

# WAKING UP TO REALITY IN POST- REVOLUTION EUROPE

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**T**HE WARSAW PACT IS A THING OF THE PAST; THE Soviet Union has lost control over its former satellites; Germany is united with NATO; the Iron Curtain has been dismantled. The suddenness of this process has caught many by surprise, and many of the attitudes and institutions left over from the Cold War remain in place. As a result, much of the current debate about security and defence in Europe concerns how best to adapt these to the new situation. Upheavals throughout much of the old communist world are dramatically redefining Europe's security problem.

The phrase "instability in Eastern Europe" has come to be used as a shorthand to cover all the less welcome political consequences of the 1989 revolution. The decline of Soviet power means that Central and Eastern Europe can breathe again, but it has also made possible a revival of nationalist and ethnic antagonisms. These were once stifled by the dead hand of communism, along with enterprise and free expression, but are now being aggravated by the dire economic legacy of state socialism.

The challenge for post-revolution Europe has been described in terms of deflecting these negative tendencies by accentuating the pluses of liberal democracy and market economics. In case this fails, much diplomatic activity has been devoted to revamping the institutions and designing new procedures to manage conflicts. At the time of writing, all this is being put to the test in Yugoslavia. Thus far, the experience has been salutary.

Until this real test, the debate itself was rather bewildering because so much of it was focussed on the capacity of institutions developed to perform specific functions in one set of circumstances to perform quite different functions in much changed circumstances. In the past, the field was dominated by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It still has the only serious integrated military organization and is the one best able to draw on North American power.

NATO'S CURRENT STRATEGY REVIEW STILL ASSUMES that the most serious problem with which member states could expect to cope would be a Soviet attempt to regain its former military influence in Europe. There is no doubt that Soviet military power remains substantial and will be so for some time. But whether the USSR has any interest in military adventurism beyond its borders must be doubtful when it faces so many internal challenges.

Exactly how this will look in five years (by which time all Soviet forces should have withdrawn, including from Germany) is hard to say, but the current period may be very transitional. NATO still tends to describe its role with concepts derived from the past, and without any sense of Soviet power its planners would become wholly disorientated.

The Alliance now expects that it will have considerable warning of any reassertion of Soviet strength. This means that it can cut existing force levels substantially and rely on the warning time to reconstitute them in an emergency. Because it is so geared to the Soviet threat, NATO is not obviously appropriate to lesser threats or to those beyond the European continent. Western leaders are anxious that direct military action be very much a last resort in all future crisis management and, despite talk of the organization becoming more "political," it is only really of relevance when military cooperation has become necessary. It provides the basis for developing common command and control procedures, and the much wider familiarization that comes through inter-operability of equipment and exercises.

ONE AREA WHERE NATO HAS DUCKED A CENTRAL ROLE is in providing security guarantees to former members of the Warsaw Pact who still judge themselves vulnerable to a reassertion of Soviet strength, but are not part of any functioning collective security organization. Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, in particular, have made little secret of their desire to join NATO. So far, closer cooperation has been agreed with liaison offices and membership of the non-governmental North Atlantic Assembly, which now meets with twenty-two rather than sixteen countries. Beyond this, NATO is unwilling to go because it does not want to be committed to particular states in all their conflicts with neighbours. Neither does it want to appear to be ganging up in a provocative manner on the Soviet Union. New security guarantees must of necessity affect the disposition of military forces, including moving both the forward line of defence and the nuclear umbrella eastward.

NATO is endeavouring to ease the risks for the newly democratizing states left in limbo by this judgement by insisting that it would not remain "indifferent" if they were threatened. Attempts are being made to define the basic principles which would serve as a stimulus to intervention, and in practice it is hard to see how NATO could avoid acting in the event of a gross act of aggression.

At first, the East Europeans invested much greater hopes in another institution, the Conference on Security and Co-

operation in Europe (CSCE). This still brings in the Americans and, indeed, everyone else. Albania has marked the end of its isolation by joining, and recently CSCE pro-

cedures have been revamped to allow it to respond to emergencies. It provides a mechanism in which force levels, and even military doctrines, might be discussed. But its decision-making depends largely on unanimity and therefore it cannot serve as a means

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