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Political Changes and the Prospects of Peace in the New Europe

In the following, I will first look at the changes that have taken place over the past couple of years in Europe and then discuss in a very broad and sketchy, and, therefore, superficial way the prospects for peace and security in the New Europe.

There are essentially three paradigms in the study of international relations that can be used to predict the future of peace and stability in Europe. The first could be called the *realist view*.¹ After two world wars, the bipolar order of the Cold War spelled peace and stability in Europe. The decline of Soviet power and its withdrawal from Eastern Europe restores the European multipolarity of the 19th Century. As a result, we are to expect all kinds of conflicts, instabilities, nationalist and ethnic rivalries. In other words, the New Europe will be a far more dangerous place than the Cold War order, which contained all these grievances.

The second vision, the *liberal view*, posits the opposite of the first. According to liberal theory, democracies do not go to war against each other, but cooperate and solve their disputes in a peaceful way.² Today, the Central Eastern European countries³ are in transition toward liberal democracies and market economies; the Soviet Union is democ-

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1. This view stems from the realist paradigm in international relations according to which states struggle to survive in world politics by balancing the power of potential opponents. For an application to the New Europe, see, for example, Mearsheimer, *Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War*, 15 INT'L SECURITY, 5-56 (Summer 1990). For a more systematic discussion of this and other views, see Risse-Kappen, *From Mutual Containment to Common Security: Europe During and After the Cold War*, in WORLD SECURITY, TRENDS AND CHALLENGES AT CENTURY'S END 123-43 (M. Klare & D. Thomas eds. 1991).

2. This view goes back to the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. For a discussion, see Doyle, *Liberalism and World Politics*, 80 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 1151-69 (1986). For an application to the post-Cold War Europe, see Van Evera, *Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War*, 15 INT'L SECURITY 7-57 (Winter 1990/91).

3. In the following, I will use the term "Central Eastern European countries" to allude to Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. These countries have repeatedly argued that they do not want to be regarded as Eastern Europeans, but as part of the political and cultural traditions of Central Europe.

ratizing, too. Conclusion: the New Europe spells eternal peace and there is no need to worry.

A third vision, the *institutionalist view*, takes a somewhat intermediate position.⁴ It recognizes that there will be a lot of problems and conflicts in the New Europe. The transition to prosperous market economies in Eastern Europe will take time; ethnic rivalries that had been frozen under the Cold War structure are now exploding. These problems need not erupt into violent conflicts, however, but can be dealt with through international institutions. Fortunately, these institutions do not have to be created from scratch in Europe; they already exist. There is the European Community (EC), which deals with the integration of the European economies. There is NATO, which will continue to work as a hedge against the eventuality of a renewed Soviet threat. Finally, there is the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the "Helsinki Process," a multilateral institution encompassing all European states, the two superpowers, and Canada.⁵

I. The Nature of the Changes

Before we can make any judgment about which of these visions will carry the day, we need to have a clearer view of what has actually happened over the past few years and about the nature of the changes. How do we measure the change? I propose a very simple criterion: Change is measured by the degree of reversibility. Thus, I will briefly discuss five transformation processes that took place during the last few years, ordered by the degree to which they could be reversed through future developments.

First, the change that is least likely to be reversed in the New Europe is German unification.⁶ The united Germany faces enormous problems concerning its economic, social, and cultural integration. But whatever happens in the future, the division of Germany, which characterized and symbolized the Cold War order, is over. The Berlin Wall will not be rebuilt.

Second, the transition of Central Eastern Europe—Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary—toward liberal democracies and market econo-

4. For a discussion of the theoretical foundations of this view, see R. KEOHANE, *INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND STATE POWER* (1989); F. KRATAOCHWILL, *RULES, NORMS AND DECISIONS* (1989); O. YOUNG, *INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION* (1989).

5. On the origins of the CSCE, see J. MARESCA, *TO HELSINKI: THE CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE, 1973-1975* (1985). For an Argument on how the CSCE could be transformed into a collective security structure for Europe, see Kupchan & Kupchan, *Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe*, 16 *INT'L SECURITY* 114-61 (1991).

6. For an excellent account of the path toward German unification, see Pond, *A Wall Destroyed: The Dynamics of German Unification in the GDR*, in 15 *INT'L SECURITY* 35-66 (1990).

mies is probably irreversible, too.⁷ These countries have to deal with enormous problems, but a restoration of authoritarian rule in Central Eastern Europe seems to be out of the question. As a result, a third change, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe and the end of the Warsaw Pact as a military alliance, is also not likely to be revoked. It might take longer than expected, and the current turmoil in the Soviet Union might additionally affect it, but there is no reason to expect that the USSR would try to re-occupy Central Eastern Europe.

Fourth, the future of arms control agreements in Europe is somewhat more uncertain. For example, the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) agreement has been signed, but not yet ratified.⁸ The irony here is that arms control, which used to be one of the primary tools to relax tensions of the Cold War, now seems to be on the back burner, given the speed of the political changes.

Finally, given the turmoil after the coup, the future of what used to be the Soviet Union is unclear.⁹ This is ironic because the Gorbachev "revolution" started the whole process of change in 1985-1986. Without Mikhail Gorbachev's initiating the most profound changes in Soviet politics since the 1917 October Revolution, there would have been no German unification and no restoration of democracy in Central Eastern Europe. On the other hand, as I will argue below, uncertainty about the former Soviet Union does not mean a re-emergence of Stalinist Russia.

So far, I have emphasized the changes in the New Europe. But there is also continuity in post-Cold War Europe. For example, the international institutions and organizations that provided predictability of behavior and helped to coordinate economic and security policies among the European nations have survived the end of the Cold War largely intact. First, NATO is still around, although many people predicted that the Western Alliance would collapse in conjunction with the Berlin Wall's tumbling down. The conventional wisdom assumes that the Soviet threat provided the glue which held the trans-Atlantic relationship together. However, there is not the slightest indication that NATO will follow the example of the Warsaw Pact and cease to exist in the immediate future. It will, however, subsist on a much smaller level of military armament and will have to redefine its mission from deterring the Soviet Union to reassuring it.¹⁰

7. For a discussion of the transformation processes in these countries, see de Nevers, *The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: The End of an Era*, in *ADELPHI PAPERS* 249 (1990).

8. See Jonathan Dean's contribution in this issue at page 457. For a comprehensive review of conventional arms control in Europe, see J. DEAN, *MEETING GORBACHEV'S CHALLENGE: HOW TO BUILD DOWN THE NATO-WARSAW PACT CONFRONTATION* (1989).

9. For a discussion of various theories pertaining to the change in Soviet foreign policy, see Evangelista, *Sources of Moderation in Soviet Security Policy*, in *2 BEHAVIOR, SOCIETY AND NUCLEAR WAR* 254-354 (P. Tetlock et al eds. 1990).

10. On the future role of NATO, see Jane Stromseth's contribution in this issue at page 479.

Second, the European Community remains not only intact, but is speeding up its process of economic and political integration toward the creation of the Single Market in 1992. Given the poor performance of the EC in formulating a joint West European policy during the Gulf War, the EC members have agreed to further accelerate the integration of their foreign policies. The EC also faces the major task of assisting in the reconstruction of the Central Eastern European economies.

Third, several European institutions that were created during the détente period of the 1970s and 1980s have also survived the end of the Cold War. The most important of these institutions is the CSCE. With its now thirty-seven members including the USSR, the U.S., and Canada, the CSCE spells a "greater Europe"—from San Francisco to Vladivostok. In addition, there are various arms control regimes such as the 1986 Stockholm agreement on confidence- and security-building measures and the 1987 INF treaty, which eliminated all U.S.-Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles.¹¹

II. Security Problems in the New Europe

Whatever happens to the former Soviet Union and its republics over the next years, the security environment in Europe has been profoundly transformed. The Cold War is definitely over. Even if one comes up with a "worst-case" scenario, the bipolar order is gone. As a result, if we discuss the prospects of peace and stability in the New Europe, we have to free ourselves from the issues and strategies that we have had about European security during the last forty years. During the Cold War, our thinking in the West with regard to security was overshadowed by one single scenario, the threat of Soviet strategic blackmail or aggression motivated by a desire to dominate or even conquer Western Europe. However, future threats to European security and stability will stem from economic issues, environmental problems, or the externalization of domestic political conflicts in various countries. In other words, if there are new threats of violent conflicts or militarized disputes in the New Europe at all, they will probably not be caused by the desire for aggression by a single state.¹² As a result, strategies of containment to deter potential aggressors, which dominated Western thinking during the Cold War, are no longer adequate to deal with these sorts of conflicts. Instead, we are entering the domain of international institutions, organizations, and of international law.¹³

11. On the Stockholm agreement, see J. BORAWSKI, *FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE URALS: NEGOTIATING ARMS CONTROL AT THE STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE* (1988). On the INF treaty, see T. RISSE-KAPPEN, *THE ZERO OPTION: INF, WEST GERMANY, AND ARMS CONTROL* (1988).

12. For a discussion of these causes of conflict, see R. N. LEBOW, *BETWEEN PEACE AND WAR: THE NATURE OF INTERNATIONAL CRISES* (1981).

13. For a discussion, see Lebow & Stein, *Beyond Deterrence*, 43 J. SOC. ISSUES 5-71 (1987).

In order to come to a judgment on the validity of the three visions for the future of European security mentioned above, I will now discuss some questions and areas with the potential for trouble in the New Europe. I will begin with "non-issues" and then address the more serious problems. I would argue that the biggest "non-issue" in the New Europe is the potential threat of the united Germany to peace and stability in the region. Given the German past and the country's behavior during the first half of this century, it is not surprising that this issue has recently received a lot of attention.¹⁴ Even though a German is probably not the most credible person to argue the case, I am nevertheless convinced that a "German threat" will remain a non-issue and should not distract us from the real dangers in the New Europe. First, there is a firm domestic consensus in the country that Germany should never again play a militaristic or nationalist great power role. Germans agree among themselves that the country should pursue its interests and goals through cooperation with neighbors. This consensus encompasses both mass public and elite opinion except for very small minorities.¹⁵ Second, the united Germany did not create a new domestic political structure. Rather, the institutions of the Federal Republic have expanded into what used to be East Germany. Moreover, the political structure of the Federal Republic, unlike France, is geared toward consensus- and coalition-building. For example, the German state is far weaker than the French state in terms of what it can impose on its citizens.¹⁶ Third, there is what I would call an "international alert squad," the German neighbors in particular, who are concerned about the country's new role and who will watch the foreign policy of united Germany very closely. The other European powers will do everything they can to contain Germany and to prevent it from once again getting out of control. In sum, the main issues concerning German unification are internal, not external, primarily the rebuilding of the country's Eastern part.

Compared to the "German problem," the issues facing the new democracies in Central Eastern Europe are real and have some potential to de-stabilize the region. First, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary are facing problems in their transition to liberal democracies. The opposition movements that swept the Communist regimes out of power in 1989 have broken up. Political struggles, bickering, and in-fighting occur. However, it is unlikely that these developments affect European security. They are mostly normal processes related to the "Westernization" of political structures and coalition-formation. The differentiation of the former dissident movements into center-left and center-right par-

14. For a summary of those concerns, see Mead, *The Once and Future Reich*, WORLD POLICY J. 593-638 (Fall 1990).

15. For evidence with regard to former West Germany, see K. BAKER ET AL., *GERMANY TRANSFORMED: POLITICAL CULTURE AND THE NEW POLITICS* (1981); D. P. CONRADT, *THE GERMAN POLITY* 227-32 (1982). For recent opinion polls in the new Germany, see *Das Profil der Deutschen. Was sie vereint, was sie trennt*, Spiegel Spezial, No. 1 (Jan. 1991) (Profile of the Germans. What unites them, what divides them).

16. See P. KATZENSTEIN, *POLICY AND POLITICS IN WEST GERMANY* (1989).

ties creates a lot of domestic turmoil, but is unlikely to lead to international instability. Moreover, the so-called "Basket III" of the CSCE agreements contains provisions for the freedom of information, the freedom of travel, and for human rights in Europe. These provisions could be transformed in a way to assist the Central Eastern European countries in their transition to democracy.¹⁷

The second set of problems facing Eastern Europe is economic. It is increasingly clear that the rebuilding of the economies and the transition to market systems is much more painful and will take longer than originally hoped for. There is a real and serious danger that these countries will remain, for quite some time, the "poor brothers and sisters" of the rich and wealthy Western European states. Furthermore, many people in Central Eastern Europe fear that their rich neighbors in the West do not really care about them—all the nice words aside. These understandable concerns might develop into anger which in turn might lead to instabilities. Finally, there are now large numbers of people migrating from East to West in Europe. They cannot all be absorbed by the economies of the EC members. Nevertheless, the rich West Europeans will probably be forced to deal with the situation and to prevent the emergence of too big a welfare gap between themselves and their Eastern neighbors. The EC may not help the Central Eastern European countries out of altruism, but, maybe because of the same analysis which I have just made, Western Europeans will likely conclude that they have to provide economic assistance in order to prevent trouble for themselves. The migration problem is only one of the issues here.

Finally, the third problem facing the Central Eastern European countries includes ethnic and nationalistic rivalries that had been frozen under the Cold War structure and are now exploding. For example, there is the Hungarian minority in Romania. Yugoslavia is disintegrating as a state and in the midst of a bloody civil war. These internal conflicts may create instabilities and even lead to civil wars. While there is some risk that ethnic conflicts will lead to international crises, the danger is comparatively low that they will escalate into war. Moreover, if internal nationalist conflicts threaten to spill over into interstate disputes, institutions exist to deal with them. The CSCE, for example, could set up a conflict management center and might even organize a European peace-keeping force to prevent nationalist violence from spreading across borders.¹⁸

The most important factor determining the future of European security is, once again, the Soviet Union. We are now faced with problems different from those of the Cold War. Since it is very difficult

17. For such a proposal, see Secretary of State James Baker's speech in Berlin, Dec. 12, 1989, quoted in *Upheaval in the East: Excerpts from Baker's Speech on Berlin and U.S. Role in Europe's Future*, N.Y. Times, Dec. 13, 1989, at A18, col. 1.

18. For a discussion, see Goodby, *A New European Concert: Settling Disputes in CSCE*, 21 *ARMS CONTROL TODAY* 3-8 (1991); Müller, *A United Nations of Europe and North America*, *id.* at 3, 6-8. See also Kupchan & Kupchan, *supra* note 5.

to predict the outcome of the current problems in the USSR, let me just discuss three possible scenarios without making predictions about their likelihood. First, a "benign scenario" would entail that the present stalemate between conservatives and democrats is resolved in a way that *perestroika*, the process of transformation, reasserts itself. The Soviet leadership, whoever that may be, gets back on the track of reforming the Soviet system. The Baltic states gain independence. The rest of the Soviet republics figure out a way to live together in some sort of confederation. This scenario does not affect European security, although it might still create a lot of trouble inside the Soviet Union. As a result, the creation of a fully integrated Europe and of a regional peace order could continue at full speed.

On the other hand, possible "worst case scenarios" contain the prospect that the conservative coalition of the military and the KGB will take over, resulting in the reemergence of an authoritarian rule in the USSR and in a violent crackdown in the Baltic republics. Another threatening scenario includes the possibility that the Soviet Union will quickly disintegrate, leading to civil wars in several republics, mainly in the south. Such gloomy developments would certainly have spill-over effects in Europe. The prospects for establishing a New European security order based on the notion of "common security"¹⁹ would be very slim in this case. In the most unlikely event that the USSR becomes threatening to outsiders again, however, the Western Alliance is in far better shape militarily to deter this threat than at any time during the Cold War. For example, the remaining Soviet troops in Central Eastern Europe and in the eastern part of Germany can no longer be considered a credible and reliable fighting force. If an authoritarian Soviet leadership were really stupid enough to threaten aggressive acts against the West again, it might well end up with an extension of NATO into Central Eastern Europe, i.e., with NATO troops right at the Soviet border. This is certainly a "worst-case" scenario and would also be very destabilizing. It is also rather unlikely.

The most likely scenario regarding the future of the Soviet Union entails a continuation of the current crisis and of the stalemate between the forces of democracy and the reactionaries for quite some time. The spill-over effect into the rest of Europe would be less dangerous than in the "worst-case" scenario, but Europeans would still have reason to worry. Moreover, the West will probably not be able to do much about it, since the events will be primarily driven by internal Soviet developments. On the other hand, a carefully coordinated and orchestrated Western and U.S. policy, which uses the prospects of enhanced political, economic, and security cooperation as the "carrot," and the threat to withdraw Western economic assistance as the "stick," might help mollify

19. "Common security" means that states cannot feel secure unless their neighbors feel safe, too. As a result, national security ceases to be a goal that can be achieved unilaterally. See INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON PEACE AND DISARMAMENT (PALME COMMISSION), COMMON SECURITY (1982).

such a situation. Moreover, given the uncertainties about the internal developments in the USSR, it should be in the West's supreme interests to speed up the implementation of pending arms control agreements. The agreement on the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), for example, provides for very intrusive on-site inspections, which would give the West, and the Central Eastern Europeans for that matter, extra warning time.²⁰

In conclusion, we were all utterly euphoric about the future of European peace and security in 1989 and 1990. In the meantime, the dust has settled down and a more depressing outlook seems to prevail given the enormous difficulties of rebuilding and reconstructing Central Eastern Europe. The Gulf War and its aftermath also remind us that the end of the Cold War does not necessarily spell perpetual peace. Thus, I agree that there are problems in the New Europe and that some of them have pretty destabilizing features. There are, however, international institutions such as the EC, CSCE, and NATO in place which are suited to or can be strengthened to deal with those issues. In sum, my own position comes very close to the "institutionalist" view that I presented at the beginning of this article.

20. For details, see Jonathan Dean's contribution in this issue at 457.