

Recent Developments and Future Possible Problems in Nato-Warsaw Pact Relations

Hartmut Pohlman*

I. Recent Developments

In describing the current and future problems existing in the NATO-Warsaw Pact relationship, one normally looks only to Europe in terms of the definition as it has been used for quite some time of "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals". However, NATO comprises not only Europe, but of course includes also the USA, Canada and the North Atlantic and the Soviet Union does not end at the Urals. This needs to be mentioned since some of the political and geostrategic problems between the two alliances stem from these conditions.

The analysis of NATO-WP relations comprises a bundle of problems dealing with the political, economic, and military relationship between the two alliances, but deals also as a matter of course with the mutual relations between the two leading power of the respective groups of states.

The two superpowers are changing and this is having repercussions on their mutual relationship. The US military development in the next twenty years has to be seen against a background of fluctuating military budgets, growing hopes for disarmament, more unstable relations within the Western alliance-especially due to the prospect of changes in the Soviet Union, and the European views about how to maintain public support for nuclear deterrence.

If one follows the arguments of the authors of the US report "Discriminate Deterrence", the United States and the Soviet Union will become relatively weaker and their rivalry more ambiguous in the next 20 years as other military powers emerge. While the first statement may be true there is no firm evidence to back up the second one.

The relationship might become more complicated because it will include a pursuit of common interests and antagonistic behaviour at the same time. But if the current thaw in their once extremely difficult relationship continues, if the mutual visits of high-ranking politicians and military experts go on, if the work of the verification teams of both countries, mutual maneuver visits and other confidence-building measures go on, then there is good reason to expect policy between the superpowers to be much better coordinated. This might

*Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Germany.

later on also be reflected in world politics and by the respective alliance members.

According to reports by news agency Tass, a group of experts has been commissioned to assess Soviet foreign policy and diplomacy. This task force was established as one of the consequences of the party conference of the CPSU in June 1988 and will deal with the international relations of the Soviet Union. As the Central Committee stated during this conference, the Soviet Union has often acted politically against its own interests. In pursuit of a beneficial correlation of forces and strategic parity, it left unexploited many opportunities of improving the country's security by political means. This led to a detrimental arms race, which neglected the prospects of social and economic progress, and did nothing to improve the Soviet position in the international arena.

In the future, decisions concerning military engagements in foreign countries, other major activities of the armed forces, and major projects of the arms industry, will no longer be decided only in small Politburo circles, but will be made and controlled by the highest elected bodies of the state. This was made public by Foreign Minister Schewardnadse at a conference on the irreversibility of *perestroika* in Soviet diplomacy in July 1988. At the same occasion he argued for regularly publishing the Soviet defense budget.

Far-reaching changes thus begin to appear on the horizon, changing many long-standing traditions and trends. A new dynamic between the two blocks has become visible. Beside the unique relationship between the two superpowers, it will influence the relationship within each alliance towards their leading powers. It also influences the relationship of the smaller states within their alliances. Additionally, with an obviously grown self-confidence the East and West European countries will increase their direct political cooperation.

It seems necessary to analyse the roots of these astonishing and unpredictable developments, to study their energy, potential and durability, and to ask what kind of long-lasting consequences can be expected. Another interesting question seems to be, to what extent can this process already be considered as irreversible, or asked the other way around, how vulnerable is this process.

These problems and their development are determined by domestic and foreign policies but they, too, determine or at least influence the policies themselves.

This essay endeavors to describe the problems and to evaluate the underlying conditions in order to promulgate them and to contribute to their solution.

The astonishing changes in the East-West relationship for many observers still have an inherent high degree of incalculability and untrustworthiness due to the fact, that antagonism between the systems, as well the governing rules

of the relations, seemed to be absolutely fixed and unchangeable. As just one example may I quote Helmut Sonnenfeldt⁽¹⁾ "I take the Soviets too serious to believe that the words of one year simply sweep away 69 years of history."

Prognoses of the evolutions which have taken place (CDE and INF) or are about to take place (START), were never made. Nobody would have dared to publish such an optimistic look into the future. If somebody would have tried to, he probably would have been widely criticized or derided as someone with a very utopian outlook.

To understand this situation properly one needs to look back a few years. The situation existing between NATO and the WP in Europe has long been determined by the confrontation of two antagonistic systems, and this situation again has been characterized by the politically offensive Soviet quest for revision of international relations. The Soviet Union has considered itself the nucleus and model of a new social system of universal validity. The Warsaw Pact countries have repeatedly shown a readiness to resort to military options where this has been possible without running a major risk.

This politically unstable situation combined with a constant military build-up by the Warsaw Pact countries-particularly the Soviet Union-remained a permanent provocation, a source of risk, a cause of tensions and distrust, thus creating an arms competition which has led to Europe becoming the region with the highest density of weapons in the world.

To overcome the unstable situation of conventional inferiority, the policy of the Western Alliance has been aimed at maintaining adequate military strength and political solidarity, and on this basis, pursuing a more stable relationship between the countries of the Warsaw Pact and NATO through dialogue and cooperation.

After the first onsets and successes of the policy of détente, the USA and the Soviet Union seemed to have recognized their mutual security interests on the basis of the "principle of parity and equality".⁽²⁾ This principle, which in the American view had been agreed upon, at least between the lines, was to have in consequence not only a renunciation of military superiority but also a Soviet "status-quo-orientation". In other words, it was supposed to have consequences in respect to restraint and moderation in the influencing or starting of national or international conflicts. At the least it should have created utmost self-control in regard to expansionism. But the results of these development were different. The Soviet Union obviously considered itself at the zenith of its power and influx. This was reflected in its active and openly evidenced influ-

(1) Roundtable talks Bergedorf, Protocoll 83, 1987, p. 91.

(2) Message of President Nixon to Congress, Feb. 18, 1970 and the declaration concerning the Soviet-American relations, May 29, 1972.

ence upon the internal politics of the NATO member state Portugal in 1974, in the Soviet-Cuban engagement in Ethiopia, Angola, and Central America, and later on in the increased radius of actions vis-à-vis South Yemen and Indochina. It reflected a self-confident utilization of a changed correlation of forces to the advantage of the Soviet Union or at least of what it perceived to be to its advantage.

By these activities the Soviet Union deliberately destroyed the basis of confidence, which was considered by the West to be the prerequisite of a long-lasting and successful policy of détente.

To understand the harsh US reaction towards the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan,⁽³⁾ one has to keep in mind all these actions. Therefore the Afghanistan invasion was condemned by the Americans as the most serious Soviet threat against the peace since World War II. This assessment was likewise reflected in the respective votings of the United Nations.

Suddenly the Soviet Union was no longer considered by many to be a "saturated superpower" as which it had been viewed at least in the USA since the Nixon era. Instead the Soviet Union appeared to be an active revolutionary system which needed to be contained by a policy of strength and deterrence.

Doubts were raised if a settlement with the Soviet Union would be possible at all after these experiences. It was discussed, whether containment, isolation of the Soviet Union, and the increase of American military strength and its flexibility (creation of Rapid Deployment Forces) would not be the better future policy to deny the Soviet Union at least the future use of its increased and relentlessly growing military power.

II. Political Problems and Developments

The background of this relatively recent period is necessary for the understanding of the ongoing process and the scepticism with which the developments in the Soviet Union are widely regarded. As long as only declarations about the new thinking prevail and as long as *perestroika* has not yet created irreversible facts, one has to be more cautious than optimistic. This is especially important as the developments seem to be tied to the person of Gorbachev. Capabilities are decisive and not intentions, as the latter can be changed relatively quickly. Until now military capabilities have not yet been diminished. In fact quite to the contrary: Despite numerous Soviet declarations on strategic parity and the uselessness of military superiority, the military capabilities of the WP countries are still increasing.

(3) President Carter, State of the Union Message to Congress, Jan. 23, 1980.

In this context it seems necessary to ask what are the real reasons for *perestroika* and will these someday also affect the military field. If only internal, economic or ecological reasons and needs have led to new Soviet intentions and decisions, then the situation is a different one than in the case that decisions have been influenced by US programs to strengthen its military capabilities (modernization of strategic weapons, the creation of Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF), changes in doctrine and strategy, and last but not least, SDI, to name just a few factors). It could well be that the assessment to be either unable or unwilling to continue that kind of competition, i.e., the arms race in traditional dimensions, led to a Soviet rethinking of the Strategic masterplan. Possibly this rethinking led to the conviction that it would be more prudent to stop this kind of competition unilaterally. Why not simply change from a military power with an offensive strategy (although the military doctrine is worded defensively) and decrease or do away with a surprise and an invasion-capability? In the final result the Soviet Union would become a world power based on more than just military capabilities, orienting itself to new guidelines like "Sufficiency" and "non-provocative defensive capabilities".

East-West cooperation, often also characterized as interdependence, is even under changed conditions based on some fundamental traditional elements. The Soviet assessment of these elements is not completely known in the West. In the western perception they consist at least of a rough military parity (on lower levels) through a mutually beneficial arms control process, extensive and stable economic relations, regional stability, and an intensified political dialogue.

Arms control objectives by contrast are based on a completely different set of conditions. Arms control measures must at least be militarily significant and verifiable, must uphold the principle of asymmetrical reductions for the side with more, must be preceded by data agreements, and must prohibit circumventions.

It already seemed to point to heightened opportunities for interdependence, when Reagan took the opportunity in 1982 to repeat John F. Kennedy's words:

"Let us not be blind towards our differences, but let us draw our attention to our common interests and to the means with which those differences can be done away with."⁽⁴⁾

Probably this sentence was repeated to underline the intentions of the Reagan administration to initiate a new and more cooperative phase in its

(4) Speech of President Reagan at the Eureka College, Illinois, May 9, 1982, in: *Survival*, Vol. XXIV, No. 5, Sept./Oct. 1982, p. 229 and speech of John F. Kennedy at Washington University, June 10, 1963, in: *Europa-Archive* 1963, p. 289.

relations vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

These intentions, however, could have success only after Gorbachev, who obviously wants to create a new kind of Soviet relations towards the rest of the world, became Secretary General of the CPSU.

One of the basic problems for the West has been the totally different way of understanding coexistence in East and West. While the West maintains a status quo thinking, the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact countries hold a dynamic view of an ongoing competition between the two antagonistic systems. Only the new principles governing Gorbachev's political view of Soviet-US relations may be able to solve this central problem in the long run. One precondition remains, however, i.e., that a concept of 'new thinking' first creates facts by diminishing from the beginning Soviet military power unilaterally, thus fundamentally decreasing the character of the threat.

Only after such a change takes place, and the Soviet Union gives up its objective of furthering world revolution with its will to change the world, will it be possible to open up a new phase of East-West relations.

In view of budgetary restraints also in the West, the need to consider ecological problems, the worldwide responsibilities of the countries of the northern hemisphere and the growing public sentiment against military overkill capabilities, the Soviet ideas of the 'new thinking' have been positively reflected in the West.

This 'new thinking' contains new ideas and almost revolutionary thoughts on military power and doctrine. At present, however, one is only confronted with declarations. Changes in military hardware and in force structure would create facts, but are still to be forthcoming. In the area of arms control there is a need for practical proposals, not propaganda. The undisputed conventional superiority of the Warsaw Pact⁽⁵⁾ makes it necessary to ask for far-reaching unilateral reductions of the Warsaw Pact until rough parity is reached.

Progress in disarmament could give a clear indication of first real changes in Soviet behavior towards constructive East-West cooperation.

A comparison of military capabilities shows that there is ample space for drastic Soviet reductions which should be executed in the way Gorbachev suggested, i.e., "the side which has more has to reduce more". The level of the side with less should be the first level to which to reduce the respective forces. After this first and very important step, a further multilateral and equal reduction could follow as a second step.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization in pursuance of its primary objec-

(5) See Force comparison 1987, NATO-Warsaw Pact published by the Press and Information Office of the Federal German Government, Bonn, 1988.

tive, namely safeguarding security and peace for the Alliance and its members, has maintained a force level often described as being "rock bottom" or a minimum strength level in view of the strength of the other side. But strength is relative quantity and a function of the capabilities and options of the perceived opponent. This leads to the conclusion that after having reached rough parity in figures one could go on and design a force level much smaller than NATO currently believes it must have. Any such proposal, however, has to include the geostrategic differences between the Alliances which are significant and have a bearing on the net military assessment.

The problems discussed here cannot possibly be reduced to only their military dimension, though these are obviously very important. First of all, the West has to decide whether it wants progress in the Soviet Union and is prepared to support ongoing developments, in the hope that as a result a state will be born, which although remaining antagonistic, would suffice the above mentioned intentions of détente. Is it utopic to think this could really happen?

The problem of how to politically handle developments in the Soviet Union is the subject of many discussions in the West. If as a result of Gorbachev's changes in the Soviet Union, NATO would be confronted with an economically, politically, and militarily strengthened state, which would then try to accomplish the objectives which it had given up in the 1980s due to insufficient strength, it would be unwise or, as many say, stupid to support the ongoing developments. If, on the other hand, the result of the intended reforms would be a responsible world power, a state with a clearly defensive doctrine and strategy with military forces of a posture and strength just enough to guarantee a robust defense, then this would be an incentive to support the process. This would be especially true if the Soviet Union and its allies would achieve such economic and technological stature that it would become mutually beneficial for both East and West to have strengthened commercial links adapted to the standards of world economy. It would clearly be in the interest of the West to further COMECON commerce on an equal basis in world trade. This would open up new markets, advantageous to both sides.

The decisive question will be, what future course will be followed by the Soviet leadership. Who, in terms of the second option, will be able to guarantee that the growing capabilities are used exclusively for a peaceful cooperation. As long as there are doubts due to the West's past experiences with the Soviet Union, assistance will be given only halfheartedly, if at all. On the other hand, can it be an alternative to transform the strategy of deterrence into the conscious and disciplined pursuit of common security between opposing powers?

NATO can be assessed to be already heading in the right direction. In 1984

the NATO foreign ministers once again reaffirmed their commitment in the following words:

"To ensure the security of members of the Alliance, the most appropriate long term policies are the maintenance of adequate military strength and political solidarity and, on that basis, the pursuit of a more stable relationship between the countries of East and West through dialogue and cooperation. These elements are complementary: dialogue can only be fruitful if each party is confident of its security and is prepared to respect the legitimate interests of others; military strength alone cannot guarantee a peaceful future."⁽⁶⁾

Do we today have better possibilities than in the seventies to create a permanent and durable détente between the antagonistic systems? What are the main political problems? Evidently there is a lack of confidence. This has been the main problem in the past and it seems to also be the decisive future problem. Probably it can only be solved by a combination of several approaches, the main ones being: transparency, tolerance, the ability to think in terms of security of the other side, the invention of incentives to decrease decisively the level of weapons. A posture of reasonable sufficiency, the aim of maintaining strategic parity instead of aspirations for military superiority, and the quest for a non-provocative defense doctrine are the driving forces.

Democratization and the regard of human rights in the WP countries have to be mentioned in this context. If one looks back to the beginning of the CSCE process many steps on the ladder of mutual trust have already been climbed up. The Helsinki Final Act reflects exactly the areas in which we find the problems to be tackled, i.e. the political, economic and military field.

That the Europeans focus their attention on the problems of their own continent seems quite natural. However, it is an indisputable fact that European problems are closely related to general East-West relations and to global problems. And although the Soviet Union talks about a "common European house", whatever that means, the development of approaches towards this broad and not exactly defined objective is bound to the development of Soviet-American relations. Three main problems result from this connection: the European perceptions and projections of the superpower relationship, the bilateral/multilateral cooperation of countries with different political systems (interdependence), and the relationship of the countries within their respective Alliances which are more and more influenced by the internal Soviet developments.

Although it would be premature to speak of a breakthrough in Soviet-US

(6) Washington statement on East-West Relations, issued by the Foreign Ministers at the North Atlantic Council meeting, Washington D. C., 31 May 1984.

relations, and although the Europeans suspiciously watch for development of a US-Soviet condominium one cannot deny that unpredicted developments between these two powers have taken place and will determine future political trends. The INF-agreement clearly signals a closer relationship in a changing environment.

This breakthrough and the expectations of a START agreement with reductions of strategic nuclear weapons by almost a half focus attention on nuclear weapons with their past and future peacekeeping function. Their existence and the fact that the Soviet Union seems to accept the Western conception of deterrence leads to the assumption that the bilateral search for strategic parity, and thus stability, could help pave the way towards arms reductions in the conventional field, a problem which will be discussed more detailed later on.

The political arena in the Soviet Union is clearly marked by the words *perestroika* and *glasnost*, and it is conceivable that step by step progress in this process might be reflected in the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact countries, as well as within NATO. In the Warsaw Pact countries a democratization process and a possible decrease of Soviet forces could lead to more self-confident allies who might loosen their hierarchical ties with the Soviet Union. This whole process could then lead to a less-alarming Western threat assessment which might reinforce tendencies of loosening ties within NATO as well. It could lead to lesser dependency on the USA due to strengthened European ties. The hegemonial power of both superpowers could thus be diminished. There is a visible tendency of Eastern European countries to maintain links of their own to Western countries and to be cooperatively creative with proposals concerning nuclear and chemical weapon free zones.

In recent years many assessments of West-West relations, i.e. Europe versus USA, single European countries vis-à-vis the USA or European countries among each other, have been published. This kind of evaluation will certainly go on in the future. Analyses dealing with the question of similar tendencies toward an independent articulation of interests by the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact-countries vis-à-vis the Soviet Union are, however, very rare. I do not know of any scientific research or analyses which have looked into the question of what effects far-reaching arms control and disarmament agreements could have on Eastern European political and military cohesion.

In Western public opinion it is often argued that the hegemonial hierarchy in Eastern Europe is based primarily on Soviet military power and that Soviet forces are essential to guarantee the communist systems in Eastern Europe. It seems extremely difficult to prove that this is true or not. But the frequently voiced opinion that the Soviet Union can exert influence due to her military presence and current strength—which it would not have without it—is more or

less a truism.

The use of military power to underline national interests characterizes both superpowers and pertains not specifically to Soviet behaviour. But it would be worthwhile to look at how military power has influenced Soviet foreign, security, and alliance policy. It would be interesting to find out to what extent the Soviet leadership relies on the direct or indirect use of military power, and whether and how much this has changed since Gorbachev became Secretary General.

It would also be very interesting to take a sharp look at how future Soviet behaviour could possibly be influenced by the Afghanistan experience and internal developments in Eastern Europe.

Could the Soviet Union totally renounce the use of military power within the Warsaw Treaty Organization? Could they totally withdraw their forces from some or all member countries as was recently rumored as a possible development for Hungary?

Does a "freedom" for systemic change exist in Eastern Europe?

Will time prove that the military factor in Eastern Europe decreases in importance? Could or would the perspectives of a comprehensive peace order in Central Europe be improved by such a development? There are obviously tendencies of a growing self-confidence among the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact member states. This is especially true of the German Democratic Republic and Romania. There is potential for continuity as well as for change in the 'new thinking' in all of Eastern Europe.

In some countries possible changes seem to be delayed as the respective leadership learn by watching the developments in the Soviet Union and in turn only cautiously make social moves. Obviously there is a growing tendency toward replacing the traditional importance of the military factor by a policy of military modesty. This process has not yet come to an end. The bilateral agreements which formally underline the political independence of the Warsaw Pact countries constitute a versatile tool to closely coordinate political cooperation. They form a system which can guarantee the grown hierarchy within the Warsaw Treaty Organization if this treaty is ever eliminated. Political elites use these instruments as a means of permanent cohesion within the Warsaw Pact. Economic modernization, growing self-confidence, increased self-determination and more political responsibility of the individual will have a bearing on a new kind of understanding of security policy issues. As a first visible result a change of the military doctrine toward a defensive orientation, the notion of military sufficiency, and the recognition of nuclear weapons as a useful means for deterrence, must be mentioned.

The new political "rapprochement" should be free of any endeavour to force

one side's system on the other, and must build upon mutual respect of values. For example European identity does not mean that it is possible to find common grounds and a common denominator in all areas concerned. In fact, that is impossible. NATO and the Warsaw Pact therefore ought not strive for that. If humanism and rationalism have the freedom to exist, to develop, and to influence cooperation, they will form a sufficient to form a common basis for prudent relations between Eastern and Western Europe.

However, one main problem remains for the future. In respect to human rights, there are still many unsolved and divergent views on whether and what one can do to positively influence the human rights situation in the Soviet Union. Some say one should regard this as an internal development and wait for the consequences of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Others want this process to be accelerated and to be influenced by external political pressure. Especially the latter could create additional problems for the Soviet Union and her allies thus delaying or disturbing a process which ought to be furthered.

III. Economic Problems

The Soviet military industrial complex obviously has become a nearly unbearable burden for the Soviet society. This very fact seems to be one of the driving forces behind Gorbachev's 'new thinking'. Skillfully the Soviet leadership has tried to cover up the extent to which resources have been used in the high priority military realm. For military purposes personnel, technological skills and raw materials have been drained away from the civilian sector of the economy, thus lessening its perspectives for successful development. Slowly the real implications of so far hidden military expenditures become visible. It is estimated that the military expenditures of the Soviet Union amount to roughly 16% of the gross national product. This would mean a burden of these expenditures to the national economy that is three times higher than in comparable Western societies. And even in Western countries with their relatively successful economics, the present military expenditures are heavy burdens no longer undisputed in their societies.

Gorbachev may have recognized that independent of *perestroika* (which means a restructuring of the Soviet economy) he will also have to decrease mainly military expenditures.

Knowing that he cannot do this unilaterally without endangering consensus in the Politburo and within the party he needs the arms control platform to further his intentions. This may be the background motif for the astonishing arms control and disarmament offers the West is currently confronted with.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union needs economical ties to the world

economy and to Western technological advances. What is especially needed is a constructive cooperation between the European Community and COMECON which—beyond mutual acceptance—will lead to agreements beneficial for the Soviet economy and the economies of other COMECON members.

Mutual economic dependence and growing economic ties could contribute to stability and security at least in the same way as conferences on nuclear disarmament and conventional stability do. A growing willingness of the West European states to increase economic cooperation and exchange as well as to strengthen the economic capacity for cooperation within socialist states, and to increase their role as economic partners, could change the current stagnation in East-West European economic cooperation. This is especially important in view of the changes in the unified European Common market envisaged for 1992.

Latter development intends to strengthen economic cooperation within Western Europe and increase its worldwide influence. In order to exploit or at least participate in these developments Eastern European countries will need to increase their economic competitiveness and develop production capacities for goods which find interest in Western Europe. Increased trade would further interdependency and thus stability, and further confidence as prerequisite for security in Europe. If these process were successful, problems in this area of common interest would be diminished. What is needed is a certain international division of labour to avoid redundant production capacities and products in some areas while other products in demand are not produced at all or insufficiently. One of the still unsolved problems in this regard is the convertibility of the rubel and the fact that a comprehensive clearing mechanism which could solve this problem does not exist.

The analysis of the economic problems leads to some theses which I would like to stress here:

1. Without the opening of the socialist systems and economic interdependence there will be no stable, irreversible détente between East and West.
2. The socialist countries should develop all possible means to promote their integration into the world economy. Therefore the plans for reformation of the socialist economy and for the convertibility of the East European currencies should be supported by the West.
3. The cooperation of socialist countries with IMF, GATT, and the World Bank should be taken seriously and promoted.
4. The opening of the socialist system and the interlacing of interests makes new structures of East-West commerce necessary. The current structure is characterized by the exchange of raw materials and intermediate pro-

ducts.

A stable economic interrelationship can only be reached by an exchange of know-how, recognizing the limiting factors of the COCOM-Agreement, and maybe adjusting them to the changing conditions of cooperation, thereby furthering the exchange of technology, science and production technologies. This exchange ought also to be enlarged to include areas of common interest like ecology and communication technologies.

5. The European Economic Community (EEC) agreement with Hungary of June 1988 is not meant as a model for further future agreements. These agreements have to recognize the special situation of each COMECON member state. The development of relations between the EEC and single East European countries has priority compared to relations between the two organisations.

Finally, regarding the economic problems ahead for both sides, one could ask the question if economic cooperation might be the key to opening up the economic and social systems of the Warsaw Pact, or if a real cooperation will only be possible if the Soviet system as a model for the others takes the lead in opening up politically and militarily. This opening, however, depends mainly on the will of the leaderships and other changing factors within the Warsaw Pact.

IV. The Military Problems

Of the many problems influencing the military field, some have to do with the fears perceived by both sides, while others pertaining to European security and cooperation are of very tangible nature.

European security and cooperation could be achieved if Gorbachev's offers are not only verbal and propagandistic, but if they reflect true intentions backed up by the reality of the mandate talks in Vienna about conventional stability, as well as the other arms control and disarmament fora. The problem areas are manifold and different for both sides.

To the Warsaw Pact they seem to be represented

- in emerging technologies (ET) and their impact on future weapons procurement,
- in a heating up of the arms race through SDI and a perceived arms race in outer space with the effect of disturbing regional and strategic stability,
- in NATO doctrine, like FOFA or deep strike, which are used to erroneously classify NATO's defense as a "forward defense" with intentions of a deep offensive into Warsaw Pact territory, therefore described as an "expression of the endeavour of imperialism to resolve the contra-

diction between capitalism and socialism by war''⁽⁷⁾ Often also the closer relationship between France and the Federal Republic of Germany is characterized as a speeding up of factual reintegration of France into the NATO military organisation and the strengthening of tendencies which could lead in the Soviet view to a more risk provoking Western Europe, thus complicating an intended détente.

The main problem between the two alliances, however, always has seemed to be the struggle to catch up and to overtake the opponent. And within this struggle, or as a consequence of it, the real or perceived threats have grown and had consequences.

Related with this main problem between the blocs, there have been internal NATO ones, for example, the European feelings about a corrosion of extended deterrence, the often mystic and ambiguous politics of arms control, and the different assessments of the bilateral geostrategic asymmetries which characterize the East-West conflict.

As the arms control talks continue new problems are beginning to loom on the horizon since the WP presented proposals for which the NATO obviously is not prepared. The following two examples make this clear:

1. The recent WP proposal to begin Conventional Stability Talks (CST) with an exchange and a verification of military data, and analysis of the rationale and followed by determination of who has more and who is therefore obliged to reduce more.

Some analysts argue that this proposal is just a trick to delay the reduction of asymmetries due to the difficulties to come to grips with a quantitative and qualitative force comparison. They point to MBFR and the WP's refusal to talk cooperatively about data as an example and make the case that 14 years have been spent in vain due to the inflexible position the Warsaw Pact has shown in the data question.

2. Discussion about military doctrine between the alliances: Although originally proposed by NATO, the initiative in question was taken over by the WP in its declaration of May 29, 1987 and is still awaiting a general reaction by the NATO side.

As mentioned above the WP has problems stemming from Western development of advanced technology weapons, the emerging conventional technologies known as ET and from NATO concepts like "Follow-On Forces Attack" (FOFA) or in the more recently developed US army doctrine "Airland Battle".

If ET is taken seriously, the Soviets believe it has real potential to unhinge their conventional war strategy in Europe.

(7) Miloslaw Hrusa, *Military and Political Consequences of Deep-Strike Concepts with Regard to European Security and Cooperation*, p. 10.

The Soviets are also deeply troubled by the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) what they publicly decry as an "arms race in space". They obviously fear that SDI technologies, in addition to the threat from the space, could play a role on the conventional battlefield in Europe and that this development could trigger a new and costly step in the arms race. They fear this initiative precisely because it proves the capability for initiative within NATO. Against easy-going competitors the Soviets are confident of their ability to catch up and even overtake. In competition with active ones, they obviously lack this confidence.

The problems for NATO are somewhat different. They derive first of all from the massive superiority of the WP in conventional arms, their constant increase and modernization in Europe and the military options which NATO believes can be gained by the WP through exploitation of this superiority.

Therefore there is an overriding need to trigger a development of cooperation which is irreversible and from which no side can step back without decisively hurting its own security. There is a continuing need for confidence-building measures and a verification process which decreases real and perceived fears and ambiguities on both sides. Conventional forces must be limited. Negotiations on conventional armament and the increase of stability in Europe should begin soon and the sooner they get down to brass-tacks the better.

The Eastern proposals are promising, far-reaching and go a long way to meet Western demands. Indications are that agreement could be reached fairly quickly on the main issues at stake in the negotiations: exchanging (verifiable) data and eliminating asymmetries, especially in the most offensive weapons categories. There is the need to reduce surprise attack and large scale offensive capabilities which form the main threat to NATO. Equal ceilings in Europe for heavy equipment should be the objective. Furthermore, concentrations of remaining troops, notably those stationed in foreign countries, should be limited, the structures and doctrines of the remaining forces should aim at a non-provocative defensive standard agreed upon by both sides.

This process will be accompanied *nolens volens* by a nuclear status which is mutually deterring. If nuclear weapons later on can be maintained on a lower level in a way reliably minimizing the dangers of war in Europe, a status could be reached in which both sides see their remaining decisive problems as not being predominantly military in nature.

V. Conclusion

Since World War II the East-West conflict has played a dominant role in

international politics. East-West relations have been determined by a compound of three divergent processes:

- confrontation,
- cooperation, and
- competition,

which at different times and in different ways have prevailed.

There are clear signs that we are currently living in a period of increased and still increasing cooperation in which the problems of confrontation and competition are becoming less determining.

Nonetheless, one should caution against being too eager in embracing Gorbachev's plans for change already as reality. It is a widespread trend to confuse intentions with a possible reality. To a certain extent NATO is faced with the danger that its member countries may become militarily demobilized in the belief that the Soviet military threat had vanished.

The chance of war between the WP and NATO is extremely low. Soviet military power, however, does pose a threat in its ability to be transformed into an instrument of "blackmail", "intimidation" or some other kind of undesired influence on Western decision making. It is still in the Soviet interest to obtain a Europe in which the United States is no longer present. In the pure sense, a "Common European House" might be more easily handled by the Soviets. Of course, this is not what European politicians could want. On the other hand, though, there are clear signs of political progress:

- a more flexible, open-minded foreign policy under Gorbachev which aims at more adjustment and cooperation.,
- the willingness of the WP countries to think more and more in categories of common security than in categories of class struggle,
- progress in arms control and disarmament which led to three important results
 - the Stockholm agreement on confidence and security building measures (CSMB's) in September 1986,
 - the INF treaty in December 1987 with its double zero solution resulting in the elimination of ballistic missiles and cruise missiles with a range of 500 to 5500 km,
 - a very close approach at the mandate talks on Conventional Stability Talks (CST) in Europe, which can to be expected to finish with promising results a few weeks from now.

This process is positively influenced by Western developments, as well:

- a US policy which is lesser determined by ideology as in the beginning of the Reagan Administration
- the endeavour of Western European states to play a more independent

and active role in reinforcing the process of East-West co-operation —the intensive search for new areas of economic cooperation between East and West (joint ventures, third country cooperation models).

The described developments are not only a challenge for the Soviet Union and her partner states, but also for the Western Alliance, which obviously has been surprised by the speed and scale of Soviet foreign policy and arms control initiatives. The reactions and activities of NATO member states in regard to the new situation underline the different interests existing within the Alliance, which not only separate the USA from the Europeans in certain aspects but also the Europeans themselves among each other.

The reasons for this development are divergent Western assessments of Soviet politics, both domestic and foreign, as well as of one's own security situation. Some analysts already claim that there is a "Western structural incapacity to respond". This may be exaggerated. But on the other hand, NATO has to respond when its strategy is challenged. Both alliances should be capable and ready to respond to far-reaching offers regarding structures and doctrine and to establish a new security relationship between them.