
EUROPEAN SECURITY
IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

W. F. Van Eekelen

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In assessing the changes in East-West relations, the first important element is the rapidity of change. Murphy's law no longer applies. Things happen much more quickly than we ever expected and so far nothing has gone wrong. That forces us to rethink most of the concepts which we have used over the past decades. In fact, we are moving from a period of high military threat but considerable political stability towards a period of low threat but high instability. In such a situation it is still unclear what force levels we will need to deal with these instabilities. As somebody put it recently: «How many divisions has instability?».

The second new element is the development of the German question. Originally we had thought German unification would come at the end of a long process in which East-West relations would improve and ultimately borders would have little meaning. New political developments have come so quickly and unification is imminent, but the new framework of relations has not yet developed. Now the danger is that some people believe that with German unification all problems in Europe will be overcome, while in fact we are still at the beginning of a new process of European cooperation.

The third factor of change concerns developments in the Soviet Union itself. At the beginning of his reign, President Gorbachev decided to improve relations with the United States, reduce his commitments in the Third World and aim at joining the world economy. In some respects the underlying reasons for perestroika are the same as those underpinning our own move towards Europe 1992. He wants to keep the Soviet Union in the race of technologically developed countries. We, in aiming at Europe 1992, also want to maintain our competitive position vis-à-vis Japan, the newly industrialised countries and the United States. The difference is, of course, that we have been working at it already for some forty years while the Soviet Union is just starting. In addition, we are now seeing

how difficult it is to reform the Soviet Union, because everything has to be reformed at once for there to be any chance of success. We are also seeing that the process of perestroika is getting bogged down, that some new programme will have to be developed and that it is most uncertain whether Gorbachev provides sufficient leadership to carry out major reform. In any case, he has no model to offer for European cooperation. His idea of a common European home has little meaning as long as he has not put his own house in order. At the same time, he is in a difficult political position. The Communist Party is being discredited and Gorbachev is trying to dissociate himself from it. Thus his rule becomes very personal without a clear constituency, while at the same time the Communist Party, though discredited, still provides the personnel for fulfilling most functions in the bureaucracy.

In international relations, the Soviet position is characterized by the loss of options. The emphasis on perestroika and the development of a market economy remove the basic threat Western society has posed to the Soviet system. At the same time, political developments in Eastern Europe and the emergence of democratically-elected governments are diminishing Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. The Warsaw Treaty Organisation is disintegrating and it is difficult to see how it could be built up again as a political organisation, for it has never been one. Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe started in the economic sphere; that will inevitably lead to abandonment in the political and security fields as well. As these developments are inevitable, we should not pay any price to obtain them. Yet, we do not want to give the Soviet Union the impression that we are crowding them out of European affairs. We are in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, we want to keep them out of Europe, certainly in the sense of having them remove their forces from Eastern Europe. But, on the other hand, we want to keep them in by giving them the feeling that they belong to Europe and have a role to play. The Soviets themselves have not yet adjusted to this situation. They know what they have lost, but they have no clear objective as to what they could and would want to gain from the new situation.

The fourth new development is that arms control no longer is the agent of change we thought it could be about a year ago. In fact, it is becoming increasingly difficult to conclude the negotiations in Vienna

on Conventional Forces in Europe in the framework of two military alliances. The concept of parity between the two pacts has become doubtful and Moscow is already arguing that after CFE implementation it would be weaker than NATO. It is even more difficult to envisage what criteria should apply to follow-on negotiations after CFE. We all want to continue the negotiations immediately but the best framework is still unclear. The 35-nations CSCE would be an obvious forum, but there too it will be difficult to see what measures of disarmament would apply to all of them. Nevertheless, a conclusion of CFE will be an essential basis for further progress. Without it a continuation of arms-control negotiations would become very difficult and our prospects for new security arrangements in Europe would hang in the air.

The fifth factor is the emergence of nationalism. We in the West are to a certain extent at the end of our history; at the end of our history of violent conflict. In the East most of the old problems and controversies have not been digested. They were less visible during the period of communist domination but now they have resurfaced. The most important conclusion of this situation is that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are all looking to the European Community for help but have very little inclination to work together. That has an impact on our Western approach to all European activities, which leads me to support the «concentric circles» approach. We can do much for everybody, but not necessarily the same for all countries. Looking at the European Community as the first circle and Western European Union as the nucleus of countries which also want to extend their cooperation to security questions, the second layer would be the European Economic Space with the EFTA countries. The third layer would be the Council of Europe which could be extended fairly easily with the new democracies as soon as they accept the responsibilities of its statute and respect human rights. Such an extension would give the new democracies a sense of belonging and a forum for political discussion. The fourth layer would be the CSCE process which could act as an umbrella over the spectrum of activities while preserving existing organisations. The best approach would be to work towards a situation in which all these organisations interlock and reinforce each other, even if they sometimes partially overlap.

In this context, Western European Union is a crossroad organisation. On the one hand it is the European pillar of NATO, on the other the security dimension of European integration. Opinions about its evolution differ, but it could best be regarded as a transitional organisation on the road towards European Union, in which ultimately the economic, foreign policy and security dimensions will converge. For the time being, of course, WEU is not a perfect pillar. We do not have all member countries of the European Community in WEU, nor all European members of the Atlantic Alliance. Nevertheless, it is the only framework available in which a comprehensive discussion of political-military issues can take place in a European context.

Building a European pillar of NATO will require an assessment of the future tasks of NATO. The most important constant element will remain the security function. Even in the best climate of East-West relations, the Soviet Union, or even Russia, will be the largest military power on our continent. To live comfortably with that presence Western Europe will need a transatlantic link, both in the conventional and in the nuclear field. NATO and an American presence in Europe will allow us to live more or less comfortably with that Russian presence. Under new circumstances this security function could best be described as an insurance against things going wrong. The second function is to consult on political-military issues throughout the world. This consultation does not necessarily mean joint action because, in the Third World, NATO's possibility for such joint action will remain very limited. Here there is some scope for European activity, which could subsequently be coordinated with parallel US action, but NATO action will be regarded as drawing a particular Third World conflict into an East-West context.

The third function would be to formulate arms control policies and monitor their results. Particularly after the conclusion of CFE, verification will become very important. European countries will have to shoulder part of that burden, but the outcome of inspections will clearly have to be discussed in an Alliance context as well.

The fourth functions is the inter-Alliance function of moderation when particular problems arise, such as the Greco-Turkish controversy. The importance of this function will of course depend upon the evolution of relations among NATO members and their internal stability.

These four functions will remain valid in the future. Yet it is clear that NATO will have to change. Some say it should be more political. Others argue that NATO has always been primarily a political organisation. Making it more political could only mean making it less military. We shall have to provide a new rationale for maintaining NATO under changing circumstances. That will apply to preserving the transatlantic link and the presence of North American forces in Europe, and also to the willingness of European countries, particularly the smaller ones, to maintain an adequate defence contribution. NATO has already decided to review its strategy. Hopefully, that will also apply to its political perspective. The Harmel report has served us well for more than twenty years and the maxim of «defence and détente» will continue to be valid. Nevertheless, the objective of creating a climate in which underlying tensions could be resolved has virtually been achieved.

NATO's strategic review will have to assess the implications of the impending withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe for the kind of forces the West needs to maintain in the future. It seems clear already that the density of NATO ground forces will be lower. To offset this at least in part the emphasis will be on mobility, which in turn will impose new requirements for command and control, communications, surveillance and target acquisition. In times of crisis there will be a need for mobilisation and reinforcement to «reconstitute» an effective defensive posture. But the warning time will be sufficiently long to allow for this. The role of the navy will be enhanced for, apart from its inherent flexibility and capabilities for crisis management, overseas reinforcement would no longer suffer from doubts about timely arrival at the battlefield.

The role of WEU

The 1987 Platform of European Security Interests confirmed the fundamental need for a continued presence of North American forces in Europe, for an adequate mix of conventional and nuclear forces and for countries to be defended «at their borders». Subsequent work has been directed towards practical cooperation (training and verification activities) and more conceptual studies. The presence of naval units from

Member States in the Gulf to ensure freedom of passage through international waters has been the first example of coordinated European action to protect its interests outside the NATO area. Future work should be directed at three problem areas:

1. The strengthening of the European identity, preferably through the formation of European units. These would demonstrate European cooperation to our own public and sustain willingness to maintain reasonable levels of defence spending. In addition they would show that military force will no longer be national force, which would reassure the countries of Eastern Europe and convince the US that Europe remains serious about its defence effort. Multinational units should apply not just to Germany but also to other countries, since special arrangements for Germany alone should be avoided. In my view multinational divisions with national inputs at brigade level would provide an optimum of political importance and military significance.

2. Provide a new rationale for a continued American and Canadian presence in Europe, preferably through a «transatlantic bargain» in which the role and function of one side are defined as complementary to the other.

3. Assess the minimum security requirements of the Soviet Union and its future relations with neighbouring countries. Apart from bilateral arrangements, these will require some institutionalisation of pan-European cooperation, providing regular opportunities for political discussion and machinery for conciliation when instabilities tend to escalate. In any case, the results of inspections under the arms control agreements will need to be discussed in a standing commission in order to clarify ambiguities between notifications and the actual situation. It may also be desirable to discuss new technological developments which could upset the new balance. The NATO summit in London has indicated willingness to institutionalise important parts of the CSCE process.

The April 1990 ministerial meeting of WEU gave a mandate to the Presidency and the Secretary-General to conduct a fact-finding mission to the newly democratic countries of Central and Eastern Europe. These visits are intended to ascertain their views on European security in general, and their own position as countries bordering on the Soviet Union in particular.

Conclusion

The cohesion and stability of Western Europe's existing security structures are major assets in the face of the uncertainties surrounding the consolidation of democracies in Eastern Europe and the future of Soviet Power. If the USSR is to survive, reform of the Soviet system is no longer enough; it must be abolished. The urgency of the situation may hasten the arrival of new leaders. We must be prepared for every eventuality.

The balance of force will continue to dominate the international dialogue even though significant progress has been achieved in the field of arms control, where each new stage seems to add to the complexity of the problems to be solved.

Greater stability in Europe does not automatically lead to greater stability outside Europe. In an increasingly multi-polar world, risks are both proliferating and diversifying. Faced with this practical reality, Europe must have capabilities to react to crisis situations. At the same time Europeans must act in concert rather than make an unseemly rush for doors that have only just been opened by the arms control negotiations.

At a time when the European Community has decided to press on with economic and monetary union, while agreeing on a timetable for the definition of political union, WEU can make a decisive contribution to the shaping of the future of European security structures based on a clear-cut European security identity.

Even with a European Union we will still need NATO, a changed NATO perhaps, making it more balanced, with two pillars, but certainly based on those crucial factors which have made it so successful and allowed us to progress to where we are today. An Alliance based on shared values and common interests. WEU wants to strengthen that community by demonstrating that although circumstances have changed we take our security just as seriously.

W. F. Van Eekelen

Secretary-General of Western European Union