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EC/WEU, NATO, CSCE AND SECURITY IN EASTERN EUROPE

by Marco Carnovale

ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI

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Premise

After the end of the Cold War, security of Eastern Europe is a necessary (though not sufficient) *conditio sine qua non* for the security of Western Europe. This is not entirely new. Already during Cold War the West recognized that its security was contingent upon that of the other half of Europe (of course, as perceived by Moscow). This resulted in some degree of hypocrisy on the part of the West. For example, the USSR got its first bout of détente and the start of CSCE negotiations right after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Today, there is complementarity in place of hostility in new East-West relations, but Europe is far from "whole and free". It is fragmented and, far from being free, many parts of it are at or near war. Paradoxically, after the virtual disappearance of the military threat from the East, security is an ever rarer commodity in Eastern Europe.

The situation is different today, but the security interdependence between newly independent Eastern Europe and Western Europe continues to exist. In fact, it can be argued that this interdependence has even increased, because some political leaders of the East are less predictable than their communist predecessors, and some among them are not as interested in the status-quo as their communist predecessors.

Under these circumstances, the risks to Western security that are coming from the East today can be categorized into four groups. First, there is a danger that local conflicts may lead to region-wide conflagration. This is the case, most seriously, in the Balkans, but to a lesser extent also in the Caucasus.

Second, these conflicts, and the destruction and disorder that they carry along, may provide ammunition to ultra-conservatives and/or nostalgic power groups, and thus provoke a backfiring of authoritarianism. This may not be of a communist character, but it may be ultra-nationalistic and perhaps involve the armed forces.

Third, Western Europe may become the target of terrorism, as frustrated extremist groups may seek to attract international attention to this or that ethnic or territorial cause.

Finally, and most seriously, Eastern European conflicts come at a time of delicate transition in the foreign policy relations among Western nations. Cleavages in the East have already provoked diverging attitudes in the West, and may result in a weakening of Western cohesion.

Western Options

The West has three instruments for the creation of security conditions in the East: wealth, technology and institutions. Wealth is the least useful one. It can only provide emergency relief, but can not provide stability and hence security in the medium-long term. Reforms and time are necessary for this, and too much aid can even be counterproductive if it allows for artificial life-support to be administered to inefficient economic mechanisms. Of course, Western

wealth can not buy military security, since all Eastern countries must, on the contrary, reduce their military commitments.

Advanced technology is more useful for security because it helps create an indispensable basis for long-term efficiency and thus social stability. But it, too, does nothing to alleviate immediate political security problems.

Institutions remain therefore the only instrument to prevent and perhaps repress European conflicts before they spread too widely. This paper will sketch what three of these institutions (the EC and the WEU, which for the purposes of this paper are considered together; the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) could contribute toward continental security.

Institutions are important also because they should help avoid a re-nationalization of Western security policies toward the East. This is an issue of the utmost importance in intra-western affairs, since the East by and large has shown to be more than eager to accept increasing German influence as long as it is backed up by sufficient amounts of D-Marks.

There are four ways in which the three European institutions dealt with in this paper can provide military security to the East: First, they can provide the political confidence and reassurance that may help diffuse conflicts among the newly independent (or newly born) states. Second, they may provide for peace-keeping or peace-making operations. Third, they may help in the process of military restructuring toward a more defensive mode, which is necessary both to reduce spending commitments in many beleaguered economies and to avoid provocation. Fourth, they may extend security guarantees to threatened nations. The following paragraphs analyze how each institution can undertake these tasks.

Potential Role for European Institutions in the Security of Eastern Europe			
	EC/WEU	NATO	CSCE
<i>Political reassurance</i>	weak	some	strong
<i>Peace-keeping</i>	none	some	strong
<i>Restructuring of armed forces</i>	none	strong	none
<i>Security guarantees</i>	none	weak	promising
On a scale of: Weak, Some, Promising, Strong			

The Community and the WEU

As of 1992, the EC is not equipped to provide security to the East. It may provide some degree of political reassurance, but certainly it does not have the tools for any military-related task. This may change in the future with the realization of a common security policy and a then of a common defense, but the time frame is far longer than is necessary. For the next several crucial years, most instruments of security policy will remain in the hands of national governments, while the Common Security and Foreign Policy continues, hopefully, to overcome national and bureaucratic hurdles. The Western European Union (WEU) is set to become the military system of the community.

In any case, even when such a common policy will exist, caution will be imperative, because for the Community to provide security would probably mean to grant accession: "extended deterrence" by the Community or the WEU is definitely not in the cards.

There are two other reasons to be skeptical about the EC/WEU role in providing security to the East, particularly if the employment of armed forces should be required to respond to crises. First, they often would not be perceived as exactly neutral. Second, as was clear during the last few months in the former Yugoslavia, some West Europeans (Germans first of all, but Italians as well) are still remembered as the invaders of WW II and therefore their armed forces would not be welcome.

These issues may present Bruxelles decision-makers with tricky and embarrassing decisions to make, should one EC/WEU country be deemed politically acceptable for intervention in a certain crisis, while others would not.

NATO

Eastern Europe, including most former Soviet republics, is asking to join NATO to the deepest extent possible. On the one hand, this testifies to the success of NATO. On the other hand, it is a symptom of a widespread illusion that this success would be easily replicated by simply bringing in new members. That is far from being the case.

This request must be rejected. First of all, it would be economically expensive, and therefore NATO members would not be likely to accept it. Public opinions are not sensitive enough to support such a move at a time of reduced threat perceptions and declining defense budgets.

More importantly, it might be difficult to establish whom to accept into the Alliance: in other words who would be defended against whose threat? If this were a way for Central and East Europeans to gain a military security guarantee, this would signify a perpetuation of the logic of the two blocs. Some advocated this also in the West, particularly during and immediately after the failed August coup in Moscow, but such a stand does not seem to fit into the current status of political relations with the successor state of the USSR.

One could argue that the logic of the blocs is perpetuated by maintaining one the two blocs as a self-contained exclusive entity separated from the now no longer antagonistic remnants of the other bloc. A more cogent argument is that the logic of the blocs would be perpetuated by trying to artificially extend one bloc against another that no longer exists.

Besides, NATO could not and would not wage war against Russia to save Eastern Europe more than it would have during the Cold War. Russia remains a nuclear state, and for NATO's nuclear powers to provide "extended deterrence" to the East would hardly be credible; it would be more likely a *bluff*. Let us not forget that even Western Europeans have had this problem of credibility of extended deterrence for forty years; for the new democracies of the East the problem would be much worse.

A second possibility is that NATO should accept all East Europeans, Russian included. The question then would be who to guarantee against whom. If one wanted to guarantee everybody against everybody else, this would probably be a recipe for disaster. It is easy to imagine rather difficult dilemmas emerging from any number of crisis situations. It is also easy to see how false expectations could be created and these could blow on the fire of the nationalist ambitions that were repressed by forty-five years of communism and are now rekindling wildly.

In that context, NATO might play a moderating role similar to that played between Greece and Turkey, but that bilateral confrontation was easier to deal with than the multilateral situations of Eastern Europe would be. Moreover, the preponderant role of the US in the Greek-Turkish relationship would not be there in Eastern Europe.

As the opinion has become more common that NATO should acquire a somewhat more "political" character, the organization created the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). But NATO has always been a primarily political organization, and to expand it as has been done may dilute its effectiveness. The creation of NACC was probably a mistake. First, NACC duplicates the confidence-building role of the CSCE. In fact, the exclusion of neutral and non-aligned states makes it less credible than the CSCE for that purpose. Second, NACC is bound to fuel the already existing expectations for full membership. As this is not likely to happen soon, it will create even more frustration. On the other hand, as I have argued above, it would not be desirable that an enlargement of NATO actually take place.

One area where NATO might indeed be useful is in providing military expertise to those nations wishing to restructure their armed forces toward a more defensive model, both to reduce the defense burden and to avoid friction with neighbor states.

CSCE

From a political point of view, the CSCE is potentially the best equipped institution to provide security for Eastern Europe, particularly should some kind of security guarantees be needed by weaker nations. Of course, so far it does not have the necessary instruments, either military or others. The Vienna-based Center for the Prevention of Conflicts (CPC) is woefully unprepared to deal with the fermenting European problems, as it is understaffed and underbudgeted. It should be strengthened. It would not be fair to suggest that it has failed in the Yugoslav crisis: it simply never had a chance.

The CSCE should also be able to avail itself of armed forces, even if it could not run an army of its own. NATO could provide the necessary infrastructure and logistical base, as has been offered recently. It would not have to provide troops, for the reasons that would apply to NATO. It would not be advisable, for example, to send German troops into the former USSR. But non-NATO troops could be employed and be supported by the NATO infrastructure, early warning systems, etc.

The growing membership in CSCE dilutes the effectiveness of the decision-making process. The consensus rule is less and less adequate. There is a need to move to majority rule, at least some kinds of decision, among which perhaps there could be the dispatch of peace-keeping forces to troubled areas.

Some have proposed the creation of a CSCE Security Council, and to allow it to take operational decisions without waiting all other member states to agree, and if necessary against one of them.

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