



CONFIDENTIAL

PM/90/03

THE PRIME MINISTER

Western Security in the 1990s

1. You asked for advice, before your meeting with President Mitterrand on 20 January, about the implications for Western security of the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe.

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

2. There are features of the security arrangements in Europe which have kept the peace for over 40 years and which we must at all costs retain. These are:-

- collective security in the form of a transatlantic alliance with its present membership
- an integrated military structure
- a nuclear component based on land in Europe
- the presence in Europe of substantial numbers of US forces
- a British commitment to the defence of the Central Region.

This minute and its two companions suggest how in changed circumstances we can safeguard these existing facts and thus the security of the United Kingdom.

THE VARIABLES

3. Our policies, in addition to their wider aims (such as promoting democracy and self-determination in Eastern Europe and

/lowering



lowering where possible the level of military confrontation) must be geared to preserve these safeguards. But the means through which they are given expression can, and in some cases should, change. The balance of effort within the Alliance will need to shift in favour of a proportionately greater European contribution. The form, and national division, of the command structure may need updating. The range of nuclear options, and the numbers and types of nuclear weapons which underpin them, are not immutable. The numbers of US forces, and indeed size of the British Army of the Rhine, could be reduced if progress in arms control justifies it. Neither forward defence nor flexible response, concepts which have served the Alliance well up to now, should be interpreted in too rigid a fashion. If we are not to be forced into unwelcome changes which do prejudice our security we must be ready to accept or propose sensible changes which do not.

THE CHALLENGES

4. The challenges to our security as defined above include:
 - the genuine diminution in the military capabilities of the Warsaw Pact and the prospect that the Pact itself may be on the road to disintegration. This increasingly leads public opinion in many Western countries to question the need for robust defence or even for the maintenance of the Alliance itself.
 - The understandable German interest in the prospects and process of re-unification. This causes some people in the Federal Republic to be prepared to contemplate a damagingly high price in security terms in order to achieve it.
 - The pressures on the US defence budget. At the political level the United States' commitment to the defence of Europe is not in question provided that present trends in the East continue. But there is no likelihood of their being able to maintain throughout the 1990s conventional forces in Europe at the level of 275,000 as envisaged in our CFE proposals. Studies are, we understand, under way in Washington geared to a European force



structure of between 100,000 and 200,000 in the mid 1990s compared to the current figure of over 300,000.

THE FUTURE OF THE WARSAW PACT

5. The future of the Warsaw Pact itself is something over which we and our Allies have no direct control or even much influence. As and when the Pact's non-Soviet members establish themselves as free democracies, we must respect their right to choose whether to remain a part of a collective security structure with the Soviet Union; and, if so, how to adapt the Warsaw Pact to this need. They might well choose to meet the security concerns of the Soviet Union by other means, for example by developing their bilateral Treaty relationships in the way that Finland has done. We should not commit ourselves to any public position about whether the Warsaw Pact continues in existence or disappears. In the short term, its preservation would be helpful in maintaining some semblance of stability for Mr Gorbachev and facilitating the conclusion of a CFE Treaty on the basis now under discussion. We should make clear to the East European countries that, if they themselves wish to retain the Warsaw Pact, in a reformed and more democratic body, we will be happy to do business with its members on a collective, as well as an individual, basis. But we must not give the impression that our own collective security arrangements in NATO depend on the continued existence of another military alliance in Europe; nor that further progress in arms control can only be accomplished on a bloc-to-bloc basis. The odds on the Warsaw Pact surviving in anything but name cannot be great. Its basic assumption, that when it came to the point Russian, Polish and other Eastern European soliders would fight on the same side, has already lost credibility.

HOW DO WE PRESERVE WHAT IS ESSENTIAL?

(a) IMPLEMENTING THE CFE TREATY

6. In the short term we need to ensure that the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe now under negotiation in Vienna is brought to a conclusion, and implemented, in a way that best



enhances our security. The Treaty itself (on the assumption that it is concluded by the end of this year on the terms now under discussion) will, as was acknowledged at your seminar on 30 September, be a good one. But we will need to ensure that we present it to our publics in the right perspective (I shall be sending you separately a note on this); and we shall need to ensure that the resulting reductions which it will involve (which overall will be rather modest) are properly co-ordinated.

7. The key problem here will lie in getting the Americans to use this CFE Treaty as the vehicle through which they undertake those reductions in their military forces in Europe which their budgetary difficulties will in any case make inevitable. If this means that they, rather than the European members of NATO, take the lion's share of the Western cuts, then so be it: there is a good case for this on burden-sharing grounds. The danger to avoid is that, having signed and begun implementing the Treaty, the Americans tell us that they need to make further reductions in their own forces; and either undertake these reductions unilaterally or seek to press us for that reason alone into a further arms control negotiation. Tom King and I will make these points to our American counterparts when we visit Washington at the end of this month. This message would be all the more effective if it was conveyed by all the main European Allies.

(b) THE DEMANDS FOR MORE ARMS CONTROL

8. A CFE Treaty, even if signed by the end of this year, will take some time (perhaps 3 - 6 years) to ratify and implement fully. Ideally, there should be a pause in the process of conventional arms control in Europe after its signature in order to allow time for the Treaty's implications, and the changes in force structure (principally on the Eastern side) which it will impose to be digested; and to allow time also for us to test Soviet attitudes to nuclear deterrence through the negotiation on short range nuclear forces which, according to NATO's Comprehensive Concept, will take place once a CFE Treaty is being implemented. Tom King and I will soon send you separate recommendations on what our objectives should



be, both as regards systems and negotiating approaches, in the short range nuclear field.

9. But if present trends in the East continue we shall almost certainly come under pressure from our Allies, including the Americans, to embark upon a further negotiation about conventional arms control in Europe. It is in this context that we shall have to face the longer term problems of preserving effective security arrangements. The Allies are committed, under the terms of our current CFE proposals, to consider further steps to enhance stability, including further reductions of armed forces. Both the Germans and the Americans may, for different reasons, urge that we establish at an early date a new negotiation for this purpose.

10. Such a negotiation carries risks, but there are powerful practical reasons for trying to steer, rather than prevent, it:-

- it offers a way of controlling the urge for unilateral force reductions by our Allies
- it provides Gorbachev with a security framework within which he can handle the complex processes of change in Eastern Europe
- it offers a political role for NATO and helps preserve the Alliance's appeal in the FRG
- it helps foster serious, and co-operative, strategic thinking in both alliances.

11. If the Warsaw Pact itself survives then there may be scope for a further CFE negotiation, along the lines of the present one, with similar objectives, ie the maintenance of a relationship of parity between two military alliances at levels which would be compatible with NATO's current defence doctrines. The judgement is one for Tom King to make, but I understand that, even after the reductions which the current CFE Treaty will impose, it would still be possible (on the assumption of parallel reductions on the Warsaw Pact side), to cut Western forces by, say, another 15% or so while retaining



intact the main elements of our present military planning. Beyond this however forward defence, at any rate on anything like the basis on which has been practised hitherto, would not be possible.

12. We must, however, reckon with the possibility that the Warsaw Pact will break up; and/or that the Soviet Union itself will, for domestic economic reasons, press for more radical measures of conventional disarmament. If this happens, then the concepts which underline the current Western approach at the CFE talks (parity between the two Alliances, equality in the equipment of stationed forces, US/Soviet parity in stationed manpower) may no longer be relevant.

13. This would not mean that measures of arms control would no longer be possible or in our interest. But they would need to be more specifically focussed. There are a number of possibilities. A US/Soviet bilateral deal would be one; a more general agreement involving asymmetrical cuts would be another.

14. A further, more far-reaching and attractive alternative approach, in such a situation, would be to view arms control, not as a means of achieving just a military result, but as an instrument for securing wider political objectives: eg the confirmation of the permanency of democracy and self-determination in Eastern Europe and the management of German re-unification on terms which satisfy the security interests of all European countries including, notably, the Soviet Union.

15. Arms control, in the form of a limitation on force levels, could have a role to play in such a wider political settlement. It might mean, for example:-

- the withdrawal of all Soviet forces back to the territory of the Soviet Union itself, a limit on Soviet forces West of the Urals, together with some commitment in respect of other, non-European Soviet forces.

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- a specific limitation on the size of US forces in Europe in general and in Germany in particular;
- some reduction in numbers of British and French forces in Germany;
- and, as a key ingredient, a major limitation on the size, and perhaps on the nature, of the armed forces of any re-united Germany;

If measures of this kind secured the withdrawal of the Red Army from all the territories which it occupied in 1945, this would indeed be an achievement. But it would have to be part of a wider political settlement; and we would need to be sure that the key force levels on the Western side were not driven down too low.

(c) SUSTAINING THE ALLIANCE

16. In any event we will need to take steps to sustain the vitality of the Alliance. We must prevent it from following the path of SEATO and CENTO in their latter years, ie remaining formally in being but only as an empty shell. NATO has had to adapt its doctrines and structures in the past - for example in the late 1960s with the transition from massive nuclear retaliation to flexible response - and may have to do so again. It will need to be seen more as a focus for political action. It will have to shape developments in Europe rather than just react to them. We must not appear fearful of change. We must present a case on the nature of the potential threats to security, and the means of countering them, which does not seem to rest on out-dated assumptions. There is no reason why we cannot do this and still retain robust, albeit reduced, defence capabilities.

17. It is of course possible to speculate about more far reaching scenarios for European security: both of a horrific kind (German slide into neutrality/collapse of the American commitment/disintegration of NATO) and a fanciful kind (evolution of the Soviet Union itself into a pluralistic democracy/market economy



and the fusion of the two alliances into some kind of European co-operative security mechanism). We have done some work on these possibilities in the FCO and papers are available if you wish to read them. But I do not think that at this stage we should spend too much time speculating about extreme cases. In the short term, our priorities must be to ensure that the essential safeguards of our security are maintained. At the same time we must find a way of managing the German question which satisfies the understandable aspirations of the German people, but does not carry damaging consequences either for Western security structures or conflict with the legitimate security interests of other European countries. I am sending you a separate minute about the German problem itself and how we might deal with it.

18. Our relationship with France will, from a security perspective, be crucial over the coming years. I am sending you a further separate minute about how we might seek to develop this. But in addition to specifically Anglo-French matters, I hope that, following your talk with President Mitterrand, we can try to concert with them a common approach to the wider problems of European security for the decade ahead.

19. I am sending copies of this minute to Tom King and Sir Robin Butler.

R.H.S. See

for (DOUGLAS HURD)

(approved by the Foreign Secretary in Hong Kong)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
15 January 1990

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