Building consensus: The Security Model in light of previous security arrangements in Europe

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"In 1989 all governments, and especially all Foreign Ministries, in the world would have benefited from a seminar on the peace settlements after the two world wars, which most of them had apparently forgotten." ¹

Hobsbawn is right in saying that governments could have learned from the lessons of the previous peace settlements but wrong in his pessimism. Certainly, the demons that plagued the peace conference in Versailles after the First World War remain with us today. Ethnic nationalism, spurred in part by the appeal to international norms of self-determination, is starkly evident in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Russia, as in 1919, fears that it will be isolated from the European security order. For their part, the countries of East Central Europe fear that they will remain alone to face their security problems or worse yet have to submit to a new Yalta with their fate decided in Brussels, Washington and Moscow.

However real these concerns and however great the uncertainty as the Europeans grope their way to a new security order, aggressive nationalism lacks the force of previous eras. What is surprising is not that so much violence has occurred in Europe after the end of the Cold War but so little. Those instances where countries in Europe have sought to redraw international borders through war have been relatively minor and so far have not succeeded. Even in these cases, wars have taken place under the guise of a civil wars, as conflicts waged over national self-determination. In contrast, after the First World War, the Bolsheviks used force to reconstruct much of the former Russian empire that had broken away. They were less successful against the Poles, who made it almost to Moscow before being thrown back.

The catastrophe that followed the First World War was not repeated after the end of the Cold War in part because of the presence of several viable international institutions with sufficient legitimacy to weather the transition to the post-Cold War era. It is these international institutions and the underlying consensus which they represent taken together which continue to ease the transition to democracy in the region. In effect, there exists a multi-speed security order in Europe of 'coalitions of the willing'. In this order, the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE) provides the foundation which defines the principles and articulates the consensus on which the rest of the system operates. These include the pursuit of democracy (as the best guarantor of human rights), proscriptions against the use or threat of

force, the self-determination of peoples and the inviolability of borders. The Council of Europe requires for membership that countries must meet a minimum set of democratic standards. The Council has self-consciously lowered its standards in admitting Russia, which has systematically trampled human rights in Chechnya, out of the stated belief that democracy would be better advanced after Russia has joined. To fully participate in the European security order, a country must be democratic, a requirement for membership in both the European Union and NATO. The European Union promotes security through economic growth and integration for its members in a common market and throughout Europe through its association agreements. NATO provides the major collective basis for providing security in Western Europe and leads a peacekeeping operation in Bosnia which includes Russia and Ukraine.

The OSCE will consider the common and comprehensive security model for the 21st century at its summit meeting in December 1996. This summit provides yet another opportunity to address pan-European security issues. Little substantial is likely to occur in Lisbon because on a number of major issues, no consensus exists on how to restructure the European security order. What we will see in Lisbon and what we have seen since the end of the Cold War is what Charles Lindblom has called 'ad hoc incrementalism'. Lindblom developed this idea to deal with domestic policy problems for which there are no clear means of identifying a solution, in other words, no grand design is possible, necessary, or desirable. Attempts to implement a grand design without an underlying consensus, such as happened with the collective security system associated with the League of Nations, have failed spectacularly.

The quest for stability
Efforts to develop security arrangements in Europe can be seen in light of three factors — the principles that provide the basis for the arrangement, those states that are allowed to participate in the decision and the specific tasks that the new security arrangements are supposed to accomplish. Of particular importance are what Osiander calls 'structural principles', that is, 'those factors which influence the structure of the international system and its subsystems: the number and identity of the international actors, their relative status vis-à-vis one another, and the distribution of territories and populations between them'. Osiander adds a fourth factor, 'the various kinds of institutions or organizations that actors may share between them', but does not discuss it in any detail because he asserts that the existence of these institutions presupposes consensus on basic principles.

The current debate within Europe is over an important part of these principles, in particular over 'who decides' on security arrangements. The bipolar world where the United States and the Soviet Union determined 'who

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