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EUROPEAN VIEWS ON THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE AND ON THE U.S. ROLE WITH REGARD THERETO, THROUGH THE 1970's

A CASE STUDY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to solicit European views on the nature and magnitude of European defense efforts and arrangements, and on Europe's defense relationship with the United States, through the 1970's. To accomplish this, two Members of the Fourteenth Senior Seminar separately visited a total of nine European countries and interviewed local government officials, parliamentarians, journalists, academicians and independent researchers. One Member covered the Northern Flank (Norway and Denmark), and one the Southern Flank (Italy, Greece and Turkey), and the Central European area was divided.

In order to ensure a common approach during each interview, a previously developed questionnaire was used by both Members as a guide. The topics covered during the interviews generally fell within four categories:

- A. Threats to European Security
- B. Current and Projected Military Force Postures
- C. Impact of European Cooperation and of moves toward East-West Detente
- D. United States - European Defense Relationships

This approach provided a basis for discussion with leaders within and outside of governments of the countries visited. In almost all cases these individuals were most candid and forthright in providing their comments and opinions.

A summary of the study's findings and conclusions is followed by a description of the reactions obtained in each country.

Federal Republic of Germany

A. Threats to Security.

The West Germans see the USSR as the major threat to their security and the security of Europe. They do not expect direct military action from the growing military power of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries, but political efforts aimed at reducing the US presence and influence coupled with an increase in Soviet influence in Western Europe. In addition, the Soviets will continue to oppose efforts directed toward political or military unity of Western Europe. The West Germans are concerned that the spirit of detente that is currently sweeping over Europe will cause some European countries as well as some elements in their own country to push for unilateral force reductions with no quid pro quo from the Soviets. As they see it, any progress toward a real reduction in East-West tensions and confrontation will come only as a result of a strong military, political and economic posture in the West.

B. Current and Projected Military Force Posture.

West German forces are currently capable of meeting their NATO commitments. They plan to maintain their forces at their present size while continuing modernization and qualitative improvements. The percentage of GNP and of the total budget devoted to defense will stay about the same, but could increase depending upon the government in power.

Recently, the term of service was reduced from 18 to 15 months and efforts are being made to bring greater equity in conscription of personnel. Despite this reduction in term of service, some problems with discipline, a growing number of conscientious objectors and a reluctance on the part of youth to serve in the armed forces, it was generally agreed that the forces were still effective and would perform well in an emergency. The US effort to develop an all volunteer force has had an adverse effect in West Germany and has aggravated some of their internal problems. The West Germans are much opposed to an elite, professional force for historical reasons. The present government's defense reform proposals call for greater discipline and more effective personnel programs.

Modernization efforts are directed toward improvements in tank and anti-tank capabilities, communications and logistics, naval forces, air defense, and a new reserve program. They visualize no basic change in the roles and missions of the forces.

C. Impact of European Cooperation and East-West Detente.

They do not anticipate any enlargement of the European nuclear family or any UK/French nuclear cooperation in the foreseeable future. They are not interested in a European nuclear force.

They support all forms of European defense cooperation in the conventional field and are one of the leaders of Eurogroup activities.

They support all efforts to reduce tensions and confrontations in Europe and are in the forefront of efforts to achieve normal relations with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union through Ostpolitik and the Berlin Accords. These efforts must be backed up by military strength and by evidence of growing economic and political unity in Europe as expressed in the expanding Common Market.

They support the Conference on European Security and Cooperation and mutual and balanced force reductions although one does not necessarily complement the other. They believe MBFR has had an integrating affect on the Alliance, and has added to stability in Europe. Any negotiations in these areas must be from strength and from an overall Alliance policy. They are concerned that these efforts might lead to premature US withdrawal from Europe or unilateral reduction of defense efforts by Western European nations.

D. U.S.-European Defense

In the West German view the continuing US presence at its present level in Europe is essential to European security and they are willing to assist in financial arrangements to keep it there. They acknowledge that the US may well reduce its presence in Europe eventually, thus they are strong supporters of all efforts to build European political, economic or military unity. They believe it is in the United States' own self interest to remain committed to Europe to protect its own extensive economic and political interests. Regardless of how the issue of presence goes, it is essential that the nuclear guarantee remain firm and that sufficient force be maintained to ensure that the Soviets believe it. Any reduction of forces should be mutual and balanced, not unilateral. In the event that US withdrawal is not matched by a correspondingly stronger Europe, then in their view it is likely that the Western European countries will seek accommodation with the Soviet Union similar to Finland's arrangement.

FRANCE

A. Threats to Security.

The French see the growing power of the USSR as the major threat to their security and the Security of Europe. In their view, increasing Soviet strategic and conventional military power would not be used directly, but would support political actions designed to achieve a US withdrawal from Europe, while Soviet influence grows and would be used to negate or defeat efforts directed toward the political or military unification of Europe. In addition, they still are concerned about the Germans.

B. Current and Projected Military Force Posture

French officials rate the quality and effectiveness of their armed forces as good at the present time, but they are well aware of the need to improve and modernize. They anticipate an increase in the size of the defense budget as a part of the total budget and as a percentage of the GNP over the next few years.

They believe this will occur regardless of the government in power in France. Priorities for defense spending are:

1. The completion and modernization of the nuclear force by 1977 to include the deployment within France of a short-range tactical nuclear weapon called "Pluton."
2. Development of a modern industrial base capable of supporting both their nuclear and conventional force requirements.
3. Improvement and modernization of conventional forces.
4. Development of an effective reserve program.

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They also see America's presence in Europe, particularly the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, as a counterweight to ancient rivalries in the European area.

ITALY

A. Threats to Security

The Italians see the Soviet Union as the main threat to the security of Europe. The major direct threats to Italy's security are Yugoslavia and Austria. The Italians are particularly concerned with the situation in Yugoslavia after Tito. They are also concerned about the growing Soviet naval strength in the Mediterranean area.

They visualize that the Soviets will use their growing military power to support political actions designed to increase their influence in Western Europe while reducing that of the United States. The Soviets will oppose actions taken to gain unity and stability in Europe. Italians are concerned that these Soviet efforts coupled with domestic pressures in the United States could lead to a US withdrawal from Europe and a reduction of defense efforts on the part of European countries.

B. Current and Projected Military Force Posture

Italian forces are considered to be capable of fulfilling their NATO commitments. However, they do have some internal problems regarding discipline and motivation as well as a need to modernize. It is anticipated that the size of the forces will remain about the same and the percentage of GNP and of the total budget will not change regardless of the government in power. They expect to put more emphasis on modernizing the navy, but they foresee no basic changes in roles and missions of the services.

C. Impact of European Cooperation and East-West Detente

The Italians do not anticipate any enlargement of the European nuclear family or any significant UK/French nuclear cooperation. They are not interested in developing a nuclear capability.

They are interested in all efforts to encourage unity in Europe and they support the expanding Common Market, Eurogroup, the Nuclear Planning Group and defense cooperation in the conventional field.

Italy supports efforts toward detente in Europe but is concerned that this will lead to feeling of apathy regarding security and defense efforts on the part of European countries. As one Italian put it, "the longer peace lasts, the less people want to contribute to defense."

They support efforts to limit the arms race and reduce tensions in Europe but they see a danger to the West in the Conference on European Security and attempts at mutual force reductions. Any real progress in these areas will only come as a result of a strong and unified military, economic and political posture in the West.

D. US-European Defense

All those interviewed were united in the necessity of a continued US presence and commitment to the security of Europe. They believe that this commitment is also in the United States' own best interest. They are particularly concerned that the Sixth Fleet remain in the Mediterranean to counter growing Soviet military power and influence in the area.

It was pointed out that the danger for the West is an eagerness to achieve detente at too steep a price, but that as long as the West negotiates from a position of strength, its security will not be adversely affected.

D. US-European Defense

There is hope and considerable confidence in Holland that the US will maintain its military presence in Europe and continue its nuclear guarantee. But there is a recognition that US developments could change US-European defense arrangements, such as a reduction of US forces in Europe. One official felt that a change in defense arrangements was already started, and that this isn't a bad thing, providing the change is gradual and not extreme. Another, stating that Europe could never defend itself alone, remarked "If our security is not dependent on Washington, it will be dependent on Moscow."

NORWAY

A. Threats to Security

The Norwegians' confidence is shaken. They feel themselves in an increasingly exposed position between the super powers, with the Soviets expanding their power in the north and in the Atlantic as part of their global strategy, and the US and UK no longer controlling the world's oceans.

Norwegians flatly assert that the Soviets covet Norwegian soil because they need air bases to protect their navy in the Atlantic. The fact that the US - for its own protection - must be prepared to cope with Soviet nuclear subs homeported on the Kola Peninsula, gives the Norwegians some solace.

No one saw an economic or political threat to Norway, but one researcher commented that protectionist tendencies in the world made it necessary for Norway to join the EEC.

B. Current and Projected Force Postures

While Norwegian forces were improved considerably in the 1960's, the defense budget - both as a % of GNP and of the total budget - is going down.

The Norwegians have a large and well-refined reserve system, which is the backbone of their ground forces.

Anxiety is mounting over a possible softening of Danish defense efforts, which would place Norway's security in greater jeopardy.

There was unanimity of view that a governmental change would not alter Norway's basic defense policy.

C. Impact of European Cooperation and East-West Detente

Everyone interviewed felt that, over time, European defense cooperation will become closer and stronger and that EEC expansion will be a catalyst for this, as will the necessity for all European defense establishments to realize economies of scale in their procurement.

In the nuclear arena, UK/French cooperation was seen as unlikely before the 1980's, if at all, and Norwegians aren't keen about the idea anyway. Little or no credence was given the idea of the European nuclear family expanding.

Norwegians don't think that East-West negotiations, which the Soviets want to conduct because of internal economic/social pressures and to shore-up their western front in order that they may devote more attention to China, will change the basic security situation in Europe; the two blocs will remain. MBFR is looked upon in some quarters as a danger to the West.

D. US-European Defense

While the view was expressed that long-term US-European relations will be determined more by economic considerations than by NATO concerns, Norwegians consider that US involvement in European security - particularly the nuclear guarantee - is vital. And it would be disastrous if the US were to reduce its forces in Europe in the absence of a reduction of East-West tensions and greater European cooperation.

It was pointed out that Norway must always rely on North America for its defense; Norway's European allies can't solve its problem in the north; "Norway's best friend is the US Navy, not the US Government."

It is expected that by the end of the 70's there will be more integrated European defense cooperation, but if the US does withdraw from Europe, European countries will not make up the difference. The result would be movement toward neutralism, if not accommodation with the East. US forces must remain in Europe to make the defense of Europe credible.

TURKEY

A. Threats to Security

After thirteen wars with Russia, the Turks are well aware of the major threat to their security. Actually, the Turks feel that they are surrounded by hostile forces. They are most concerned about the threat posed to their security by the Soviet Union and Bulgaria.

No one interviewed saw the Soviet Union engaging in direct military action against Turkey but did see the Soviets using their growing military power to assert political pressure on Turkey and its neighbors to gain influence throughout the Middle East and the Mediterranean area.

B. Current and Projected Force Posture

Turkey's well trained and competently led armed forces are the largest in NATO after the United States. They have compulsory military service and few if any problems of discipline or morale. The real need is for modernization and qualitative improvements in weapons and equipment in all services. The Army needs new tanks, anti-tank weapons and air defense. They are in the process of acquiring submarines from Germany and destroyers from the US to improve their naval capability and they plan to buy some F4 fighter aircraft from the US to update the air force.

They anticipate that the percentage of GNP and of the total budget devoted to defense will stay about the same regardless of the government in power. They do not visualize any change in the basic roles and missions of the services.

C. Impact of European Cooperation and East-West Detente

The Turks are interested in the Common Market and currently are associate members with rights of full membership in 1988. They support

cooperation in defense matters and are members of Eurogroup and the Nuclear Planning Group but are not interested in a separate, independent Europe. Although Turkey is making progress in developing its industrial base, it is not yet ready to enter production-sharing with other NATO countries to any large extent.

The Turks will support efforts at SALT, CESC, MBFR and Ostpolitik as long as they are kept informed and no action is taken that would adversely affect their vital interests. They fail to see how mutual force reductions could work to the advantage of the West and are particularly concerned that mutual and balanced reductions in Central Europe would simply result in the Soviets and Warsaw Pact countries redistributing their forces to the flanks of NATO. In addition, since they believe that Bulgaria has more sophisticated conventional weapons than they do, any arrangements that would preclude their ability to catch up would be completely unsatisfactory.

The Turks do not anticipate any enlargement of the European nuclear family or any UK/French nuclear cooperation in the foreseeable future.

D. US-European Defense

The Turks are united in the view that the continued US presence and commitment to Europe is essential to their security and the security of Europe. In their view the continued presence of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean is vital to counteract the growing Soviet naval presence and influence. The US presence also acts as a counter to ancient rivalries and frictions in the European area.

They need and expect continued economic and military support from the United States in order to properly complete their ten year plan to modernize the armed forces.

UK

A. Threats to Security

"The only military threat to the UK is from a war in Europe." However, the British are distinctly worried by the buildup in Soviet worldwide maritime power and its use politically on both of NATO's flanks, and they are very sensitive to the vulnerability of their fuel supplies. They liken the Soviet naval surge of today to that of the UK in the 19th century.

As for political or economic threats, there is a feeling that the UK is as exposed as anyone to the 20th century upheaval taking place throughout the Western World. They often cited the breakdown in law and order (Northern Ireland), and one parliamentarian referred to the threat of indigenous economic forces. It also was pointed out that entering the EEC will mean lean years for the UK.

Several individuals interviewed displayed great empathy toward the Norwegians and to some extent the Danes, who now find themselves behind the Soviets' naval perimeter, where the British will end up also at the rate the Soviets are expanding.

An assertion was made that the chaotic third world is a major threat today, and that Europe is stable and should be kept that way by keeping NATO together and getting the French to rejoin the Alliance military structure.

B. Current and Projected Military Force Posture

The British are quite proud of the quality of their forces, which one referred to as at the "top of the European league."

There are mixed feelings about the military effectiveness of Britain's recently expanded reserve ground forces; neither the RAF nor the RN have much in the way of reserves.

While the defense budget has been slowly sinking as a percentage of GNP, it has now stabilized at about 5 1/2%, which it was noted, is larger than those of the UK's major EEC neighbors.

It seems clear that British forces will in future be configured for European rather than "world" missions, with England's last remaining carrier and its long range air fleet disappearing. Also, it is expected that internal security will continue to receive heavy emphasis for a long time.

If Labor were to return to power, the view of most of those interviewed was that there would be no fundamental change in the UK's defense policy, certainly not in its NATO orientation, though defense links with Malaysia and Singapore might be severed. Defense policy has become fairly bipartisan in Great Britain.

C. Impact of European Cooperation and East-West Detente

Closer European defense cooperation is considered highly desirable, but few are optimistic about its realization in spite of the Euro-group's activities. Most of those interviewed felt that the EEC might, over the very long run, facilitate closer defense cooperation. One parliamentarian held that the key to the question was whether the French join in. On the other hand, there are those who contended that ever-increasing defense costs will force closer European defense cooperation .

The possibility of UK/French nuclear cooperation is considered remote, though there would be advantages to technical cooperation and joint targetting. Likewise, little or no prospect was seen of an enlargement in the European nuclear family.

No one foresees a basic change in the European security situation as a result of East-West negotiations, though one individual thought a lessening of tensions will permit some defense reductions. MBFR is viewed as either unlikely or undesirable.

D. US-European Defense

While the British would like to see US-European defense arrangements continue as they are, those interviewed had concluded that a reduction of US forces in Europe is inevitable in this decade. Among the reasons cited was that overall US military manpower levels will of necessity drop with the abolition of the draft. There also is marked concern that trade and monetary turmoil between the US and the EEC could adversely affect political and defense relationships across the Atlantic. But there is considerable confidence that the US will continue to see the defense of Europe as inextricably interwoven with the defense of the US, and that the US commitment to European defense, in the form of the nuclear guarantee and some level of US conventional forces in Europe, therefore will continue.

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