

How Bush can help build a new Europe

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Yesterday's defence White Paper, despite its cautious approach, acknowledged that in this decade we shall "move forward a very long way" in European security. But it failed to provide a bold vision of the route the West should take. Perhaps the time is approaching for the United States to expand its vision of a Europe united and free; to clarify what kind of security structure it requires.

To accomplish this, President Bush will need to adopt a bolder approach than that which has brought him success in Europe so far. During most of the Cold War, the US led by pulling Europe along with the force of its ideas. The Bush administration, however, accurately judged the change in the European environment as well as the decline in US authority. So Bush has led quietly by building a consensus and then articulating it to European leaders. The formula has worked well since the Nato summit last May, but it may not work well for the establishment of a new European security system, because a consensus seems to be building which is inimical to US and British interests.

As the fog begins to lift from the changing European landscape, Nato must address three related security problems.

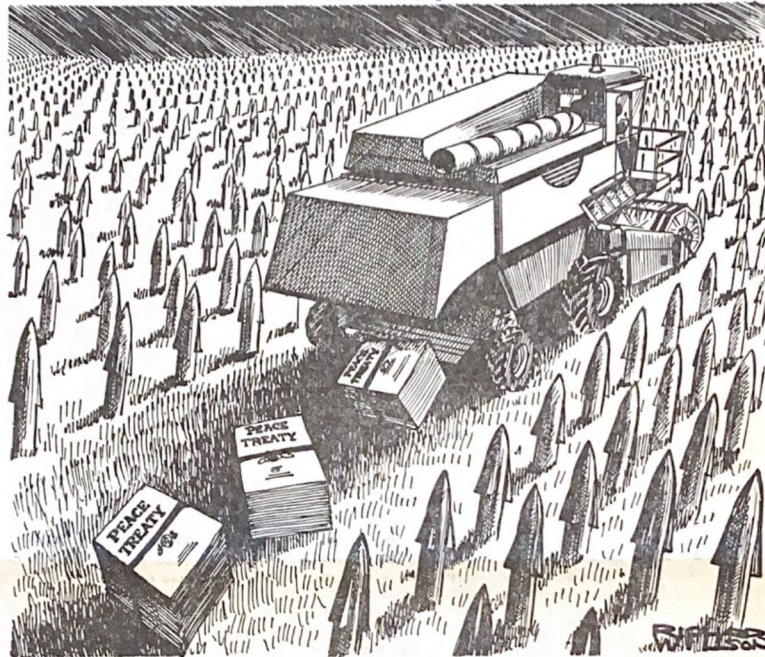
First, having failed to gain Warsaw Pact support for a neutral Germany, Mr Gorbachov may well concentrate his efforts on ensuring the removal of US troops and nuclear weapons from West Germany as Soviet troops are forced out of East Germany. But any provision in a two-plus-four agreement which banned Nato forces from a united Germany undermines the concept of mutual defence on which Nato is built.

Moscow policy-makers are divided as to the wisdom of leaving Germany without the stabilizing influence of US troops, but those seeking symmetry appear to have the upper hand. And Moscow is not without influence, since the new Germany will want an orderly departure of Soviet troops.

Polls show that most German people favour removal of foreign troops from German soil. Chancellor Kohl, however, favours retaining some US troops after the Soviets are gone — a view shared by most other Nato leaders. But Gorbachov will still be able to exert intensive pressure on Kohl to remove all foreign forces.

The second problem is the growing political pressure for a "European peace order", a "European confederation" or a "common European home". The concepts are Utopian and vague. Many people hope that Nato will eventually be replaced by a new scheme based on the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE).

Unfortunately, history teaches us that most all-encompassing collective security schemes have serious limitations. To act, the



Hans Binnendijk offers a plan for a Western security system to which Moscow could not object

CSCE today requires the unanimous vote of 35 nations, which would make effective defence impossible.

But rule by majority, in the manner of the League of Nations, is not the answer either. Four of the 35 nations are nuclear powers, and it is difficult to envisage a majority taking timely military action against one of these unless an existing alliance were attacked. In addition, any international system which committed US forces to combat by majority vote not subject to a US veto would probably be dismissed by the American Senate, as was the 1919 Treaty of Versailles.

A United Nations of Europe is another model now popular on the continent (with a European Security Council made up of the four CSCE nuclear powers plus Germany), but 45 years' experience have demonstrated that the UN is effective at peace-keeping only when the protagonists accept the presence of its Blue Helmets.

The third problem is the potential for instability in post-Warsaw Pact Eastern Europe. When repression was lifted, the fissures of old were revealed: border disputes, ethnic quarrels, nationalism, anti-Semitism, secessionist pressures and political factionalism. The leadership transition continues, and the shift from command to market economies will complicate matters by causing temporary but

acute dislocation and hardship. Recent civil strife between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania may be a taste of things to come.

Should conflict erupt again in Eastern Europe, there may be pressure to intervene, as there was during the Romanian revolution; but who will organize it, and how can misunderstandings and escalation be prevented?

To deal with these problems while protecting the integrity of Nato, President Bush may have to lead opinion instead of following it, by presenting a new vision of the European security system. In doing so, he might consider expanding on the themes of the Berlin speech by his Secretary of State, James Baker.

European security could be stably supported by three legs. An enhanced CSCE acting as a United Nations of Europe could combine arbitration and crisis management with a modest European peace-keeping force to deal with minor unrest in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Major powers could be given a veto over the use of the European Blue Helmets.

Nato would be the second leg of the system, to deter possible conflict involving the Soviet Union. It could also co-ordinate arms control and quality-of-life issues. Nato's membership could expand to include all democratic

free-market states in the CSCE.

Under this arrangement, US forces in Europe probably numbering fewer than 100,000 could provide an infrastructure for large reinforcements if the Soviet threat should re-emerge. They might include aircraft with nuclear capability and mobile, rapid-action forces for multi-lateral European peace-keeping activities agreed by the US and other members of the European Security Council.

Under these circumstances, maintenance of US forces in Germany would be easier to sell to the American, German and the Soviet peoples. A reasonable degree of American influence in Europe would be preserved.

The third leg of this new security triad would be economic. Forward defence, traditionally a military concept, must now be seen as an economic concept too. Healthy democracies in Eastern Europe may soon be Nato's most effective forward defence. US assistance to the reformed countries of Eastern Europe could contribute to the EC effort to bring former Warsaw Pact members into the Western fold. Victory for democracy will be expensive in Panama and Nicaragua, and even more so in Eastern Europe, but it is a price worth paying.

A strategy such as this, put forward persuasively by President Bush, could capture the imagination of Europeans, ensure general peace, and establish a mechanism to deal with instability in the newly liberated areas of Europe.

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