

The background of the cover features a complex geometric design. In the upper left, there is a dark blue field with several light blue stars. Below this, a diagonal band contains a checkered pattern of dark blue and green squares. The lower right portion of the cover is dominated by a large, light blue circular shape that overlaps with a dark blue triangular area. At the bottom center, there is a white circle partially obscured by the dark blue triangle.

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INTRODUCTION

1

Recasting European Security

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1992 seemed almost as far from the start of this decade as the first months of 1990 did from the start of 1989, let alone the pre-Gorbachev Cold War years. The mood then verged on the euphoric. The peaceful revolutions of 1989 were generally seen to be an almost unqualified bonus for international politics. The very manner in which power was transferred from communist to non-communist régimes, long-standing disputes resolved and the state system re-arranged offered an optimistic prospect for future crisis management. The end of superpower antagonism removed the risk of a catastrophic total war and made it possible to think of a 'peace dividend' in both economic and psychological terms. European security came to be discussed in terms of strengthened institutional structure, helping resolve disputes and enforcing norms of good behaviour by means of economic and political rather than military instruments. At the centre of this structure was to be found the European Community, building on the profound integrative achievements of the past and pushing forward to economic and monetary union, while at the same time exerting a benign influence in its regional neighbourhood and offering a hopeful prospect for would-be members as they restructured themselves following the liberation from communism.

This was once offered as the ideal 'post-Cold-War world'. So it might have been. What had become clear even before 1992 was that no new order with any degree of firmness was set to take over from the old bipolar order which had gone before. Even

the old order was somewhat more fluid than it now seems in retrospect, with regional conflicts already taking on a life of their own, independently of the superpower confrontation. The stability in core political relations that had developed during the Cold War could clearly not withstand the steady deterioration of the economic fundamentals in one of the two blocs. However, the pace and complexity of change since the communist system broke in 1989 has been both breathtaking and profoundly disorienting. The idea of a stable world order with conflict well contained and prosperity and justice abounding has not lasted long. The cumulative uncertainties of the 1990s are now threatening the self-confidence of Western Europe and are demanding drastic reappraisals of basic assumptions.

Two sets of events in particular shaped this reappraisal during 1992. The first was the continuing turmoil in the former Yugoslavia. This illustrated all the limitations of the established institutional structure in terms of coping with crisis. The second was the unravelling of the Maastricht Treaty on the future development of the European community. Although the Treaty just about survived the year, with a new Danish referendum and British ratification still pending, the underlying thrust towards economic and monetary union had been compromised by the stresses and strains within the existing exchange rate mechanism, while the promise of a European defence entity had been undermined by the poor performance in the former Yugoslavia. Both sets of difficulties were linked directly to the upheavals of post-communist Europe. The link is obvious enough in the Yugoslav case, which has been presented as almost a prototype for what might happen if the sort of ethnic conflict prevalent throughout the old communist world is exploited by hard-liners, turning to narrow nationalism to sustain themselves in power now that the universalist appeal of communism has been discredited, and then allowed to get out of hand. The currency turmoil too was linked, for it reflected the consequences of German unification as well as the downward thrust of key economic indicators. This is discussed further below.

THE OLD ORDER

The violence of the conflict in former Yugoslavia produced the most disturbing images. The old order of the Cold War was not in itself violent, although it involved more than its fair share of fear and intimidation as well as active military preparations. The East-West conflict never came to a head, but was restrained by a combination of a recognition of the risk of total war and the clarity of the border separating one bloc from another. In those places – Berlin in Europe and Third World ‘troublespots’ – where the basic political relationships were ambiguous and shifting, the superpowers were liable to get involved militarily but took steps to avoid direct conflict with each other and at times were often able to restrain their clients when they clashed. There were understood ‘conventions of crisis management’, and over the years forms of communication developed (i.e. the ‘hot line’) to prevent conflicts where only ‘non-vital interests’ were at stake to get out of hand and to ensure sensitive treatment where ‘vital’ interests were at stake. Increasing care was also taken in the definition of truly vital interests. It was very evident that when international institutions were engaged it was either because they were the expressions of one of the two power blocs (NATO/WTO) or because, as with the UN, the two blocs had reached a stalemate and recognised the need for compromise.

Bitter and bloody warfare was most likely to take place in those regions where East/West interests were not directly engaged. It was a natural part of the game in Third World conflicts to find an ‘anti-communist’ or ‘anti-colonial’ rhetoric to help draw an external power in to help retrieve an otherwise hopeless situation. The vulnerable sought to manufacture a strategic imperative for the Great Powers which they dare not ignore, even when they suspected that it might be artificial. As the regional political configurations became more complex, and local powers were able to play the role once played by the external Great Powers, it became difficult to generate a strategic imperative simply out of a fear of Soviet – or Western – influence. Gradually, most regions other than Europe began to disengage from the Cold War system. When conflicts then occurred outside the main lines of East-West antagonism – in

South Asia, the Middle East and Africa – it was often difficult to contain violence. As these regions became more troublesome it became even less likely that external interests would become engaged.

At the same time the Cold War system did make possible the use of economic and political measures to solve the classic security dilemma of Western Europe – Franco-German antagonism. After the Second World War, American hegemony, in itself a function of the developing Cold War, was reflected in the Marshall Plan for economic reconstruction. The development of the European Community was made possible by a lack of contrary pulls from the East and the blocking off of a large chunk of not very digestible Europe as a result of the Iron Curtain. The durability and stability of the overall political framework was critical to a peaceful, integrated Western European development. In those areas where international relations became intimate, as a deliberate result of policy, enterprises transformed economic relations. Where relations remained closed they were unable to make much of a dent. Thus, activity within both the economic and military spheres was governed by fundamental political relations – but as these were remarkably constant it was possible to treat much economic and military activity as almost independent variables.

ECONOMISTS AND STRATEGISTS

The resultant apolitical tendency in both economics and strategic studies is now causing a lot of problems to both as they attempt to adjust to new circumstances. Economists are thus continually surprised by the fact that their old models are no longer working, while many strategists have been made redundant if they were the type obsessed with the minutiae of military balances. Strategic studies have been forced the hard way to rediscover the link between the military and political spheres that, since the days of Clausewitz, has been at the heart of the subject. Even so, they often appear woefully ignorant of economic tendencies. At the moment there is really no manageable conceptual framework for handling the relationship between economics and strategy. Discussions of 'economic security' tend

to revolve around questions of protectionism and the vulnerability of raw material supplies. In current circumstances it is necessary to look much deeper into the economic foundations of political stability.

Such an exercise might help in the analysis of the use of economic instruments as substitutes for armed force. In the past, the East-West political stalemate made it tempting to use economic and political means to ease the strains of Europe's division. Economic measures employed during this period, in particular technology transfers and credits, failed to help modernise the socialist system and probably subverted it further. Communism collapsed because it lacked the legitimacy and self-confidence to cope with the consequences of chronic economic failure. The faults were structural and beyond intelligent reform within the confines of the system. This meant that local élites had little resistance to either internal or external demands for fundamental reform. In all of this, it was possible for Bonn effectively to buy compliance from Moscow in German unification by generous financial transfers (none of which, again, seem to have helped the development of the Soviet economy).

This confirmed one legacy of the pre-October 1990 Ostpolitik: the habit of 'pocket book' diplomacy. This causes problems not only in shaping other's expectations – as could be seen in German responses to the Gulf conflict – but also that when practised as diplomacy it results in so-called 'economic' measures; being bribes in return for political favours instead of transfers of resources to ease the pain of structural reform. This was evident in the pre-coup debate on a 'Marshall Plan' for the Soviet Union. So long as there was no credible process of economic reform in place the net result of assistance was to help the élite hold on to its precarious position. The desire was to 'help Gorby' but the net result was also to help the hardliners who were still well placed to block reform.

Recent developments in Europe are best viewed as the continuation, indeed the culmination, of the post-war processes of decolonisation. There is nothing in that history to provide encouragement to the view that economic measures will be of much value in dispute management. Aid does little good if it simply involves transfers of funds into the hands of an incompetent and bloated bureaucratic élite and fails to address

structural problems. This is not to deny its value when reinforcing economies making the necessary structural changes, or on targeted projects and disaster relief. Nonetheless, regional political stability is most likely to depend on domestic political stability combined with market-oriented policies and access to Western markets. Of course, as the newly industrialised economies, the East Asian 'tigers', have discovered, success in this can also produce a defensive reaction in the West. Any East European 'tigers' may face the same reaction.

The post Cold War 'Ostpolitik' concentrated on Poland, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and Hungary – which could be seen as the most culturally sympathetic, geographically contiguous, politically stable and economically advanced. The current association agreement with these states facilitates exports to the EC except in those areas where these countries are best placed to export. The split of the Czechs from the Slovaks indicates that even these more promising states still have some way to go in consolidating their political progress.

The proclamation of a democratic constitution does not in itself guarantee democratic practice. Many of the post-communist states are still in the process of self-definition and so are vulnerable to civil upheaval and secessionist movements. They can tax the most established democratic system – never mind one that is still feeling its way and is having to cope with horrendous problems of economic adjustment.

It would be unwise to draw excessively close parallels between experiences in the 'Third World' and the current traumas of what was once the 'Second World'. In economic terms there are differences with both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, the obvious replacement to communism is seen to be Western liberal capitalism. Economic modernisers no longer have a credible state socialist model. There are authoritarian options for capitalism using Chilean or Korean models (although not necessarily viable in heterogeneous societies) and there are potential non-capitalist alternatives based on various forms of romantic nationalism, often with strong religious inspiration. However, most key political leaders accept – at least rhetorically – that they should be working to a West European model, and if possible eventual membership of the EC. This is the basis for optimism on the use of economic measures to man-

age the dynamics of change in post-communist Europe. It can be added that geographic proximity and an educated population tend to work in their favour.

The negative side of the comparison is in part structural and in part temporal. The structural aspects relate to the fact that before these states can become modern economies they must first de-industrialise on a substantial scale; and this creates high urban unemployment. As can be seen with the strains of German unification, it is difficult to explain why the full benefits of a welfare state should not be kept in place simply because there are no longer the funds to support it. This might be less worrisome were it not for the unfortunate timing of the events in terms of the international economy. They have come after the 1980s boom. Just when spare capital was needed it was no longer to be found. If the revolutions of 1989 had come a few years earlier the story might have been very different.

Nowhere is the link between economic and political developments clearer than in the case of Germany. Many of the post-Cold War prognoses of 1990 postulated the inexorable rise of Germany as the dominant regional power. East Germany simply appeared as an add-on to the successful industrial machine of the West. Its large population, geographic location and formidable currency meant that Bonn – and soon Berlin – must provide the pre-eminent voice in European politics. Yet the reality, at least in the short and possibly medium term, has been that unification has sapped rather than enhanced German power. Monetary union between East and West on over-generous terms, was followed by a collapse of the Russian market. The high subsidies to which the German government are now committed is exceeding the capacity of the economy to grow and is leading to indebtedness. This will be a drag on the German economy and the West European economy as a whole.

These problems come before any adverse knock-on effects from continuing economic weakness in post-communist Europe which may render nugatory some past investments, as well as create problems of refugees and environmental disaster. Obviously, if a virtuous cycle can be set in motion then this would allow for substantial benefits both to the local economies and to the German economy, which has been the major player. All that can be said is that before these pay-offs arrive, there is

going to be a need for steady nerves. One requirement of a virtuous cycle in Eastern Europe is improved access to EC markets, especially for agricultural products and textiles. The defensiveness of France in this regard was another factor leading to tension in 1992, with Paris apparently ready to jeopardise a GATT agreement and risk a trade war rather than put even more pressure on its farming community.

There is a real risk of disillusionment in post-communist Europe. Concentrating on the more promising cases may be realistic but it does risk removing hope from other societies and even the future of these three is by no means assured. Moreover, if we think of economic measures as instruments of crisis management, then some preparation needs to be made for hard choices. Making economic support conditional on both political and economic reform as well as good behaviour in external relations becomes problematic when some, but not all, of these conditions are being met. It is always difficult to pull the plug on a whole society because of unacceptable policies by its government.

Sanctions are often adopted as the most natural 'non-violent' alternative to armed force. They can be effective over the long-term so long as it is possible to be patient, the target is effectively isolated and there is a link to an imaginative diplomacy (as perhaps happened in southern Africa). They can also provide the basis for the development of an international coalition that would be difficult to forge, in the first instance, on the basis of armed force (as in the Gulf). However, it is unwise to view sanctions as a non-violent alternative. Often to have an impact they must cause real distress (which has been a continual dilemma over the anti-Iraq sanctions) while to succeed they may well require armed force to prevent the target breaking the sanctions through superior strength (as with the defence of Saudi Arabia and the blockade in the Gulf). Furthermore, if a problem is serious enough to warrant all the effort entailed by effective sanctions – and these show little prospect of success – then it is hard to argue that it is insufficiently serious to warrant military measures.

THE ROLE OF FORCE

This is not to argue that military instruments will always be appropriate where economic instruments fail. Just as wealthy states will face domestic constraints on their ability to follow enlightened economic policies vis-a-vis developing states, so will they face even greater constraints when it comes to placing their young men and women at risk. Western states regularly insist that they have no desire to act as the 'world's policeman' even though, in practice, that may be the role they are expected to play. Decisive military intervention in armed struggles in the more disorderly parts of the world to enforce international norms will be no more than occasional, though humanitarian intervention may be more frequent.

Again it is instructive to look at past practice outside the main areas of East-West conflict. The alternative to direct intervention into the affairs of other regions is to promote some local balance of power. This can be done by one of two ways which can, for obvious reasons, soon come into contradiction with one another. Either support can be given – through military advice, training and equipment – to an otherwise weak power to allow it to defend itself, or to a relatively strong power to encourage it to take responsibility for regional order. The problem with the latter course is the risk of identification with the range of political objectives harboured by the potential regional hegemon and of the consequences of a sudden change in its élite.

The problem with the former course is that it requires an enduring commitment and may still not be enough – prompting requests for direct intervention to save a client in mortal danger. Much of the discussion on 'controlling the arms trade' presumes that measures can be found to remove armed force as an instrument of local power politics. This would be a dubious proposition even if starting with a clean sheet, but in circumstances where military instruments are already widely available it is hopeless. To end support for a weak client simply means aggravating its vulnerability. On the other hand, simply supplying equipment rather than manpower to a small state is rarely enough to stop it being overwhelmed by a neighbour which has ample supplies of both, as Kuwait discovered.

It would be unwise for the foreseeable future to assume that