of security than just the protection of adjacent waters. As Admiral Crowe, CINCSOUTH, has frequently complained, it is not so much the lack of NATO ships but the lack of deployment flexibility that hamstrings NATO in the Mediterranean. A more generous assignment of NATO's navies to his operational direction would certainly help to make good the obvious decline of the power of the 6th Fleet and allow COMNAVSOUTH to assert more of a NATO presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, given that this will not entirely redress the declining naval balance in the Mediterranean, the littoral states can only turn to land-based maritime strike airpower to challenge Soviet dominance at sea. A long narrow enclosed sea such as the Mediterranean offers great opportunity for the operation of land-based maritime strike aircraft although there is not much convincing evidence that the problems of co-ordination and integration have been seriously tackled. To get a sense of the size of the problem, it is worth recalling that one US carrier can only generate about 25-30 strike aircraft.

In this context - as in others - the reintegration of Greece into NATO must be welcomed but it would be foolish to pretend that the political problems with respect to Turkey (which caused Greece's withdrawal from NATO in the first place) have been solved and the renegotiation of the Greek-American bilateral agreements promises to produce added strains, given Greece's fragile domestic balance. Turkey cannot be said to have reached any kind of

domestic consensus with respect either to her domestic political structures or to her external relations. That the current military leaders have so far avoided the excesses of the Greek Colonels is to their credit and the need to continue to support the Turkish economy and military modernization is still widely recognized in the West but there must remain the question of how long that support will continue if the military leadership shows no obvious signs of restoring democratic rule in Turkey. The geographical significance of Turkey does not need elaboration: it is at once a barrier to Soviet ambitions and a bridge to the Islamic world. A strong and self-confident Turkey would be immensely reassuring to the rest of NATO - not just as a barrier but also as an arbiter and mediator between Europe and Islam. However it would be unwise to believe that Turkey would do anything to facilitate the projection of Western military power into the Middle East if that appeared likely to offend powerful Arab states whose assistance she is constantly seeking to ameliorate her energy debt.

Arab-Israeli Problems

This survey of security problems would be incomplete without mention of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is not the place to predict what progress may be made towards a settlement of the Palestinian issue. Through the UN commitment to Lebanon (as with the UN commitment to the solution of the Cyprus problem), peacekeeping will remain on the agenda even if there is no extension of that role by way of UN or multilateral guarantees to a future Palestinian entity. Israel seems likely to remain a potential flashpoint pending the solution of the Palestinian issue in a way that is satisfactory both to the principal Arab states and Israel and the Palestinians. Moreover the Reagan Administration, by tending to stress the strategic significance of Israel, seems set to polarize that part of the world still further and

to make more difficult American relations with the Arab states. However it is not suggested here that the solution of the Palestinian problem would, at a stroke, remove all those other security concerns which have as much to do with the dislike of Arab for Arab (or of Arab for Persian) as with the dislike of Arab for Jew. Given a degree of what might seem to be permissible pessimism over the forward movement of the Palestinian issue, we must deal with the Middle Eastern world as it is and not as we would wish it to be - and that implies that Western interests for the next few years will be increasingly difficult to sustain in the region in the face of Arab hostility. Only to a rather limited extent will the Arabs defer to Western interests, preferring instead to seek regional arrangements to assure their security.

To prejudge the extent to which such arrangements are likely to be effective may seem unfair but it is hard to see how they can deal themselves with any but rather minor security threats to members arising from within the region. Ultimately - and when really anxious - the Gulf states will turn to the United States as Saudi Arabia did at the start of the Iran-Iraq War in seeking AWACs. But by being unwilling to pay the political price necessary to facilitate American (or Western) intervention, they will have created the worst possible conditions for the swift and effective deployment of American (or Western) military power.

Although it is unlikely that the Soviet Union can take much comfort from recent developments in the Middle East, the Treaty of Friendship with Syria implies a greater degree of potential military involvement in any future Arab-Israeli dispute which, at the least, tends to constrain Israeli options with respect to Syria. On the other hand, the Syrian regime looks fragile and isolated. Given the hostility between Syria and Iraq and between Syria and Jordan, the choice that the Soviet Union has made is likely to reduce the attractions of Soviet friendship - to say nothing of the continuing

stigma of Soviet actions in Afghanistan. If the prevailing mood in the Gulf states is "a plague on both your houses", this - from the Soviet perspective - is better than the position of Western dominance which has prevailed until now but the Soviet Union seems at a loss to know quite how to turn anti-Western feelings into pro-Soviet ones.

Conclusion

It would be foolish to argue that the Western European Allies can shoulder much of the direct burden of maintaining security in distant areas but they can and perhaps should shoulder some of it. The alternative - simply to look for the holes created by the shift of American emphasis and to try to fill them - implies the pursuit of the second cliché "division of labour" which may prove easier politically but it implies too the total surrender of responsibility to the US for all aspects of security outside NATO. That may be politically unwise.

Moreover there were clear indications in the US Deputy Secretary for Defence's statement at the February 1981 Wehrkunde meeting that the Americans are looking for the Allies to join in this wider definition of Western security. If the move to place the RDF under EUCOM/SACEUR is taken to imply the assignment of the RDF to NATO for tasks outside the currently defined NATO area, this will greatly ease the contingency planning which, as has been argued here, should be an important symbol and practical demonstration of the desire of the Western European Allies to be associated in the larger enterprise.

Adjudging strategic priorities will not prove easy and circumstances may well arise where the decision whether to despatch forces to distant

areas or leave them in Europe will have to be made in the light of assessments of threat made at the time. There is nothing new about that in terms of strategic planning. Throughout history, governments and Alliances have had to determine, in the light of circumstances, where to apply their military resources. What the approach suggested here is intended to convey is the acquisition of rather greater flexibility in the application of resources than is currently possible. If what worries the West today is that the Soviet Union has created new options in distant areas for putting pressure on the West, it would be singularly imprudent for the West to stand pat on combating simply the old options.

There is of course the danger that some members of the Alliance will embrace these ideas too enthusiastically and so seek a way out of current commitments. It is for this reason that the contributions should be modest and imply modest financial burdens rather than give excuse for a major reordering of commitments. In the case, for example, of the United Kingdom, the components exist for the levels suggested here and the cost of some specialized training, together with some enhancement of the capabilities of a Field Force headquarters, should not be excessive.

A more substantial criticism would be that the idea of the ADF would undercut what the West is trying to do in other directions through military assistance - particularly in the Gulf. Much careful diplomatic preparation would be needed to make clear the difference between intervention (with its overtones of unilateral military action to impose a security solution) and assistance (which implies invitation and multilateralism). On the other hand the West, in thinking through these problems, should not be put off by pro forma rhetoric. Only if there were no circumstances in which Western

military deployment would be relevant could we afford to disregard a capability to put together a useful force of modest size, tailored to circumstances.

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