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**THE EUROPEAN SECURITY SYSTEM
BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE**

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An Outline

The fall of the Berlin Wall has been noticeable in various ways:

- 1) it has weakened the Franco-German axis;
- 2) it has become a dangerous test for Gorbachev, who until then had given the sensation of being in control of Eastern European change;
- 3) it has posed fresh questions about the future of the Atlantic Alliance;
- 4) it has generated new doubts among German neighbors, particularly on the East, where Polish drift away from the Soviet Union has been slowed down.

In this way, what had been until then the Soviet question has become also a problem for the West. The gigantic change of the Soviet system has developed into a modification of the international security system.

While the CFE negotiations are going on, unilateral reductions and the withdrawal of a large number of Soviet Forces from Eastern Europe are reversing the traditional European balance of power. At the end of this process, the East will be left with fewer forces in Europe (USSR excluded) than NATO will: around 300.000 men less than NATO, in the Central European Region as defined by the Warsaw Pact.

Theoretically, a unified Germany could be left with the strongest Army in Europe, with more than one million men, thousands of tanks and armored vehicles, thousands of guns, mortars and missiles, more than 800 very modern combat airplanes, etc.

Meanwhile, the US forces in Central Europe will decrease to 195.000 and will probably fall even lower, with the dwindling down of the Soviet threat (80-100.000? None?). Other NATO forces in Germany will probably have to follow suit, given that a "2+4" agreement will progressively devolve the former responsibilities of the Four to the new German state.

Thus, the CFE talks are about completely overtaken by events. The aims defined by negotiations are already bypassed by announced or expected unilateral withdrawal of the Soviets. A CFE treaty might still be useful, nonetheless, in order to make permanent the present changes, guaranteeing that they will be verified and might not be circumvented.

CFE negotiations could also help governments and public opinion in measuring the difference existing between announced or expected changes and the changes that have effectively taken place. We are commonly speaking as if we were already in a new military situation, while changes are coming at a much slower pace, and will usually not be implemented for a number of years: meanwhile a stable military balance will have to be maintained.

Soviet troops might remain in Poland only, even if some Soviet forces might stay in the former GDR territory for some time after the unification, these forces could not possibly have any operational military significance or role. The idea of a neutralized united Germany with a kind of Berlin status (or even the idea of a Eastern Germany with a Berlin status), under the joint military control of the Four Powers is fully inconsistent with the actual scope of the "2+4" negotiations, and does not take into account political and economic realities. No one today can possibly think in terms of new "unequal treaties" to be forced upon Germany. And a "neutral" Germany would be a much more powerful cause of de-stabilization in Europe than a united Germany integrated into the Western system. This simple truth seems to be largely understood also in Moscow, even if domestic political perceptions might confuse and delay somewhat the explicit endorsement of it.

The Atlantic Alliance, therefore, might outlast the end of the Warsaw Pact. Some doubts might be cast, however, on the survival of NATO as a vital military organization.

A new security order is in the making, but its structure and functions are still muddled in the mist generated by the brisk transformations going on. A united Germany will be an essential member of the future Atlantic Alliance, as Federal Germany is an essential member of the present one. Indeed, without Germany no viable NATO is possible in Europe and completely different patterns of alliances will emerge.

The attempt to maintain NATO unchanged, however, seems to conflict with the aim of maintaining the membership of the new united Germany (with its new constraints and priorities). And at the same time, accommodating German requests could end up destroying its military and political coherence.

Some of the positive functions of NATO should be made to survive in any new security order:

- the "stabilizing element" represented by the American presence in Europe (it helps to "balance" intra-European relationships)
- the mechanism of consultation, information, co-decision and reciprocal commitment, between Americans and Europeans
- the power to balance the Soviet military might on the continent
- the moderating effect on arms race, especially where nuclear weapons have been concerned.

The most important function of NATO, however, is the maintenance of a credible, extended and flexible nuclear deterrence. Present European changes are relatively innocuous because they are unfolding in this "solid" framework. The same applies for the Soviet Union: the disintegration of its military empire and of its Eastern European "security belt" is not starting a "roll back" of the other powers over Soviet territories, to grab parts of it, mainly because nuclear deterrence still works.

The difficulty of envisaging the future of Allied deterrence strategy is coupled with the difficulty of assessing the new threat from the East: both general war and more limited attack scenarios are difficult to assess, as they involve a large amount of complex political assumptions and many uncertainties. The number and quality of possible emergencies is expanding (including crisis management scenarios, out of area scenarios, scenarios without Soviet involvement, etc.). A distinction has to be made between threats, that are declining, and risks, that might be increasing and should require careful planning (they might be military only but will more probably stem from a combination of non military factors, also requiring non military options, strategies and means). NATO is not geared politically and institutionally to deal with them.

Nuclear deterrence could evolve as a kind of new mutual deterrence aimed at reassuring both the East and the West that incoming instabilities will not translate into military confrontation and/or adventures. Conversely, a new mutual deterrence could help maintain an essential and limited number of nuclear systems in Europe, thus avoiding a complete de-nuclearization of Germany (a situation that, sooner or later, might be conducive to German nuclear re-armament).

The problem arises, however, of the military means necessary to keep deterrence working. While the USSR will certainly maintain a credible array of nuclear delivery systems, NATO will probably be unable to modernize the LANCE missiles and will therefore be deprived of any surface-to-surface tactical nuclear system (with the possible exception of the French Hadès). Artillery fired atomic projectiles and Atomic demolition mines (AFAP and ADM) will have probably to be eliminated too. NATO's theatre nuclear forces will be reduced to airborne systems only, possibly modernized with TASM-like systems (stand-off, medium range air-to-surface missiles). This evolution might have some serious disadvantages, however:

- it would deprive NATO of equal tactical capabilities with the USSR,

- it would strain the capabilities of combat aircraft, giving them costly dual missions,
- it would be vulnerable to preventive strikes, thus increasing the instability of the nuclear balance,
- it would be open to strong Soviet objections, since the new stand-off missiles would be capable of striking Soviet territory, while tactical land-based missiles, respecting the range-limits established by the Washington INF Treaty, would not.

Some of these objections (but not the last one) could be overcome if all Soviet theatre nuclear forces will be withdrawn from Eastern Europe and/or if the USSR will agree to a "third zero" option, scrapping all its remaining tactical missiles and AFAP.

Conventional defence should be adapted to this ever changing scenario, and to the political, economic and social need to reduce military expenditures. In theory, smaller armed forces, with a higher percentage of long-term voluntary soldiers, putting less emphasis on a large standing and armored Army, favoring new lighter infantry formations, highly mobile, equipped with high technology weapon systems, could be coupled with a strengthening of the Air and Naval branches and increased investments in R&D, as well as in space technologies, electronics, communications, command and control.

Smaller forces and lower defence budgets require greater integration and a deep specialization of roles, investments and operational missions of allied forces: a difficult aim that has always escaped NATO planners in the past.

NATO should remain an essential element of the future security system in Europe (mainly because it will assure the continuity of the American presence in, and commitment to, Western European defence, balancing the USSR). It might be unable to cope with these new tasks and problems, however, if a more stable and responsible Western European defence and security system is not established. Meanwhile, such a system might significantly change the present NATO arrangements.

The Atlantic Alliance and NATO alone cannot bring stability in Europe, under these changing circumstances: they can contribute to it, but in order to do so they will need a secure political basis and a greater European commitment.

The European Council has recognized the existence of Western European "responsibilities" toward the East, and has decided to support and aid the process of economic and political reforms. The Summit of the Seven has given to the EC Commission the task of coordinating western economic assistance toward Hungary and Poland (and this mandate has been later expanded to include also the other Eastern European countries). Meanwhile the EC has concluded an agreement with COMECON, establishing a direct relationship with it: a policy endorsed again by the Eastern Organization during its January Summit.

Bilaterally, the EC has initiated trade and economic cooperation agreements with the USSR, Yugoslavia, Poland and Hungary, and is negotiating similar arrangements with Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Rumania. A "quadrilateral" initiative (later expanded to Czechoslovakia) has been taken by Italy, Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia, to help sub-regional economic cooperation between East and West.

While the "2+4" can negotiate the general framework of German unity, de facto, the EC (and the Atlantic) allies will have to be called in, sooner or later, to implement the preferred solution. This reality has probably been understood by Bonn, and explains why, after Ottawa, the Federal Government has taken a much more open attitude toward the EC.

The Bush administration has been so far openly supporting (possibly more than any other administration since Eisenhower's endorsement of the EDC) integration of the Twelve - economic (with the caveat of Fortress Europe now somewhat going in the backstage) **and** political. Baker's proposals for strengthening, possibly institutionalizing EC-US relations are a substantial follow-up of Kennedy's partnership idea. The new understanding, reached in Washington last February, to hold two Summit meetings each year between the US and the EC Presidency and Commission, might be the first practical implementation achievement of the Baker proposal.

Future structures of European Security might include a number of multilateral, East-West, reassurances and guarantees as well as some kind of regional superstructure built upon the CSCE framework. However, none of these should be taken for granted or be considered as practical alternatives to the present alliances. On the contrary, a stable framework of an overall european security can only be based on the interlocking number of security arrangements and sub-regional alliances aimed at avoiding the reconstitution of a system of unrestricted national sovereignties trying to balance each other on their national terms and means.

A key factor in determining the shape of the new security system to come will, therefore, be the future of Western European security cooperation and integration (in the WEU, in the EC, in a new EDC or in any other conceivable form).

Any new security system, however, will have to be based on a more sound economic and political basis: that is, it will have to deal with the problems of the newly liberated Eastern European countries.

As we noted previously, this responsibility will fall mainly on Western European shoulders: the present arrangement giving to the EC Commission overall coordinating responsibilities for the granting of economic aid to these countries is, therefore, a sound one and could be a starting point for even larger responsibilities.

As of today, East European countries do not have a clear security concept spelled out. Their debate is oscillating among old fears, new hopes and the survival of confused conceptions of national autonomy and neutralism. While Poland is mainly worried by the re-birth of Germany, Czechoslovakia favors the departure of both the US and the USSR troops from Europe and Hungary is declaring a kind of "tous azimuts" defence posture.

Western Europe is mainly concerned that the Eastern political evolutions do not upset European security and stability as a whole. Eastern Europe, on the contrary, seems to be more interested that security priorities do not hinder its political and economic revolution.

A possibility will be for the Soviets to try to play the perception of a German danger in order to salvage some of their old sphere of influence. They will have also the opposite opportunity, however, of trying to establish better direct relationships with the Germans in an attempt to come back to a more traditional power politics game.

It has to be stressed, therefore, the need for recognizing some guiding principles such as: the refusal of unitary East-West security systems, institutional hierarchies or primacies between countries or security regimes, the freedom to organize self-defence (multilaterally) and the refusal of going back to the older system of unrestricted national sovereignty.

The West should define the model for the East. Full recognition should be given, however, to the economic and social problems stemming from the process of liberation from communism.

In Central Europe, for more than forty years, the confrontation between East and West has effectively removed from the political picture intra-European national conflicts. No such result has been achieved in the Mediterranean, where borders between the two "blocs" are muddled and dubious and alliances frail and changeable. A "balance of mutual impotence" has been created, failing to impose long-lasting order and stability on this area.

In Nato terms, moreover large part of the Mediterranean is "out of area". For many years, Americans and Europeans remained at odds on the problem of out of area commitments, with the US trying not to be obliged to support the dwindling European colonial empires. No common strategy was conceived, therefore, that could be dealt with through the common machinery of the Atlantic Alliance. The issue was already present in the 1967 Harmel report: "Crises and conflicts arising outside the area may impair its (NATO) security either directly or by affecting the global balance. Allied countries contribute individually within the United Nations and other international organizations to the maintenance of international peace and security, and to the solution of important international problems. In accordance with established usage the Allies, or those of them who wish to do so, will also continue to consult on such problems without commitment and as the case demands."

This formula has been repeated at length in the final communique]s of the subsequent North Atlantic Council meetings.

The most important factor influencing the security perceptions of the Mediterranean countries, therefore, is the search for coherence between the strategic aims of the major external powers and the local interests and policies.

The main problem for the Southern European members of the Alliance is understanding the scope of the "vital interests" guaranteed by the Alliance. This term has a direct bearing on the extension of American nuclear deterrence. According to the traditional behavior of the Alliance, Central European interests have been considered somewhat more "vital" than the Southern European and Mediterranean ones. It is also true, however, that, at least in principle, the Southern European allies are equally "vital": this is the key pillar of extended deterrence for the Southern Region.

Out-of-area interests are more "opinionable" than "vital", however. A policy of greater involvement in overseas contingencies, resulting in a de facto linking the Southern Region of Nato and out-of-area crisis management - even for simple reasons of geographic proximity - will inevitably blur the strategic assessment of what is "vital" and what is "opinable", diminishing the strategic importance of present distinctions.

Thus, NATO will have to deal with the setting up of many strategies "à la carte" without losing its political and military coherence. Differing perceptions and alternate priorities of arms procurement will grow, straining NATO internal consensus and efficiency.

Southern European perceptions of the threat are equally out of line with the main thrust of the Atlantic Alliance. The Spanish attention to the threat from the South, or the Greek concentration on the Turkish threat, are just two of the many anomalies. Each Southern European country has its own view of the Mediterranean and of its military needs.

Portugal, while firmly integrated with the Atlantic strategic theatre, has a somewhat residual role for the ground defence of North Eastern Italy.

Spain, much less integrated in the Allied structure and planning, is effectively reducing its utility as American bridgehead in the South, and has up to now maintained its traditional strategic "isolation" from the European theatres.

France, apart from being a central European power of its own right, is possibly the strongest Mediterranean military power, after the US, but its military and strategic commitment in the area is apparently aimed mainly at establishing a kind of "Western Mediterranean" sanctuary, in line with the traditional appreciation of the Mediterranean as a "flank".

Italy is torn between conflicting interests and perceptions. It has a dual role, European and Mediterranean: its North Eastern border would be part of a Central European confrontation between East and West, while its Central Mediterranean location exposes the country to completely different threats and strategic requirements.

While Greece fears Turkey more than the Warsaw Pact, the latter is also part of the Middle Eastern strategic theatre and, sharing a common border and a Sea with the USSR, is probably the most exposed country of the Mediterranean and the less covered by an absolute Allied guarantee.

The Southern Region and the Mediterranean, therefore, are deeply concerned by the future evolution of the European Security system.

Italy's interest in developing a common Western European approach is boosted by the risk of being marginalized and or cut from the main European scene. The same is true for the other Southern European countries.

Should a fragmented scenario take place, these countries will fluctuate between their strong political preferences toward the West (France, UK) and their economic and geo-strategic ties with Central Europe. Should Germany become a new international reality by itself, separated from the European integration process, the Southern European countries will probably be divided between a pro-German and pro-French party. With one great exception: their dependence from a bilateral alliance with the US will probably increase.

A case in point is the idea, apparently quite fashionable today, of a "diversionary" or "compensatory" role of the Southern Flank, while the Center is reducing military forces. Given the political changes occurring in Central Europe, and considering, moreover, the greater risks connected with any war on the Central Front, could we assume that Nato would be willing or capable to reciprocate?

The perception of being drafted for fighting a distant war without fair reciprocity from the Allies, is certainly feeding the existing "neutralist" tendencies in some Southern European countries. All the more so, if the out of area crises are taken into account: the utilization of the Mediterranean bases and communication lanes by the United States, without prior consultation and agreement, increases the probability of irresponsible behavior from the Southern Allies.

All the Southern European countries hold a bias in favor of Europe, at least in principle. "Isolation" from the mainstream of European politics has always been a major problem, for all these countries. Democratic regimes, in all these countries, have played repeatedly the "European card" for strengthening themselves. In the case of Greece and Spain (and in the case of the Italian Communist Party), a greater European defence cooperation is seen as a way out from the present "unequal relationship" with the US and a more acceptable justification for increasing their commitment to common defense. Europe is at the same time the main aim and the main trouble of the Turkish foreign policy, torn between its willingness to join the EC and the WEU and its nationalistic reaction against the present European rejection of the Turkish yearning.

Southern expectations and perceptions are not necessarily shared by the other Europeans. Could a "European pillar" be more oriented toward the South than the present Nato system? Presently after all the US is the only non-Mediterranean Nato ally effectively engaged in the Mediterranean, with considerable military forces. A recent decision of West Germany to send some naval forces in the Mediterranean, to help Nato to close the gap created by the American, French and Italian naval engagement in the Gulf, is a step in the good direction. In military terms, however, no real alternative exists to the permanence of the US present commitment for the defence of the Eastern Mediterranean allies and for the maintenance of an acceptable balance of Air Forces.

No European pillar, therefore, could make without the US, in the South as well as in the entire Nato area. The European pillar, however, could be useful for at least two other reasons.

The first is a political one. The main problem of the Southern Flank is its perception of isolation and lack of a clear international "identity". A greater European integration could supply both (even if it could have some contrary effect on Turkey if appropriate compensatory steps are not taken).

The second is a strategic one. The importance and danger of the crises developing out of the Nato area is growing rapidly. Western Europe cannot ignore the requirements of world order, and European countries are increasingly asked to share the burden of managing overseas crises. Both the Western European Union (to be enlarged soon to Spain and Portugal) and the EC machinery have been already involved with out of area problems of various nature. A greater European coordination would make sense and would certainly help to establish a more balanced relationship between the American way of dealing with out of area crises and the European interests and priorities. Such a coordination, moreover, could ease some of the problems experienced by the Southern European countries, increasing the Allied solidarity in the Mediterranean while allowing for a differentiated (but still consensual) approach.

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