

## The virtues and drawbacks of stability

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Understandably enough, strategic stability has been endowed with particular virtues in the decades following the «European civil war» of 1914-1945. Not only had the bloodier lessons of instability been driven home with particular vigour as a result of the two World Wars, but the nuclear factor, with the prospect of the ultimate destruction of mankind, had further underscored the advantages of a stable strategic regime. That being said, stability cannot be considered as possessing intrinsically positive value, even in the nuclear age. Not only was this stability acquired at an unacceptably high price - forty years of division of Europe and the deprivation of the Eastern population of its basic freedoms cannot simply be shrugged off; but more fundamentally, an exceedingly stable regime can only be of an artificial nature, unless one is positing total lifelessness: only death is truly stable and that is of course not what is sought in the pursuit of strategic stability. An apparently immutable, frozen strategic order, of the sort we have lived under during the historically exceptional episode of the Cold War rested on a set of contradictions which in time unfolded all the more suddenly, sometimes explosively, in that their evolution had been forced underground. We have been exceptionally fortunate in that the revolutionary resolution of these contradictions in Eastern Europe has not resulted in international tension or crisis. No such assurance can be given as to the manner in which these contradictions will in the future be resolved in what is still called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In Marxian terms, the strategic order of the last forty years contained the seeds of its own destruction, with excessive stability becoming in turn a cause of instability.

Conversely, a measure of instability, including instability in the strategic arena, can be a sign of a creative and positive development of our societies and the international system in which they operate. What should be sought therefore is not stability for its own sake, but the means by which a much more mobile European setting can be organised so as to avoid

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a catastrophic chain of events. In this respect the nuclear factor will continue to be of essence, both in being the strongest stabiliser of all - nothing deters like nuclear deterrence - and in presenting the greatest of dangers, in case deterrence breaks down. Although nuclear deterrence or the nuclear threat will no longer be in the foreground, as it was during the Cold War confrontation, the fundamental change in the European strategic landscape does not entail the disappearance of the nuclear reality, even if the latter will shift to the background of a hopefully less sinister European setting.

One corollary of these remarks is that analysts and policy-makers will increasingly have to move away from the static, rigid concept of a European *order* to the dynamic, occasionally disorderly nature of a European *system* composed of moving parts.

### **Pace, nature and effects of change on strategic stability**

In examining the manner in which the shift from order to system is occurring, it may be useful to make a geographical point which will in itself illustrate the massive character of that change. When talking about «Eastern Europe» or the «East», I will be distinguishing three rather different areas:

*Central Europe*, i. e. Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary; these are the states which have adopted Western-style democracies and which historically do not belong to the Byzantine and Orthodox traditions. The former GDR was part of this area, but given its rapid absorption into the Federal Republic of Germany, it need not be mentioned further in this context.

*South-Eastern Europe*, i. e. Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and what is still today the Yugoslav Federation. These countries have not (yet?) managed the transition to Council of Europe standards in terms of political democracy and human rights.

*The Soviet Union*, currently including the Baltic states, the Ukraine, Bielorussia and the Russian-populated parts of the Russian Republic.

These three are as will be used for reasons of convenience in this presentation. However, this political geography itself has become highly mobile, as we have seen in the last two years. In the future, parts of Yugoslavia may "migrate" to Central Europe as may portions of the Western part of the Soviet Union... These three areas correspond to different tracks in terms of the pace and nature of reform.

In *Central Europe*, what has been baptised the new "Springtime of the Peoples", in reference to the Revolution of 1848, has been essentially non-violent, at least on the part of the societies seeking and securing their political liberation. These are also countries in which the nettle of economic reform has been grasped most quickly, and possibly decisively (notably in the case of Poland). These characteristics have major implications in terms of policy recommendations for the Western countries: the expression "Western" here being shorthand for the more affluent of the market economies (EC, EFTA, United States, Canada, Japan...).

In *South-Eastern Europe*, change has been rather more patchy whether one considers process or outcome: violence was - and to some extent still is - the hallmark of the unfinished Romanian revolution; a combination of palace revolution and popular participation also characterised change in Bulgaria, albeit in a more peaceful mode; Albania remains in its awkward corner; whereas Yugoslavia has witnessed the extremes of repression, notably in Kosovo, and a blend of communism and populism in the Serbian-dominated part of the Federation on the one hand, of reasonably smooth moves towards political and economic pluralism in Slovenia and Croatia (i. e. those parts of the country of non-Ottoman, non-Orthodox heritage).

The *Soviet Union* has been the seat of trends not unlike those just mentioned. However, the scale is infinitely more vast than that which may exist in Yugoslavia, and the legacy of central-planning and single-party rule so much heavier and generally longer lasting than in Central and South-East Europe. The uncertainties and the potential for catastrophic levels of internal confrontations are greater - and of much greater import - than elsewhere in Europe.

Before considering the opportunities, risks and challenges which may flow from these varying manifestations of reform and revolution, several strategic consequences can already be drawn from what has occurred:

For all practical purposes, *the East-West polarisation no longer exists*. There may be differences of interest and outlook between the countries of the East and the West: indeed, divergences may well become prominent if North America and Western Europe were to go to war in the Gulf whereas Moscow would still press for a peaceful outcome. However, no permanent confrontation along East-West lines will structure the European order, or system, in strategic terms. For this reason, what would have been seen in the past as earth-shaking events such as Germany uniting in NATO and the CFE agreements (leading to

drastic force cuts affecting essentially a Soviet Union bereft of any real allies), such events, important as they are, do not in themselves upset the strategic situation precisely because the East-West polarisation and force balance have ceased to be meaningful. What is of essential significance is the dislocation of the Warsaw Pact and the possible disintegration of the Soviet Union (and on a smaller scale, of Yugoslavia).

*A strategic vacuum now exists in Central and South-Eastern Europe:* although the legal fiction of the WTO still exists, its non-Soviet members are now in a state of suspended animation from a strategic viewpoint. Neither allies within a functioning organisation, nor clearly locked into intra-regional antagonistic relationships, nor truly neutral (whether neutrality be defined on Austrian, Swiss or Finnish lines) these states have yet to acquire positive 'strategic identities'. This is true not only intrinsically, but also extrinsically: from a NATO viewpoint, all that we know is what these countries aren't - they aren't enemies, or proxies of adversaries, or allies or reliable neutrals; nor have we otherwise integrated them into our own strategic thinking, if only because we don't know what they are, or will be. For this reason, it is important not to prejudge the strategic fate of these countries by relying on pre-World War II strategic parallels, such as the 'Cordon Sanitaire' or the 'Petite Entente', or by using expressions such as the East European 'glacis': loaded words and historical analogies are, for the time being, best avoided.

### **Opportunities, risks and imponderables**

From what precedes, it is clear that unknowns abound as far as the prospects for strategic stability are concerned. That being said, *the sense of opportunity* which this somewhat confused situation presents should not be lost sight of: we have already been able to seize the opportunity presented by the end of the East-West polarisation, with the unification of Germany and the peaceful resolution of the German question. We now have the opportunity of establishing a security system which may be as successful in avoiding war in Europe as the Cold War order was, without having to bear the fearful burdens associated with the Cold War. The point is not theoretical, and it is heartening to see that the opportunities being followed through within the CSCE - witness the forthcoming Paris Summit -, within the EC and WEU, within the Atlantic Alliance (e. g. the London Summit communiqué). And the point deserves to be heavily underscored for there is a tendency in parts of the strategic community, not least in my own country, of being transfixed by the new risks and unknowns, thus letting opportunities slip by. London, Paris and Moscow

were more particularly prone to this phenomenon during the months immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

This does not mean that the new risks and imponderables flowing from change in the East are trivial, far from it, as a brief list of real or potential risks indicates. For my part, I will single out five interlocking areas of concern and uncertainty with a potential for great damage in terms of stability, including strategic stability:

The *collapse of the new democracies* and the abortion of democratic change in large parts of the East. As Central Europe enters its first "democratic winter", the challenges it faces are increasing at a rate which can only cast grave doubts as to the sustainability of radical economic reforms: the third oil shock, the move to hard currency trade, the immediate pain and the comparatively slow pay-off of reform are of major proportion. "Argentinisation" may be a word which could apply were the forces of political populism and economic indecisiveness to prevail in the new democracies. The same causes could kill in the womb moves towards responsible democratisation in other parts of the East, where party politics are not exactly conducted along the lines existing in mature democracies. An Eastern Europe which would in some ways resemble the pre-1939 years would not be a congenial area from a strategic perspective.

*Massive population movements.* If the collapse of democratisation is only a virtuality, population movements are already a reality: there are more than 700,000 displaced persons in the USSR and close to 1 million Soviets of German origin and some 2 million Soviet Jews are already more or less on the move. As the USSR adopts Western standards in terms of access to passports, literally millions will wish to emigrate temporarily or permanently. With some 20 million non-Russians living in Russia and 20 million Russians living outside of Russia, a very large pool of potential candidates for emigration exists, as a function of ethnic strife in the USSR. The same applies, mutatis mutandis, in Yugoslavia, not to mention economic migration on a large scale from a number of Eastern European countries: in a sense, the East is now part of the South. How will we cope with potentially enormous flows, and how will our actions and reactions affect international relations in Europe? There may be a case here for coordinating the EC's policies with those of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia (i. e. the prospective entrants into the Council of Europe), vis-à-vis emigration from the Balkans and Russia.

*Ethnic conflict.* The potential for strategic destabilisation resulting directly from ethnic strife is great indeed. A collapse of Yugoslavia could not leave Bulgaria, Hungary or Albania

indifferent. The interface between the Ukraine and some of its neighbours is not crystal clear, to mention another example among many. Suffice it to look at the imbroglios between the Moldavians and the Gagauz and Russian denizens of Moldova to see how such strife can unfold. How should such confrontations be handled by those whose interests are directly or indirectly affected by them? The good news here is that, in contrast to pre-1939 and pre-1914 Europe, the general wish of the outside powers is to keep out of trouble, not to try to take advantage of it. The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 also provides a solid bulwark against the forceful change of international borders.

*Nuclear weapons in the Soviet Union.* More than 12,000 strategic nuclear weapons and a comparable number of tactical nuclear weapons are based or home-ported in the USSR. A number of these have been stationed outside of the Russian Federation. Authoritative voices (notably that of General Moysseyev) have indicated that such weapons are being 'withdrawn from troubled areas'. This leaves two questions in abeyance: what defines such 'troubled areas'? and what happens if there are no untroubled regions? Without attempting to answer these questions there is reason to believe that tactical nuclear weapons have been, or are being, withdrawn from the Baltic States and Transcaucasia; however, strategic nuclear weapons remain in place in the Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Apart from the very different and limited examples of the putsch in French Algeria in 1961 and turmoil in China in May 1989, there is no practical example of nuclear weapons risking to escape central control, or indeed of central control itself disappearing in a nuclear power. The strategic consequences cannot, however, be trivial, if warring factions or extremist groups take possession of nuclear weapons.

*Weimarisation.* I use the expression 'weimarisation' to describe the type of dynamic which could unfold in a Soviet Union or a Russia in which the perception of humiliation and isolation could lead to the search for a form of revanche. This is not a present danger, nor can it be said that the outside world is bent on humiliating or isolating Moscow. The risk exists nonetheless, with potentially immense strategic consequences.

### **Policy recommendations**

In trying to elaborate policies adapted to the new strategic landscape, one factor should be considered as certain, and that is that uncertainty has become a major and permanent feature of that landscape. The predictability of the old order was exceptional, and we should not expect that by waiting a bit longer we will possess a much higher measure of

certainty. As some uncertainties disappear - the resolution of the German question for example - others of equal proportions emerge, such as the fate of the Soviet Union or the future of the Middle East. Planning with uncertainty will therefore be the name of the game.

For my part, I would be tempted to enunciate three guidelines for action in an era of unpredictability which may contribute towards the goal I suggested in my opening remarks: minimising strategic instability without stultifying the creative nature of an open, pluralistic European system. On the basis of these guidelines, I will briefly draw a few institutional conclusions.

1. We need to enhance *the openness of the emerging European system*. Most starkly put, this will mean offering the prospect of active participation by all countries in all institutions of which they meet the basic requirements: our clubs should be open to all who meet conditions of admission, and not entail any *numerus clausus*. This proposition has another angle to it: there should be at least one major multilateral institution in which every European country can join, and actively participate, notwithstanding internal difficulties, or even disintegration. This is the most expedient way to ward off the risk of weimarisation, and of forcing as broad as possible a treatment of those issues - ethnic strife, population movements - which may affect European security.

2. *Nuclear deterrence cannot be discarded*. Nuclear deterrence will not only continue to be necessary to deal with the consequences presented by risks as diverse as nuclear turmoil (or blackmail) in the USSR, the consequences of eventual weimarisation in Russia, or emerging nuclear threats in the Middle East. More basically, the demotion of nuclear deterrence would enhance the 'de-nuclearisation of attitudes' towards conflict. Such a change of attitudes would favour a return to risk-taking of the pre-1945 variety in Europe, and of doing so in a context where nuclear weapons do exist and where any conflict therefore has an unacceptably high potential for catastrophic chain reactions, literally and figuratively. Naturally, this does not mean that deterrence should remain of the Cold War variety: the adjectives 'existential' and 'minimal', or even 'cooperative' are the apt ones here.

3. *Economic assistance* to the East will have to be both generous and highly selective. This is easier said than done. Realities in both East and West point towards a growing degree of selectivity:

- The West is rapidly losing its capital generating capacity of the 70s and 80s, with Germany having to concentrate on the costs of unity and Japan undergoing major financial

adjustment. Petro-dollars won't be as readily available for massive recycling into the financial system as was the case in the 70s. Therefore, there will be little room for the sort of misguided profligacy of the past, when the great petro-dollar recycle allowed the financial community to misguidedly lend vast sums of money to mismanaged Latin America and centrally planned Poland.

- The East is to a large extent incapable of using 'Marshall Plan'-type aid in a practical manner. Only those countries which prove that they can help themselves through radical movement towards economic pluralism will be appropriate recipients for relatively massive economic assistance and investment. At the *other* end of *the scale*, *severe* disruption, not least in the USSR, could call for international aid of a very different sort, of a humanitarian nature, akin to food aid to Subsaharan Africa, the Horn of Africa or Cambodia.

This makes the case for selectivity - but what of generosity? Notwithstanding the impending capital crunch in the West, it is in the West's strategic interest that economic reforms succeed where it is undertaken in earnest: what Western Europe does not need for its long-term security is a 'strategic slum' on its Eastern doorstep. And if such reform is undertaken in earnest, a Marshall Plan-type approach combined with infrastructural aid becomes a long term investment, not a case of misplaced and unaffordable charity. The same applies to measures such as the opening of Western European markets to Eastern exports.

These propositions have institutional implications, which affect what can be termed the «institutional triad» of the European system, i. e. the CSCE, the Western European organisations (the EC and others), the Atlantic Alliance - a triad which may play for European security the same stabilising role as the traditional strategic nuclear triads have played, admittedly in a somewhat tenuous fashion.

The CSCE's basic virtue is that of fulfilling proposition one: drawing all countries in, be it by virtue of geography or of European security interests, from Alaska to Kamchatka via the Atlantic. The institutionalisation of the CSCE will have the advantage not only of reinforcing and upgrading the participation of states such as the USSR, but also of allowing it to play a role in defusing conflict and, possibly, of coordinating responses vis-à-vis ethnic and other strife. The CSCE is not, however, a collective security organisation, if only because it operates by consensus. Formulae of majority voting or proposals to create a group of nations «more equal than others» deciding upon the security of their neighbours will not be easily devised in the CSCE framework, to put it mildly. Lastly, the CSCE will



have to evolve rules of representation for states such as Russia, Lithuania or Slovenia, emerging from looser, or disintegrating, Soviet and Yugoslav federations.

The Western European organisations (which include the IEPG, the WEU, the EC and the Council of Europe) will exercise a growing attraction in the East, as the barriers disappear. Here the proposition that 'all those who are fit to join a club, should be allowed to join' should apply. This does not entail quick membership, with the possible exception of the Council of Europe; but there should be a clearly stated *vocation à l'adhésion*, to use a French expression, once a state has entered into associateship with these bodies, not least the EC: this would inter alia provide a useful 'light at the end of the tunnel' for nations which will be able to sustain the harsh effects of radical reform all the better if they know that these efforts will eventually allow them to switch from the outer to the inner circle. The corollary of this is that the EC itself may want to move towards an EMS-like posture in the arena of security, with the WEU becoming the EC's core of states subscribing to an automatic security guarantee. This calls not for the merger of the EC and the WEU - it would be a shame to lose the security guarantee contained in the latter's binding treaty - which would make enlargement of the EC more difficult; it would however entail a convergence of the EC and the WEU, possibly in the framework of European Political Cooperation. I finally assume that in all this, the EC will be the pivot of the European system, an assumption which rests largely on the success of the forthcoming inter-governmental conferences on economic and monetary union and political union.

Lastly, NATO. The Alliance will continue to be indispensable: to extend a measure of US security guarantee to its European allies, to involve the United States in the management of democratic Europe's affairs, to reassure all and sundry (including the Soviet Union). This will remain true even if NATO were, in time, to become what I call «EATO», a European-American Treaty Organisation, along increasingly bilateral lines, between North America on the one hand, and the EC/WEU on the other... Nuclear deterrence would remain one indispensable component of NATO's contribution to security.

I have made little mention until now of so-called «out-of-area» issues. They are however not without importance with regard to the topic of this presentation.

First of all, the end of the East-West polarisation has also fundamentally altered the nature of the North-South divide. Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union, is in effect now part of the South from the viewpoint of economic and societal issues. In strategic terms,

«out-of area» begins at the Oder and the Leitha. In other words, the manner in which we conceive nuclear deterrence in the future, or the handling of population movements, will have to integrate the West's traditional out-of-area approach with the new Eastern reality: it will no longer be possible to deal separately with the Eastern and Southern dimensions of such issues. This pleads in favour of complementing CSCE with regionally-based organisations, such as a grouping of Southern European and Northern African states.

Secondly, much of what I mentioned in my earlier remarks depends to a crucial degree on the outcome of the Gulf crisis. If the international community secures an outcome in full conformity with UN Security Council Resolutions 660 and onwards, expressions such as collective security, alliance relations, UN action, security guarantees, will see their meaning strengthened. Conversely, if Iraq comes out of the crisis with the equivalent of the Sudetenland in its possession, then we will go back to the unwelcome mores of the pre-1939 era: weak alliances, ineffective multilateral institutions, 'insecurity' guarantees, will flow from the victory of one tinpot dictator against the whole international community. Nuclear proliferation, unbridled national defence expenditure, will be seen as the way to go for all those harbouring ambitions similar to Saddam Hussein's - and the same means will have to be sought by those who will find it necessary to check the progress of such regional hegemonies, while isolationism will be sought by others: but isolationism is not an option available to Europe, if only for geographic reasons.

It is unusual for a single international crisis to have such a formative influence on a scale so vastly greater than the narrower theatre of the military confrontation itself. Yet such is the case and I would urge all those who are thinking about the future of European stability, as I have tried to do here, to take the full measure of how strongly dependent that stability is on that contest about a small faraway country, on the confines of the Arabian desert.

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