

CHARTING A NEW COURSE AT NATO'S FIRST POST-COLD WAR SUMMIT

The heads of state of the Western World come triumphant to the July 5-6 NATO Summit in London. Only a year ago, they met in Brussels to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty. Little did they know that in the ensuing year, revolutions would sweep the European continent and their long-time nemesis, the Warsaw Pact, effectively would collapse. The worst of the Cold War may be over, but NATO's job is not finished. Until a democratic and decolonized Soviet Union emerges, the Atlantic Alliance will be needed to balance Soviet power on the continent. The task before NATO leaders at the summit is to define the essential strategies and capabilities that will be needed to meet this basic mission in a changing Europe.

NATO leaders face a retreating, weakened Soviet Union which nonetheless continues to press its case skillfully. The message from Moscow is that the Soviet Union feels threatened by German membership in NATO, by U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, and by NATO's "flexible response" military doctrine, which reserves the right of the Western powers to use nuclear weapons to repel a Soviet invasion. The Kremlin since last year has issued a stream of proposals to address these putative fears, ranging from neutralizing Germany to denuclearizing Europe. Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze on June 22 unveiled a surprise plan to give the four victorious World War II powers — the U.S., Britain, France, and the Soviet Union — ongoing occupation rights in a unified Germany.

Europe's Real Problem. In reality, the Soviet Union is the last country in Europe that needs reassuring. It has a 5 million-strong army, about 25,000 nuclear weapons, and more tanks than all of NATO and the rest of the Warsaw Pact combined. If such Soviet allies as Czechoslovakia and Hungary, with barely 300,000 ill-equipped troops and not a nuclear weapon between them, do not feel threatened by NATO, why should the Soviet Union? Even if it withdraws all its troops from Eastern Europe, the U.S.S.R. will remain Europe's only nuclear superpower and, by virtue of its military mobilization potential and vast territory, its predominant land power. Moscow does not have a European security problem; the Soviet Union is Europe's security problem.

Sometimes it seems that NATO leaders accept the contention that it is the Soviet Union, rather than its neighbors, which needs reassurance. George Bush said at the May 30-June 3 Washington summit with Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO will reconsider its military strategy to make it appear "less threatening" to Moscow. West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher told a NATO Foreign Ministers conference on May 5 that NATO had to "supersede the power politics of the past." All this talk is relatively harmless so long as NATO leaders do not come to take their own press releases too seriously.

Hard-Headed Look. Behind closed doors in London, however, NATO leaders will have to get past the rhetoric aimed at assuaging Moscow and take a hard-headed look at their military requirements in a changing Europe. This means separating items which are essential to their

security, and therefore non-negotiable, from those which are negotiable. Some points which should be non-negotiable for NATO are:

◆ **NATO's future.** At various times Moscow has suggested either abolishing NATO and the Warsaw Pact or maintaining both in "political" roles. NATO leaders should reaffirm at the London summit that the Western Alliance's future is a matter for its members alone to decide. Its future should not be negotiated with the Soviet Union or tied in any way to the future of the disintegrating Warsaw Pact.

◆ **Germany's option to remain in NATO.** NATO and most of the Warsaw Pact (although not Moscow) have recognized that a strong relationship between Germany and its Western allies is essential to European peace and stability. Moscow still wants a united Germany to be neutral. A neutral Germany, however, would be insecure, vulnerable to Soviet coercion, and ultimately politically and militarily unstable.

◆ **The sovereign right of NATO allies to decide whose forces will be stationed on their territory.** A united Germany, no less than any other NATO country, should be free to invite U.S. forces to remain on its territory and to tell Soviet forces to leave. Moscow is pressing for an agreement that will allow Soviet troops to stay in Germany for up to seven years after unification. The U.S. should encourage its German allies to stand up to Moscow and demand a quick withdrawal of Soviet forces within no more than two years.

◆ **The sovereign right of allies to station nuclear weapons on their territory.** The Soviet Union is the only nuclear superpower in Europe. A united Germany will desire no nuclear weapons of its own, and no country in Europe wants to see it acquire them. Germany and the other non-nuclear or small nuclear powers of Europe therefore must have access to American nuclear protection, including the presence of U.S. nuclear forces on their territories if they want them there.

◆ **No "singling out" of Germany.** Moscow has insisted that the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) talks in Vienna set strict limits of just under 500,000 on the size of German armed forces. While Germany is not likely to deploy a larger army anyway, the proposal inherently is destabilizing because it restricts the size of German forces while leaving that of Soviet armies unconstrained. Bush should stick to the NATO position to discuss armed forces manpower — for Germany and the rest of Europe — at a follow-on round of CFE talks.

While holding ground on these issues, Bush could agree to some changes in NATO's position if it will speed conventional arms reductions and secure a united Germany in NATO. NATO could consider revising its strategy of "forward defense" at the East-West German border by adopting a mobile defense with forces stationed further to the rear in peacetime. "Forward defense" will make little sense once the inter-German border disappears. Further, NATO could expand the role of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), for example, to discuss regional conflicts, in a bid to help Gorbachev save face as the Red Army withdraws from Europe. But, on the verge of its greatest triumph, NATO certainly need not make any concessions — particularly those concerning Germany's participation in NATO as a sovereign and equal ally — which threaten to leave Central Europe open to Soviet power. It was just such an outcome in Europe, after all, which NATO was created to prevent.

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For further information:

Kim R. Holmes and Jay P. Kosminsky, eds., *Reshaping Europe: Strategies for a Post-Cold War Europe* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1990), forthcoming.

Stanley R. Sloan, "The United States and a New Europe: Strategy for the Future," Congressional Research Service Report 90-245 RCO, May 14, 1990.