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A BRIEF HISTORY OF (CENTRAL EUROPEAN) TIME**

A "Cosmic" View of the Emerging Atlantic Security Environment and a Proposed "Face Lift" for
US/NATO Flexible Response Strategy

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[** With apologies to Stephen W. Hawking (author of A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes), Einstein, and serious astrophysicists, cosmologists, and historians everywhere.]

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INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT/HISTORICAL SETTING: The concept hit me like a thunderbolt! I had been mulling over a recent guest speaker's "literary" characterization of world events based on oceanographic analogies (i.e., "the tides and currents" of political change), wondering if would-be strategists, like fishermen, should consult their solunar tables before wading into murky political waters. Other conceptual models for visualizing international politics were available for use in the upcoming strategy paper. For example, Marxists and other "historical Darwinists subscribe to "natural selection" and/or "scientific historical law" as the ultimate determinant of international politics. These dogmatic approaches are no handier than the solunar tables, since recent events in Europe do not fit neatly onto a steady "evolutionary ladder," nor do they reflect the "ever-oscillating but always-ascending" pattern of dialectical materialism. Other conceptual devices to render international relations more fathomable include "balance of power" (ballast management) approaches; chess analogies/game theories; abnormal psychology and racial stereotyping; and (usually apocalyptic) religious allegories [after having been "mocked and scourged" by a previous Faculty Seminar Leader for dabbling with the "moralistic" approach, I wasn't anxious to press that particular edge of the academic freedom envelope in my final written requirement]. Thus, my predicament was that I had access to an exceptionally lucid, comprehensive, coherent, and practical framework for analyzing military strategy (pp. 7-9 of syllabus), but there were few reliable, "intellectually gripping" models (telescopes or microscopes) through which to make sense of the discontinuous fits and starts of current events in Europe, nor plot their future trajectories, at least, not using Newtonian mechanics.

That is when "the apple" from the rafters of Arnold Auditorium hit me on the head, so to speak. Instead of futilely attempting to describe the profound political forces which are reshaping Europe in the obfuscatory jargon of professional/professing political scientists, why not relate the process in simple terms more easily understood by laymen--i.e., by using the basic concepts of nuclear physics and modern cosmology? Then, having established a frame of reference for grappling with the changes which are sweeping Europe, it would be much easier to "plug and chug" through the algorithm of the "Framework for Military Strategy

(Elaborated Version)." The introductory chapter of the new Principia Strategica might read as follows:

In many respects, the behavior of states and nations is similar to the behavior of nuclear particles and the aggregations of these particles into successively larger and more complex structures, ranging from atoms to the universe as a whole. Often the "mild interactions" during peacetime of large objects (i.e., NATO, the Warsaw Pact, the US, the Soviet Union) belie the tremendous energies bound up in their constituent subatomic particles (e.g., various national/ethnic subgroups which lie within, across, or outside national boundaries. Many of the characteristics of "modern" Europe were forged very rapidly in a "singularity" event of intense heat and light--a Big Bang represented by World War II. Residual forces, for example, Soviet military power, have helped to hold the European political constellation in place during the ensuing 45 years. Like gravity, Soviet force affected political events on a global scale. Opposing power from the US and its regional alliances tended to nullify the "gravitational pull" of the "Red Giant." However, as the Soviet Union has consumed its economic and ideological sustaining fuel, it has begun a period of gravitational collapse and may ultimately collapse to a "White Dwarf." Over the longer term, that collapse could stabilize; or, an international "supernova" could occur which would consume nearby bodies and engulf some nations lying beyond the orbits of its former East European satellites.

Some observers have been so enraptured by this "macro" cosmic event that important "micro" effects have been slighted during the rush to formulate a "new" US military strategy. At the "atomic" level, there are other nuclear forces which are typically exerted only over short ("local") distances, but whose intensities can be many times those of the "global" gravitational and electrostatic forces which affect the superpowers' peacetime interactions. For example, there are "heavy elements" among the current international system which are inherently unstable. Several of the "artificial" Balkan nations are prone to natural decay and exhibit relatively short "half-lives" (until, in the "astrophysical alchemy" of cataclysmic "supernova" events such as world wars, they are rearranged into new unstable

compounds). The explosive breakup of these states can release lethal "fission" energy. US, Allied, and Soviet military influence has often acted as a "moderating" element to prevent uncontrollable chain reactions in these situations. In essence, a US military presence acts as a "cadmium rod" to keep reactions in these regions from "going critical."

In addition to European instabilities caused by centrifugal "fission" tendencies, there exists the possibility of uncontrolled explosions due to centripetal "fusion" effects. The "binding forces" between various Eurasian peoples (the Germans, Romanians, Hungarians, Albanians, Armenians, and divers Muslim groups come to mind) can produce very exciting "high energy physics." [A nice feature of nucleonic terminology is that affectatious expressions such as "revanchism" and "irredentism" can be avoided.] With the attenuation of Soviet power in Central Europe, it will be increasingly important for the US/NATO to moderate the fusion process to prevent its rate from "going exponential." And, as in the case of H-bombs, nearby fission explosions can provide the impetus/trigger for catastrophic fusion events.

Having identified "fission" and "fusion" tendencies as the two principal, potential threats to regional and/or global peace and US interests in Europe, let's look at one final analogy drawn from physics--namely, "EC 92" and the Second Law of Thermodynamics. This law states that systems naturally tend toward states of greater, uniform disorder. For example, a liter of helium atoms released in Arnold Auditorium would tend to disperse evenly throughout the room rather than spontaneously gather in a tight cloud near the speaker's podium. A millennium of European history suggests that, aside from local cohesive effects along ethnic/national lines, there is no strong, endogenous, attractive force which has been sufficient to draw this nebulous array of stars, dust, and gas together. Rather, outside military and/or economic pressures have been the exogenous forces which have caused European institutions to congeal. Ultimately, centrifugal forces seem to prevail whenever outside political, military, and/or economic pressures have subsided. In short, EC 92 is not necessarily the spectral threat to US interests as often portrayed. Dangerous instabilities at the "micro" (national) level should be our main concerns as the steadying influence of Soviet power attenuates.

POLITICAL OBJECTIVES: Due to the limitations of Space and Time, we must leave our "thought experiment/political visual aid" and turn to the matter of US political objectives in Europe. With respect to the Soviets' intentions and capabilities (and Western vulnerabilities), insufficient time has elapsed to verify or take advantage of substantial changes in the latter two categories. The basic equation for the balance of East-West power has not yet dramatically shifted in terms of current capabilities. The first derivative of the current capability equation yields the coefficient of change, i.e., the future trajectory of Soviet power. The second derivative of the basic equation is the "rate" of change (in this case, a "deceleration" is taking place). The danger of the current wave of "Gorbaphelia" is that some US policy-makers will place undue emphasis on today's "instantaneous rate of change" while ignoring the underlying power base which drives the process, and ignoring the Soviets' planned "power curve" which will level off and turn upward over the mid- and long-term.

It is too soon for the US to abandon the basic political tenets embodied in the 1967 "Report on the Future Tasks of the Alliance" (the Harmel Report). The Harmel Report reasserted NATO's commitment to maintaining collective strength and consultation as the sine qua non for establishing improved relations with the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe. The "dual track" approach which led to the elimination of US and Soviet INF missile forces in Europe is a direct descendant of the Harmel philosophy, and NATO's Flexible Response Strategy, adopted at the same time as the Harmel Report, is the military embodiment of the Alliance's continuing, fundamental political objective. At this juncture, continuity rather than radical change is appropriate. The best approach is to examine the "deltas", i.e., those tangible factors which have changed--and to make adjustments to US/NATO political and military objectives rather than build a new collective security architecture starting with "brick one." The empyrean age has not yet dawned in Europe. The Soviet Union is still a power to be reckoned with and the explosive instabilities noted above have increased the overall political challenge for the US and its allies.

In an era of (contagious) economic and political turmoil in the Soviet Union and Central Europe, and at a time when Germany and the Western European states are entering a period of

flux, the US has a vital interest in dampening political oscillations and instabilities to manageable levels. In this vital "steady" role, a US presence can help in the prevention of political brush fires. The best course of action for the US is to remain an integral player, rather than a bystander, in the process. Furthermore, the best channels for US economic, political, and military integration are "traditional" vehicles such as NATO, although it will also be essential for the US to be a "player" in emerging fora such as the CSCE and to maintain close ties with the EC. It is not in America's best long-term interests to encourage the ascendancy of alternative, "independent European pillars" such as the WEU.

Gorbachev has scaled-back/concealed "the threat" and has temporarily relaxed external pressures on Europe in an effort to reinvigorate the atrophied economy of the Soviet Union with Western technology and managerial "know how." This will exacerbate US difficulties in pursuing stabilizing international policies during a period of fiscal retrenchment. The residual Soviet threat, though considerable, will be an insufficient bogeyman to "scare up" support from those segments of the European public which cried out for unilateral disarmament even when the threat was most palpable. The US will, therefore, be more reliant upon its European partners to take the lead in "selling" Allied policies to voters. This will call for a much greater commitment to true consultation with European nations prior to embarking on major policy initiatives. The US must be willing to comply with local "bylaws" as a responsible tenant in the "new European house." This will entail scrupulous US respect for German sovereignty rights as that nation transitions toward full unification. Ultimately, American policy-makers should seek the closest possible political and economic integration of the US and all European nations to increase the "transparency" of European borders. Transparent borders and cross-border political/economic equilibria are the best "immunization" against crises stemming from ethnic/national centrifugal and centripetal forces. Border transparency and transnational uniformity of basic human rights would significantly reduce the pressures to redraw national boundaries (pressures which have sparked many European wars in the past).

MILITARY OBJECTIVES: The direction and magnitude of recent changes in Europe (i.e., the "deltas") do not warrant abandonment by the US of its fundamental, peacetime military objective in Europe: namely, to deter war in Europe through collective security in NATO. Nor should NATO's fundamental wartime military objective be altered, i.e., the restoration of Alliance borders and termination of hostilities at the lowest practicable level in the event that deterrence fails. Obviously, the Soviets are significantly altering their peacetime military objectives by removing their principal coercive mechanism for controlling Eastern Europe. The eventual withdrawal of the bulk of Soviet military muscle from the Northern, Western, Central, and Southern Groups of Forces, coupled with conventional force cuts, are being undertaken as the price tag for domestic modernization/resuscitation of the Soviet state. It seems much less likely that the current Soviet leadership would strive to occupy the entirety of Europe or resort to the early use of nuclear weapons to achieve "total victory" as ultimate wartime goals. Thus, Soviet objectives in a European war are more likely to be limited, and in some respects, more difficult for NATO to deal with. The vulnerable "center of gravity" for NATO will continue to be the political cohesion of the Alliance, whose overall effectiveness is highly dependent on mutual consensus. The center of gravity of a "leaner" and less acquisitive Soviet Union will continue to be its military forces and its coercive security apparatus through which it maintains internal and external control. The Warsaw Pact is now moribund, and whether or not NATO continues to flourish, there is an increased likelihood of bilateral and multilateral (short of NATO-wide or WTO-wide) participation in future crises as the Soviets (and reluctant US allies) attempt to isolate participants and limit the scope of conflicts. Allied unanimity would be especially unlikely in "spill over" conflicts originating in the democratizing nations of Eastern Europe. Developing "backup" bilateral arrangements to hedge against the possibility that NATO fails to act in local (not to mention, out-of-area) conflicts will be a serious challenge for US policy-makers.

MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND VULNERABILITIES: Strategic surprise may be more difficult for the Soviets to attain opposite NATO's Central Region, depending upon the scenario. Since Soviet

intervention could be triggered by instability in a neighboring East European state (perhaps by invitation of one faction in a civil war), it is arguable whether NATO could put increased strategic warning time to effective use. The northern and southern flanks of NATO will remain as vulnerable to "minimum warning" scenarios as ever. The assumption that the Soviets might go to war for limited objectives increases NATO's difficulties in reaching a timely consensus on mobilization. Many NATO members would be extremely reticent to take provocative countermeasures in response to a "graduated" Soviet intervention in a peripheral conflict near or within its own borders. There is a growing potential for such crises in Central Europe, in the Baltic, and near the Turkish frontier.

Other key trends will be the continuing reduction of NATO and WTO forces within the CFE process and unilateral arms reductions (especially on the part of smaller NATO allies and the new East European regimes). Since fewer ground forces will be positioned near the battlefield during peacetime or during a politically murky "transition to war" phase, tactical air power will play a more important role as a mobile "linebacker" to counter enemy force concentrations. Another change is that military operations at the lower end of the spectrum of conflict will be somewhat more likely in Europe--creating challenges for all players in the theater who have tended to focus on general conventional/nuclear war scenarios. Also, the demographic trend of a shrinking "draft age" cohort in the US and Western Europe (coupled with steadily declining reserve forces) runs opposite to the trend in the Soviet Union where the military manpower pool will continue to grow for the next decade. This unfavorable mobilization factor will exacerbate the geographic asymmetries (in favor of the Soviets) which will persist after opposing combat forces are drawn down to rough numerical parity below current NATO levels.

With shrinking military industrial bases in the US and Western Europe, it will be increasingly difficult for most NATO nations to field modern weapon systems capable of performing the full spectrum of modern combat missions. The ongoing trend of "de facto mission specialization" in NATO will accelerate. For example, the smaller Allies will have little electronic combat, advanced surveillance/reconnaissance/targeting, or night fighting

capabilities. While the US is developing space-based systems to support terrestrial operations, many allied air forces are devolving into clear-air, daytime-only forces. In general, European forces (in the West and East) will be less capable of projecting land, naval, or air power to decide theater or out-of-area conflicts.

Finally, the US should tailor its theater nuclear force structure to more closely attune its military capabilities to the new political environment in Central Europe. "Dual capable" systems which can potentially reach Soviet territory (i.e., aircraft with air-to-surface missiles) may be the only nuclear-capable systems which are politically acceptable to Allied governments. Short-range, land-based systems which can only be used on "friendly" territory (or on the territory of Eastern Europeans who could be considered "bystanders" or "resisters" against Soviet occupation forces) have a slim chance of public acceptance. The time has come for the US to stop "arm-twisting" Bonn to accept the Follow-on to Lance (FOTL). A strategically useful FOTL would have to be able to reach Soviet territory to preserve stability and assure linkage with US strategic nuclear systems. A long-range FOTL would constitute a violation to the US-Soviet INF treaty, or, if designed so as to fall beyond the upper range of the treaty, would be perceived as equivalent to an ICBM--another "non-starter" in the current political environment. Meanwhile, NATO needs to explore the use of "smart/brilliant" conventional munitions which can cover many high value targets and permit a continuing reduction of sea and land-based "tactical" nuclear stockpiles.

In order to effectively deter war (a peacetime military objective), deter escalation ("intrawar deterrence"), and compel termination as soon as practical on terms acceptable to the Alliance (wartime objectives), NATO's tactical nuclear arsenal should be modernized to replace "large and dirty" warheads with "cleaner", lower yield warheads so as to minimize collateral damage and speed post-war recovery. In the hope of preventing escalation to massive "countervalue" strikes, the use of tactical weapons should be restricted, if possible, to "point" or narrowly dispersed "counterforce" targets. Thus, the "nuclear weapon of choice" for military planners and policy-makers in NATO ought to be "enhanced radiation warheads" (neutron bombs). However, this modernization effort can (and should) be very low

key--the psychological target for this move is the adversary government--not the "friendly" public. NATO strategy and its supporting military capabilities must be discriminately targeted against three "squares" in the "three by three matrix" of the Clausewitzian trinity (the columns of the matrix are the government, the people, and the army; the rows of the matrix are objectives, means, and will). In wartime, NATO's military forces must be capable of denying attainment of the adversary government's objectives, defeating (delaying, disrupting, and destroying) his military means, and undermining the will of his people.

STRATEGIC PLAN: As noted above (and as relentlessly hammered home by the Chairman of the JCS, the Service Chiefs, almost every top Administration official, and the NATO allies), Flexible Response strategy is flexible enough to accommodate the current changes in Europe without having to "start over from scratch." The residual Soviet threat, the instability of Eastern Europe, and the ripple effects from the German unification process provide strong justification for NATO's continued existence. Full participation in the Alliance by the US and all the major, democratic European powers (to include Germany) will be essential to maintain regional stability. No other European consortium exists which can provide collective security (the EC and the CSCE are useful fora, but they lack the "military/political clout" to resolve serious disputes). The \$64 question is: what strategic "fine-tuning" will be necessary to attain US and Allied political and military objectives in the new European order?

"Forward Defense" is still valid as one of the pillars of Flexible Response strategy as enunciated in MC 14/3. However, the implicit partners of forward defense, i.e., "forward deployment" and "forward training" need to be reexamined in light of new political realities. First, the location and shape of a future European battlefield will be less certain under the new political conditions on the continent. US and other Allied troops stationed in Germany may, in fact, be garrisoned far from their real-world "general defensive positions." With, perhaps, as few as half of the current force levels in Western Europe, it will make little strategic sense to deploy Allied corps shoulder-to-shoulder in a linear defense along the former inter-German border. Instead, NATO combat forces should be dispersed in greater

defensive depth, relying on greater mobility to deploy to critical points in the "theater strategic operation." Tactical air power (both land- and carrier-based) will play a more crucial role as "gap fillers" due to the reduced density of forces. The increasing disparity in capabilities among Allied national corps (and their supporting air forces) also militates against the current "linear" defensive plan. Also, as mentioned earlier, a graduated escalation scenario leading to localized, limited war, would likely result in various Allies staggering their national mobilization decisions. These nations (based on past experience, Belgium and the Netherlands might fall in this category) should be included in strategic plans as late-closing "reserve" forces which would initially take up positions well to the rear of the major, "front-line" nations in the Alliance.

As conventional force negotiations and free-falling fiscal support vie to establish "basal" force levels, the US will have to place greater reliance on dual-based air and ground forces to meet wartime commitments, with fewer forces permanently stationed in theater over the mid-term. Over the long-term, it is conceivable that only forward logistic elements (and prepositioned materiel) would remain in theater, and that combat ground units and TACAIR squadrons would rotate into the country. The timing of this "rote" pattern for US forces should enable a full cross-section of mission capabilities to be available in the theater at any given time (e.g., in the case of tactical air forces, these mission areas would include counter air, surface attack, electronic combat, air lift, reconnaissance, and command and control). Training and exercise operations will tend to be smaller and more "transparent" in the wake of CSBM accords impacting all 35 CSCE nations. More training of US forces will have to take place in the US, with local area familiarization occurring during rotations to Europe. It goes without saying that US forces will have to comply with the same training and exercise restrictions which host nations place on their own forces. The traditional argument that NATO-assigned forces need to train in peacetime over the same territory they would defend in wartime will become less compelling as it becomes increasingly difficult to predict exactly where in the theater these forces will be applied in wartime. The assumption that the Soviets would attack with minimum warning across the breadth of Europe, with the goal of

seizing the entire continent, will be untenable--making NATO strategic planning more difficult due to the greater uncertainties of the scenario.

The highly integrated, "operational level" concepts of Follow-on Forces Attack and Deep Battle will still be applicable to military operations near the FEBA, in the enemy's rear areas, and in NATO's "communication zone." Lower force densities at the outset of hostilities will make these forms of "defense in depth" even more important as Allied forces are stretched thin while carrying out their objectives of delaying, disrupting, and destroying enemy forces while deterring escalation to weapons of mass destruction. With the conditions of battle being less predictable, Allied weapon systems will have to be more flexible. A higher premium will be placed on "multirole" air and ground systems. Specialized platforms which can only perform a single role in one phase of a campaign will much less attractive in a numerically constrained environment.

As noted in an earlier section, if the "Balkanization" of Europe continues to spread from NATO's eastern borders to the Urals, the chances of the US being drawn into a major European conflagration (a'la World Wars I and II) will increase. The triggering mechanism for another such explosion is already in place. A highly visible, "convincing" US presence and the concerted efforts of our allies in NATO and the EC may also help to keep the "lid on" as Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union attempt to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. But alliances which depend upon unanimous consent before taking action can be paralyzed by one or two dissenting votes. Therefore, the US needs to back up its NATO plans with complementary bilateral agreements with as many European nations as possible. For scenarios in which only a subset of NATO nations play, it may be necessary for the US to supply the critical C³I nodes necessary to execute operations. Future conflicts may begin as insurgencies or as civil wars rather than massive, simultaneous conventional and/or nuclear assaults launched on "D-Day". In order to control escalation in such conflicts, the US may need to conduct low intensity operations in Europe, using (atypical) diplomatic finesse during parallel negotiations with opposing factions, and using the utmost care in establishing rules of engagement. The new realities in Eastern Europe will make it more

difficult for NATO to ignore out-of-area conflicts, since the demarcation line between "AOR and OOA" has become much more difficult to define. Out-of-area operations and "limited conflicts" will likely be the domain of US unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral efforts involving small "ensembles" of NATO members, rather than the entire Alliance in concert.

A final strategic recommendation is that the US reexamine the "wiring diagram" of NATO's integrated military structure and institute long-overdue changes which will establish a more equitable basis for partnership in an alliance of sovereign nations. The opportunity to restore equilibrium to the command hierarchy--based on the military contributions of each member--will be welcomed by most NATO members and could even be an inducement for the French to officially reintegrate their forces. The "loser" in such a reorganization would be the UK which has enjoyed disproportionate clout based on a 45 year old "snapshot" of its relative military contribution. The rotation of SACEUR among the US, UK, France, and Germany is only part of the solution. There are few merits for retaining CINCHAN's "Major NATO Commander" status on a par with SACEUR, nor does the tiny force of UKAIR warrant the status of a "Major Subordinate Commander" on a par with CINCENT. Finally, if SACLANT were placed on a tier immediately under SACEUR, NATO would benefit from a single, integrated command structure which could unify Allied military operations throughout the theater of war. And, by ceding greater responsibility and sovereignty to its European partners within NATO, the US could dampen the urge of some allies to dilute NATO's political and military power and replace it with other consortia (e.g., CSCE, WEU, a "militarized" EC, etc.).

POTENTIAL RESULTS: The proposed adjustments to US/NATO Flexible Response strategy may seem mundane after the heady experience of examining current European politics from an "astrophysical" perspective. The whole point of that (admittedly tongue-in-cheek) exercise was to point out that the practical significance of Gorbachev's "revisionism" has been overly dramatized, while the potential ramifications of chaos within Eastern Europe and the USSR have been understated. The same type of "wishful thinking" or "psychological denial" by many influential voices in the Alliance has resulted in grievous mismatches in the past between NATO's political/military objectives and its fielded capabilities. NATO lacked the political

will to commit sufficient resources to achieve conventional deterrence after the "Lisbon Conference" in 1952. The US "trip wire/massive retaliation" strategy was backed by credible nuclear forces, but its political objectives were incredible. NATO's MC 14/3 Flexible Response strategy suffered from a similar capabilities-objectives mismatch after the Soviets attained "escalation dominance" at every rung of the ladder of conflict. Ironically, Gorbachev's own actions may help to create conditions in which Flexible Response will be more credible. In the emerging European environment, it may be more likely that conflicts can be limited, contained, and terminated short of an apocalyptic, strategic nuclear exchange. Soviet force reductions and (perhaps) doctrinal changes can increase stability and bolster Flexible Response by reducing the capabilities gap between Soviet and NATO forces. Hopefully, the strategy and force adjustments suggested above would further increase stability and improve the odds for the attainment of democratic aspirations throughout a new, "European house." The "down-side" of the suggested adjustments is that the proposed "instantaneous rate of change" of force structure will not satisfy policy-makers who have fixated on immediate, windfall savings (with which to retire portions of the deficit or finance other socioeconomic projects/experiments).

The Heisenberg "Uncertainty Principle" (which laid the foundation for quantum mechanics, with help from Planck, Schrodinger, Einstein, and others) is based on the premise that it is impossible to know precisely or simultaneously the current position and velocity vector of an electron. If it is difficult for "rocket scientists" to approximate the current state and future trends of a single elementary particle, it is probably twice as difficult for a lowly War College student to confidently predict where hundreds of millions of Americans and "Eurasians" will find themselves ten years from now. One can only hope that "cooler heads" will prevail and that US military planners will be allowed to follow a deliberate course toward a more stable, more secure, and safer strategic posture in Europe.