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CONFLICT RESOLUTION
IN THE NEW EUROPE

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"The participating States will settle disputes among themselves by peaceful means in such a manner as not to endanger international peace and security and justice." -- The Helsinki Final Act 1975 --

"The great questions of the day will not be decided by speeches and the resolutions of majorities -- that was the great mistake from 1848 to 1849 -- but by iron and blood." -- Otto von Bismarck 1862 --

ISSUE DEFINITION

What diplomatic mechanisms for conflict resolution should be adopted in Europe, and what role should the U.S. play in light of the revolutionary changes occurring there?

BACKGROUND

Conflict Resolution during the Cold War

With the exception of the Cyprus crisis in the mid-1970's and the internecine conflicts within Soviet bloc in the 1950's and 1960's, Europe has been at peace since 1945. This unprecedented period of European peace occurred for the following reasons:

- o Potential conflicts in Eastern Europe were suppressed by the Soviets;
- o Longstanding animosities in the West were resolved through Western integration, and Western attention focused on the threat of Soviet expansionism;
- o Soviet expansionism was deterred by NATO strategy;
- o Tensions were reduced through East-West negotiating mechanisms, including the Four Power Agreement on Berlin, MBFR, U.S-USSR negotiations, and German Ostpolitik.

The Revolution of 1989

Europe is again facing Bismarck's "great questions." The strategic retreat of the Soviet Union from Eastern Europe, combined with the ideological shift there, has reopened a number of possible causes of conflict in Europe, not the least of which will be a reunified Germany. It is now possible that the most likely causes of conflict in Europe into the next century will not be a Soviet attack on the West, but rather, long suppressed regional disputes, failures of the balance of power, or ethnic rivalries.

The issue before European leaders is whether Europe can resolve such questions without resort to "iron and blood." Within the last few months, for example, we have seen the French offer to introduce "volunteers" into Rumania; the U.S. Secretary of State advocate the use of Soviet troops in that same conflict; and, according to press reports,¹ Greece and Bulgaria -- members of opposing alliances -- are discussing military cooperation against Greece's putative ally, Turkey.

U.S. Interests

The U.S. is a European power with a vital interest in the European balance of power. This has been amply demonstrated by virtue of its decisive participation in last two European wars, its successful forty year effort to prevent Soviet domination of Western Europe, its economic interdependence with the European economy, and its shared commitment to

democratic values and national self-determination. U.S. interests and objectives in Europe are as follows:

- 1) prevention of another failure of the European balance of power leading to a third European conflict this century;
- 2) continuation of the process of democratization and self-determination in Eastern and Central Europe;
- 3) a continued role for the U.S. in the political and economic councils of Europe after economic integration in 1992.

OPTIONS:

Three broad approaches to the problem of conflict resolution suggest themselves: 1) preservation of existing East-West mechanisms; 2) a unilateralist approach; and 3) creation of new bodies to resolve conflicts.

Blocs and Superpowers

Under the first option, the U.S. would support the retention of NATO as the principal mechanism for negotiation and conflict resolution. A reunified Germany would maintain its NATO membership, although some means would have to be found to reassure Germany's eastern neighbors and the USSR that NATO would not convert the new German state into a strategic threat. The principal objective of NATO would be to negotiate a controlled disengagement from the cold war through the CFE process. The Soviet retreat from Eastern Europe would continue but in a controlled manner. Proponents of this view² consider a violent Soviet reaction to recent events in Central Europe, or a sudden reversal of internal political conditions in Moscow to be the most likely cause of conflict. The announced meetings of the four World War II allies plus the

Germanies to outline a peace treaty to end that conflict would fit into this approach.

Other potential sources of conflict would be reduced since the reunified Germany would remain constrained by its integration with the West and the continued extension of U.S. nuclear deterrence to the continent. This would obviate the need for Germany to pursue destabilizing rearmament efforts in the future. This view seems to presume the alliances and the great powers can suppress or control regional/ethnic conflicts. The Bush administration would strongly advocate this option.³

Critics of this option⁴ note that it is rapidly being swamped by the revolutionary tide in Europe. President Bush barely managed to update his U.S. troop reduction proposal for the CFE talks before it was completely overtaken by events. Eastern European nations criticized the U.S. for crafting a negotiating position that legitimized the presence of Soviet troops on their soil which were no longer welcome. Further, it is not clear whether NATO can survive the demise of the threat of a Soviet invasion for which the alliance has prepared for so long. In the absence of a clear threat or military mission, domestic political pressures are building throughout the alliance for significant, immediate reductions of troops. Moreover, the proposal does little to deal with non-East/West conflicts.

Unilateralism

Proponents of this option⁵ argue that events in Europe are moving rapidly in a direction favorable to the West. In particular, left to itself, the Soviet withdrawal from Central and Eastern Europe is irreversible and irresistible. They maintain the U.S. should permit a reunified Germany, which could be nominally neutral, and the new Eastern democracies to press for a complete and rapid unilateral withdrawal of all Soviet military forces located West of the USSR's borders. The Soviet military threat to the West would be reduced beyond recognition, while the U.S. may be able to maintain its military presence in Europe at some reduced level. Since the only sustainable number of Soviet troops in Europe will be zero, proponents argue, linking troop withdrawals to negotiations will result only in the U.S. being forced to negotiate its own exit -- at least from Central Europe -- against the desires of its allies in order to remove the Soviets.

Advocates of this approach view continued emphasis on NATO to be American "nostalgia" for its cold war leadership role. Arms control, they argue, is actually retarding the Soviet retreat. Inherent in this view is the assumption that the Europeans can manage their own disputes more-or-less on an ad hoc basis. They note that, once the potential for East-West conflict is reduced by Soviet withdrawal, other national or ethnic conflicts in Europe are of little national

security concern to the U.S. The EC would serve as the political core of Europe.⁶ The EC political consultation process, along with bilateral contacts, would suffice to deal with other conflicts. A neutral Germany would still be integrated into the West through the EC. Most proponents would argue, however, that the inspection and verification provisions of CFE do have value.

The negative aspects of this approach could include the following: Unilateral actions can be unverified and easily reversible, if conditions in Europe change. Unilateralism will cut both ways. U.S. and other allied governments may match Soviet withdrawals in an uncoordinated manner without any particular strategic rationale. This is already occurring with allied troops in Germany. Unilateralism may also substitute a chaotic Europe for a bipolar one. While the U.S., the Soviets, and the Western Europeans may seize the moment to reduce their forces, less restrained elements in the East and South may decide to take the opportunity of super power withdrawal to cut the throats of their ethnic or national rivals following Azerbaijan's example.

Modified Helsinki

The Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) is the sole body consciously crafted to operate throughout the European continent and to include the U.S. and Canada.⁷ CSCE could function as the nucleus of a new Concert of Europe, like the European-wide alliance that kept the peace

after 1815. Mechanisms could be crafted to provide for peacekeeping and for a permanent body to administer the CSCE process.⁸ Blocs such as NATO, the EC, neutral and regional groupings could operate as informal caucuses within the CSCE process as they have in the past.

Everyone in Europe appears to be supporting some version of this option. The Soviets cite the requirements of the Helsinki final act to justify a cautious policy on German reunification; the French consider CSCE the only concrete proof of European unity and are pressing for an early second Helsinki summit of 35 CSCE nations to discuss changes in the European situation.⁹ It appears CSCE will be utilized to approve a treaty to end World War II.

The CSCE process offers great advantages for conflict resolution in the new Europe. The negotiators of the Final Act consciously addressed the major issues now at the top of the international agenda including: a breakdown in the division of Europe, a formal end to World War II, German reunification, East-West economic cooperation, human rights and self-determination.¹⁰ The Final Act provides for peaceful changes of borders (German reunification), national and ethnic rights, and places restrictions on outside interference in domestic political changes. A CSCE summit provides an excellent forum for developing consensus on major European security issues, since it includes both blocs and European neutrals. The conference could function as a conflict

discussion body much as ASEAN has in order to defuse some Southeast Asian border disputes. The CSCE process successfully negotiated military confidence and security building measures in 1986. Expert groups on third party arbitration of interstate conflicts have also met. Given its commitment to peaceful change, self-determination, and minority rights, the body would be well placed politically to step between feuding nationalities and ethnic groups.

On the other side of the issue, the U.S. has never been particularly enamored of the CSCE process, except as a bully-pulpit to press the East on human rights. The U.S. has opposed past efforts to place East-West arms control directly in the CSCE environment. Efforts to strengthen the CSCE with a permanent body have been viewed by the U.S. as covert efforts to emasculate NATO. Further, the CSCE operates on the basis of consensus, which cannot be expected on future disputes. Thus, the body -- despite its moral force -- lacks at this point any means to bring power to bear on conflicts.

CONCLUSION

No single model will meet the needs for conflict resolution in Europe.¹¹ However, it would be unrealistic for the U.S. to cling to a security structure crafted for a divided and militarized Europe in a much altered environment. A mechanism to deal with new sources of conflict not linked to East-West issues is vital if the democratizing trend in Eastern Europe is to be preserved. A revised CSCE with a

permanent body to manage negotiations and peacekeeping appears to be a good candidate for this role. On the other hand, existing security structures should not be discarded without consideration of the long-term impact of such a step. The risk of unilateralism at this time could be future European chaos. Policymakers will, no doubt, soon conclude that NATO's existing structure and strategy will not serve the diplomatic needs of the new Europe, but they should also consider carefully whether it cannot still serve as a mechanism bring coordinated Western power and influence to bear on European conflicts while it yields a number of political functions to the CSCE and EC.

As the famed diplomatic historian A.J.P. Taylor noted years ago, it is a sad fact of European history that Bismarck has been right: the great questions of Europe -- from the question German power to Soviet expansion -- have been resolved through iron and blood.¹² It would, therefore, behoove us to provide the new Europe with structures that both accept the sad realities of the European past and provide it with more humane mechanisms for the future.

FOOTNOTES

¹ "Greece and Bulgaria Plan Anti-Turkey Strategies," New York Times, February 7, 1990, p. A9.

² See for example, Steele, Ronald, "NATO's Last Mission," Foreign Policy, No. 76 Fall 1989, pp. 83-95. Layne, Christopher, "Superpower Disengagement," Foreign Policy No. 77 Winter 1990, pp. 17-40. Kissinger, Henry, "Delay is the Most Dangerous Course," Washington Post, February 8, 1990.

- ³ See Secretary of State James Baker's December 12, 1989 speech at the Berlin Press Club (reprinted in December 13, 1989 New York Times); see also President Bush's press conference on December 4, 1989 in Brussels (reprinted in December 5, 1989 New York Times); and Eagleburger, Lawrence S., "Uncharted Waters", Foreign Service Journal, December 1989, pp. 38-42.
- ⁴ See Will, George Op Ed column, The Washington Post, February 7, 1990. Krauthammer, Charles, "Declare Victory in Vienna (and Then Go to the Opera)," The Washington Post, February 9, 1990.
- ⁵ Ibid. See also Schlesinger, James R., "Cut U.S. Forces in Europe -- Now," The Washington Post, February 4, 1990. Mueller, John "A New Concert of Europe," Foreign Policy No. 77 Winter 1990, pp. 3-16.
- ⁶ Hormats, Robert D., "Redefining Europe and the Atlantic Link," Foreign Affairs Fall 1989 pp. 71-91, pp 80-81.
- ⁷ Department of State, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Final Act Helsinki 1975. Maresca, John, To Helsinki, Duke University Press: 1985, pp. 3-26.
- ⁸ One intriguing possibility would be to convert the upcoming "four plus Germany[ies]" meeting, supplemented by participation by the EC Commission and chaired by a major neutral into a "directory" for the CSCE. This body, which would include the region's four nuclear weapon states plus its largest non-nuclear weapon state, could serve somewhat like a security council. See "Steps to German Unity: Bonn as a Power", New York Times February 16, 1990.
- ⁹ A CSCE follow-up meeting at the head of state level is currently scheduled for 1992. Recently, the U.S. has fallen off its resistance to a 1990 two or three day "preparatory" meeting at the head of state level as long as it is not a substitute for the 1992 summit, a CFE meeting is ready for signing, and the full range of CSCE issues is discussed and not just the German question. (Interview with Department of State desk officer for CSCE issues.)
- ¹⁰ Maresca, pp. 7, 26, 80.
- ¹¹ George Kennan expressed this view far more eloquently in "This is no Time for Talk of German Reunification," The Washington Post December 5, 1989.
- ¹² Taylor, A.J.P., Bismarck, the Man and the Statesman, Vintage Books, New York: 1967, pp. 56-7.