

Redefining British Foreign and Defence Policy

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This paper surveys some of the questions which arise in reviewing British foreign and defence policy.

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Introduction

It is always easier to make short-term adjustments of policy than to undertake a fundamental overhaul of assumptions and priorities. In the course of recent arguments about the scale and nature of cuts in the defence budget, about the future of Russia, about the future of the transatlantic relationship and about the ability of Western Europe, whether in the guise of the Western European Union or the Eurocorps, to organise a military force independently of the North Americans, there have been repeated calls for new strategic thinking, but, as Hugo Young wrote in *The Guardian* on 21 October 1993, such thinking is painful and could lead to uncomfortable conclusions. Moreover, previous attempts at a radical overhaul of Britain's security priorities and forces have often foundered on new and unexpected changes in the world outside.

Nevertheless, as Young notes, "such thinking... does go on". This paper surveys some of the arguments and some of the new directions which are proposed, drawing not only on British sources, but also on recent thinking in the United States and Russia.

Other Research Papers relevant to this topic include *Nuclear Testing and the UK* (93/73), *Defence reviews: past, present & future* (93/91), *The crisis of democracy in Russia and some international implications* (93/92), *Defence Statistics 1993* (93/88) and *The Earth Summit: one year on* (93/71).

I Recent developments in Russia

A. Russia as a threat to European security?

The only state which has the military potential to commit an act of massive aggression against the UK and is not firmly allied with the UK is the Russian Federation. Similarly the only state which has the potential to commit massive aggression against any NATO member is the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation is unique in Europe in possessing both nuclear weapons and the ability to arm and equip peace-time armed forces which, even when current reductions have worked through, are likely to number more than a million men. However, the ability of the Russian armed forces to project conventional military power beyond their western borders is now severely curtailed. The question for British policy planners is whether or not there is any residual threat, not perhaps to any NATO member directly, but to the general stability of the continent. Moreover, should the NATO mutual security commitments be extended to any state in Eastern Europe, including the Baltic republics, the possibility of a future Russian threat to those states would need to be taken into account.

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The Russian Federation has a different strategic profile from that of the former Soviet Union. It is both smaller and further away from present NATO states. In as far as it represents (for example in the minds of some of its military officers, journalists and politicians) the continuation of the historic Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, it has recently "lost" a vast amount of territory, including territory in Eastern Europe which it never formally "owned", but effectively controlled. It has also abandoned an internationalist ideology which in the past encouraged its state and military apparatus to acquire control over territory not inhabited by Russians. Instead it has adopted an ideology which is solely concerned with economic goals and the interests of the Russian people. Nonetheless, Russia remains a great power. Kenneth Waltz recently defined its position thus:

The ability of Russia to play a military role beyond its borders is low, yet nuclear weapons ensure that no state can challenge it. Short of disintegration, Russia will remain a great power - indeed a great defensive power, as the Russian and Soviet states were through most of their history.

("The Emerging Structure of International Politics", *International Security*, Fall 1993, 52)

B. Vladimir Zhirinovsky

The main difficulty is that although the Russian Federation now has a popularly elected president and a democratically accountable government, it is not at present a stable polity. Few of its people have yet fully come to terms with the changes of the last 5 years; the first steps towards fundamental economic reform have proved very painful; there is a growing impatience with elections and parliamentary institutions and frequent calls for more authoritarian government. Following the December 1993 elections in which the "Liberal Democratic Party" of Vladimir Zhirinovsky won 23% of the popular vote, it is not impossible that state power might eventually be won by new leaders who, despite the economic situation, would place high priority on trying to revise the outcome of the 1989-91 upheavals, rather as the Nazis set out to reverse the humiliation of Versailles. The greatest source of anxiety is the fear that the Russian state might in future behave in the same way as the Serbian state has behaved since 1990. Judging by the recent elections such policies would enjoy a measure of support from individuals in the armed forces. However, the danger should not be exaggerated: the great majority of Russians are not interested in provoking new wars to restore the Russian Empire. A demagogue like Zhirinovsky, should he or one like him ever win power, would face deep divisions, and, as Aleksei Arbatov argues in *International Security*, Fall 1993, the likely consequences in terms of armed resistance, refugees, international condemnation and sanctions, would probably ensure a rapid reassessment.

Neil Malcolm offers the following assessment in the February 1994 issue of *The World Today*:

The possibility cannot be excluded that sections of disenfranchised industrialists will seek to form an alliance with extremist politicians such as Zhirinovsky and their numerous supporters in the military.

However, this is a concern for the future, and it is important not to allow alarm at the aggressive neo-imperialist rhetoric of the extreme right to colour our interpretation of the increased assertiveness which has been evident for at least the last 12 months. What we have seen so far is most likely not the "evil empire" getting ready to strike back, but rather Russia feeling its way towards the role of a "normal" regional power.

(p 32)

Although Vladimir Zhirinovsky deliberately promotes comparisons between his movement and the German Nazis, the current situation of Russia differs from that of inter-war Germany in many ways. Whereas Germany and Japan in the 1930s were economically powerful and hungry for markets, labour and raw materials, Russia already has a vast stock of under-used labour and resources and is unable to supply its domestic markets adequately. A resurgent Russia would have an extremely weak economic base for years, if not decades to come. Its economic problems could not possibly be solved by acquiring more territory and reconquering deeply hostile populations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Even the very limited goals of regaining the Baltic seaboard and the Crimea, would be immensely costly to Russia. For Russia to arrive at the position of being able to face the costs of aggression with equanimity would require an economic transformation greater than any country has achieved in the twentieth century. At present, and for the foreseeable future, Russia is in desperate need of economic assistance (finance, food aid, know how) of a kind which could not be obtained by any military means.

C. The new military doctrine

The new military doctrine of the Russian Federation was adopted in November 1993 and has not been fully published, but key elements were unveiled at a press conference and further details have been published in the Russian press (eg *Izvestiya* on 18 November 1993). The document is explicitly transitional and fills the vacuum left by the disappearance of the former Soviet armed forces and their Soviet-era doctrine. As the *Izvestiya* commentator on military matters Stanislas Kondrashov commented on 24 November, the new document should be seen as redressing the balance in favour of giving a dignified and worthy role to a much reduced and humiliated army. The most publicised aspect of the new doctrine, the rejection of the

"no first use" doctrine in cases where the RF is threatened by a nuclear state, or a state allied with a nuclear state, is not in itself any indication of future belligerence. It brings RF doctrine more or less in line with that of the United States and NATO and replaces a stance which was almost certainly more propagandistic than anything else.

The new doctrine does not, at least in its published extracts, give clear answers to the vexed questions about the role of Russian armed force in conflicts beyond the borders of the RF. This, according to John Erickson (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 1994, p7), is the most worrying aspect of the new doctrine. The version of the document published in the Russian press does list "the abuse of the rights, liberties and lawful interests of Russian Federation citizens in foreign states" as a source of actual or potential military threat to the Russian Federation, but, although international law is generally interpreted as discouraging the use of such instances to justify action in self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, similar wording has been used in the past to justify US military interventions, for example in Grenada, and does not necessarily imply that the Russian Federation claims a right to intervene at will in contravention of neighbouring states' sovereignty.

II The Insecurity of Eastern Europe

A. Sources of Insecurity

There has been much discussion recently about the perceived security vacuum in Eastern Europe which arises from the fact that the Warsaw Pact has been dissolved and neither the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC), which was set up in 1991 to link NATO to the states formerly belonging to the Warsaw Pact, nor the CSCE, which includes all European states, including the neutrals, have developed structures which could guarantee a coordinated military response to major security problem.

The subject is difficult to discuss rationally because the states involved generally display a diplomatic reticence about their underlying anxieties. Since most of them experienced more than forty years of Soviet military occupation or domination it is scarcely surprising that there is still a widespread fear of a Russian military resurgence or that this fear is fanned by the wild statements of Zhirinovsky and his like. The desire to be taken under the NATO security umbrella is a readily understood response to such fears and must make the existing members of NATO think carefully about the nature of the commitment which they would be taking on in the worst-case scenario.

However, the more immediate threat to stability and security in Eastern Europe is of a different nature and arises from the danger that one or more of the long-standing quarrels

between neighbouring peoples or states could turn into armed conflict, in the same way that the simmering quarrels of old Yugoslavia have turned into a devastating war. Again there is an understandable reluctance to discuss worst-case scenarios and all the states potentially involved in such conflicts insist on their continuing commitment to the Helsinki principle of the inviolability of the existing frontiers.

B. Extending NATO

Nor is it by any means certain that these tensions would be resolved or permanently contained if all the states were members of NATO. NATO membership may have helped to contain the deeply-felt mutual suspicion between Greece and Turkey, but it has not removed the underlying tensions, nor resolved the problem of Cyprus and there have been times when relations between the neighbouring states have seemed to be deteriorating dangerously.

Russian policy on the eastern enlargement of NATO has followed two distinct lines of approach. On one hand there has been talk of the need for an overarching security structure to create stability and defuse the latent tensions which arise from long-standing territorial disputes, historical grievances and irredentist movements. At various times Russian spokesmen have argued that CSCE should become the primary security forum to deal with these problems, or that NATO should be expanded to include all the states of the region, including Russia itself, or, in Andrey Kozyrev's formulation, that there should be "overlapping security guarantees", possibly based on the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, Part 1, SU/1892 B/5).

The other strand of thought is more traditional and suspicious. It sees NATO as an essentially unchanged "cold war" alliance, trying to expand its influence to the east at the expense of Russian interests. A report drawn up by the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation and published in *Izvestiya* on 26 November 1993 points out that cold war attitudes towards Russia as the main threat to Western Europe are still found in NATO and sees a danger to Russian security should this perception persist and be combined with NATO enlargement. The report concludes that in these circumstances the Russian High Command would have no alternative but to reorganise its defences accordingly and that this would place further strains on army resources and morale. It also detects a potentially dangerous irony in Germany, as the most powerful European member of NATO, taking more responsibility for the guaranteeing of the post-1945 borders in Eastern Europe and sees a threat to the conventional balance of forces negotiated under the CFE agreements.

In fact, the ambivalence of Russian politicians and soldiers towards NATO is not new. There were indications over many years, becoming quite explicit in the Gorbachev period, that, despite the anti-NATO rhetoric and the huge resources put into preparing for a possible war

against NATO, some Russians actually regarded the western alliance as a factor for stability and a curb on possible German revanchism, an understandable Russian preoccupation in the post-war period.

A more recent discovery which has reinforced Russian interest in some kind of overarching security structure is that some of the problems of regulating Russian military relations with the other Soviet successor states can be tackled more easily in a wider international context. The role of the United States in brokering a settlement of nuclear weapons issues between Russia and Ukraine, a role underlined by President Clinton's summit meeting with Presidents Yeltsin and Kravchuk in January 1994, is the most recent example of this. Hannes Adomeit has also argued ("The Atlantic Alliance in Soviet and Russian Perspectives", in Neil Malcolm, ed, *Russia and Europe: An End to Confrontation?*, 1994, 50-52) that the NACC played a useful role in negotiating the allocation of CFE quotas between the Soviet successor states and in encouraging Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

C. Stability Pact

A different approach to Eastern European security problems, but one which also relies on the power of the Western European states and the USA to mediate and persuade, has led to the Balladur initiative for a Stability Pact which is intended to promote "preventive diplomacy". This initiative is directed at potential conflicts (specifically excluding those which already broken out) in the countries which aspire to join the European Union or have agreements with it and is intended to encourage these countries "to consolidate their borders and to resolve problems of national minorities". By contrast, CSCE efforts have so far concentrated on existing armed conflicts such as the one around Nagorno-Karabakh. The Balladur initiative was approved by the European Council at Brussels on 11 December 1993 and will be formally launched at a conference to be held in Paris in April 1994.

D. Partnerships for Peace

The question of Eastern European security and the perceived vacuum came to a head at the NATO summit of 10-11 January 1994. The member states reaffirmed that membership of NATO remains open to "other European states in a position to further the principles of the Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area" but decided to concentrate for the present on the negotiation of separate agreements or "partnerships for peace" with each of the Eastern European states. The framework document adopted at the summit makes it clear that the partnership agreements will be individually negotiated and tailored to the circumstances of each partner-state and will lead to a variety of different relationships with NATO. The decision leaves many questions unanswered about the long term security

arrangements for the region, including the crucial question as to which states might eventually join NATO, when, and on what terms. Romania became the first signatory of the partnerships for peace framework document on 26 January, followed by Lithuania, which lodged an application for full membership of NATO on the eve of the summit on 27 January.

It is proposed that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe should also be invited to participate in an "enhanced relationship" with the Western European Union along lines complementary to and compatible with the NATO "partnerships for peace" (HC Deb, 2 February 1994, c749w).

The force reductions and limits negotiated under CFE and CFE 1A should prevent any of the states in the region expanding its military potential to the point where it would become a direct threat to neighbouring states. It also seems unlikely at present that regional tensions will lead to the emergence of new rival blocs within Eastern Europe, although tactical diplomatic alliances are already a feature of the scene. Most, if not all, of the states are busily reorganising their forces to provide adequate border security combined with a reserve potential to organise a general defence in depth, should this ever become necessary again. Several, such as Poland and Ukraine, are already providing soldiers for UN peacekeeping and could, if necessary, contribute to peacekeeping within the region if required in the future. The future use of Eastern European forces for international peacekeeping has already been discussed in an ad hoc group under the North Atlantic Co-operation Council. For the moment, aside from former Yugoslavia, the only resort to armed conflict in East-Central Europe has been in Moldova and, since the flaring of violence in the summer of 1992, this has been contained.

E. Enlargement of the European Union?

The need for security guarantees may not, therefore, be an urgent one, except that the present uncertainty about the future could itself undermine stability. NATO governments have been reluctant to take any hasty step which could add to the danger of a backlash in Russia, but are also worried that their reluctance to extend the Treaty eastward could send the wrong signal and encourage Russia to take a more aggressive line, for example in defence of Russian interests in the Baltic states. Few in NATO would regard the whole of Eastern Europe as ripe for admittance to NATO, but a partial enlargement, to include only those states which are closest to membership of the European Union and would find it easiest to adapt to co-operation within NATO, could also be unwise, since it might appear to suggest that there are certain states and borders which are more likely to be protected by NATO than others.

In the longer term close association or membership of the European Union may provide an alternative to NATO membership for some of the states of East-Central Europe. Not only would this imply a strong commitment to mutual security (the Union created by the Rome and Maastricht treaties could hardly tolerate a large-scale armed attack against one of its members), but it would also create a dense network of economic and political links, public and private, which would make it increasingly difficult for new member states to engage in serious and protracted conflicts with each other. Union membership should also help to entrench democracy, as it seems to have done in Spain, Portugal and Greece and, while democracy is not, as is sometimes claimed, an absolute guarantee against aggressive state behaviour, it makes such behaviour much less likely. The existing member states of the European Union do argue and disagree at government level about many issues, but these disagreements rarely spill over into the general state of relations between them or have any security implications.

Asked about the implications of future enlargement of the European Union and the inter-relationship of WEU and NATO on 8 February, the Secretary of State for Defence told the Commons:

They are obviously separate alliances, but it is assumed that, as countries move towards membership of the European Union, if they also wish to consider a closer association with NATO the two would naturally seem to go together, as would involvement in the Western European Union. It is obviously better that there is common membership so far as possible, but that will depend on the pace of progress, not only for the European Union but for other matters relating to military integration.

(HC Deb Vol 237, c126)

III Western European security co-operation

A. The Western European contribution to security

For the foreseeable future most of Eastern and Central Europe will not enjoy the sense of security against external threats which is now almost taken for granted in most of the states of Western Europe. Indeed the general stability of the region diminishes sharply to the east and south. Apart from initiatives such as the Partnerships for Peace, the CSCE mechanisms and the projected Stability Pact, what contribution to wider European security can or should be organised within the existing military co-operation structures of Western Europe? Or, to broaden the question further, what contribution can and should Western Europe be making towards military security in any part of the world, whether it is organised through NATO, the

WEU, the United Nations, or, as in the case of the Gulf war, by a coalition of states operating under the ultimate authority of the UN Security Council?

Here, again, the questions remain unanswered. As most Western European states, and the United States, reduce the proportion of their national income devoted to defence and the numbers of men and women in uniform, their willingness and ability to become involved in any international peace-keeping or enforcement activity diminishes.

B. The Maastricht Treaty and WEU

The Maastricht Treaty creates a European Union which, according to the Preamble, is resolved to implement a common foreign and security policy, but "the framing of a common defence policy" is an eventual, not immediate goal and there is no commitment to this becoming a "common defence" (preamble and article J.4). Neither Denmark, nor Ireland is at present prepared to take part in such a project. For the foreseeable future the capacity of the Union to contribute to wider European or international security will be no more than the sum of the national parts. France, Germany, Belgium and Spain have begun to create the Eurocorps, which could eventually be the nucleus of a common defence force, but this too depends on national decisions about equipment and manpower. NATO did try to set targets for the forces which it should collectively have at its disposal and the resources which its members should be prepared to devote to defence, but the targets were rarely achieved. As D L Bland concludes in a study of the NATO Military Committee:

The allocation of resources from nations does not follow automatically from the issuance of force goals, which serve more as indicators of national defense efforts and as the basis on which NATO military authorities prepare future plans. Many of the goals are never met and some observers contend that they are only accepted to avoid political wrangling in committees.

(The Military Committee of the North Atlantic Alliance, 1991, 201)

Now that WEU has been enlarged and non-EU European NATO members have been encouraged to participate in its activities, the differences in scope and membership between the two organisations have been reduced. Since the recent decision of France to join the NATO military committee, the most significant difference will soon be the presence of the North Americans in NATO and their absence from WEU. NATO HQ could eventually be replaced or eclipsed by the separate military planning apparatus of WEU and the Eurocorps, but the difficulty of carrying out coherent collective force planning based on 10 or more sovereign states will remain.

C. Former Yugoslavia: a European failure?

There is also a danger that, despite growing economic integration and interdependence, the member governments of the European Union, may continue to have divergent foreign policy priorities or, indeed, divergent interests as perceived from the various national capitals. These interests may reflect geographical proximity and anxiety about conflicts spilling over borders, but these are often reinforced by historical links (eg France with North Africa, Austria with Slovenia and Croatia, Italy with Slovenia, Croatia and Albania, Britain with Ireland). The differences in approach to the dissolution of Yugoslavia frequently reflected the differing historical perceptions and priorities of the national governments forming the EC and the self-exclusion on historical grounds of the most populous member-state, Germany, from direct involvement in peace-keeping is a further weakening factor.

The war in the former Yugoslavia is often seen as a test of Western Europe's ability to contribute to the security of the continent as a whole. In a recent essay on "West European security and defence co-operation", Professor Trevor Taylor comments:

Events since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty have not been kind to West European defence co-operation aspirations, and the Yugoslav conflict on top of the Kuwait crisis has brought out just how little military power the states of the European Community are able to deploy. The French government has come reluctantly to accept that serious military action by West Europeans requires American participation and thus NATO involvement...(..)

Western Europe has seen its aims of maintaining Bosnia's integrity and even of maintaining safe areas within it go by the wayside. This has occurred essentially because Britain and France lack the confidence to defend Bosnia's integrity with only European help. Had the US been willing to deploy a ground force division (about 25,000 troops) in Bosnia, Britain and France would have provided a brigade each and other European states would probably have supplied another brigade. However, faced with US refusal to deploy its ground forces, the consequence is a serious ill-feeling between Europe and the US as well as success for the aggressive use of force in Bosnia.

(International Affairs, January 1994, 6)

IV Britain's contribution to international security

A. National interests and national contributions

In the 1992-93 session both the Foreign Affairs and the Defence Select Committees reported on Britain's contributions to international security via the United Nations (*Expanding role of the United Nations & its implications for UK policy*, Foreign Affairs Select Committee third report, HC 235 1992/93; *United Kingdom peacekeeping & intervention forces* Defence Select Committee fourth report, HC 188 1992/93 & HC 369 i-v 1992/93).

Both discussed British actions in terms of "contributions" to security in other parts of the world and also touched on the difficult question of British "interests". For example, in para 58 of its report the Defence Committee stated:

There is no doubt that there must be an element of national interest in any decision to use national forces, if only to the extent that any use should not be against national interest. But that can be but a feeble guide in selecting where and when to intervene. Geographical proximity is an equally doubtful ethical criterion: as the Secretary of State for Defence observed-

"I am not aware of any ethical distinction between a war in Bosnia and a war in Angola or Cambodia..",

British forces are indeed involved in UN operations in areas of no evident "national interest". **In the event of a general need to support the UN, it seems to us that the best criteria for involvement in peacekeeping operations are that it should be an operation which requires the particular skills and strengths of British forces; that the United Kingdom should be seen to be an active participant in a substantial number of such operations; and that there is a serious chance of a successful outcome. In general terms, those peacekeeping operations in which the United Kingdom is currently engaged meet those criteria.**

The question of what constitutes "national interests" is indeed a difficult one. It was the subject of a further parliamentary exchange in the context of Bosnia on 8 February (Mr Budgen and Mr Aitken at c131). Most states give absolute priority to the security of their own territory. For the United Kingdom, with almost 20,000 troops on security duties in Northern Ireland, this is a heavy commitment (*ibid*, para 56). There is also a national

responsibility for the far-flung territories which have remained under the sovereignty of European states after the granting of independence to their empires. The United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and Portugal continue to have territories in this category and the experience of the Falkland Islands conflict in 1982 shows that they can still require protection against external aggression. Whether it is in the "national interest" of the metropolitan power to offer this protection is hard to judge. Objectively it may be difficult to justify committing a significant proportion of defence resources to remote territories with few resources and small populations and this could be regarded as contrary to the national interest, but cost-benefit analysis has generally been regarded as inappropriate to issues of national sovereignty.

B. Regional interests

Beyond the national border it is not difficult to identify a national interest in the security of the surrounding region. This is partly because states generally have an obvious political and economic interest in the stability of their neighbours, but also because a major threat to one state is also likely to threaten that state's neighbours sooner or later (an argument which clearly influenced, for example, the decision of Saudi Arabia to take a stand against Iraq over Kuwait). States sensing a common threat often take refuge in mutual commitments like those in the WEU and NATO treaties.

For Britain the commitment to mutual regional security through WEU and NATO endures, but the common threat to the immediate region which inspired the creation of these treaty organisations has effectively disappeared. As suggested in the first two sections of this paper, the question mark of insecurity now hovers over European states which are further away from Britain. This means that "national interest" in the narrow sense is much less involved. As Beatrice Heuser has written on this point:

It has to be said with some realism that the fates of Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan would be of more concern to Britain or France if they were a function of a common threat, than if these eastern European countries were embroiled in conflicts unlikely to spread beyond their own territory.

("Containing uncertainty: options for British nuclear strategy", in *Review of International Studies*, July 1993,257)

Britain has investments and markets (some more potential than actual) in the less stable regions of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and in the former USSR, but on a strict "cost-benefit" basis it might be difficult to demonstrate that commercial interest alone justified the cost of maintaining intervention or peacekeeping forces on the scale that might be necessary to impose a favourable outcome to armed conflicts by military means, even if it could be

guaranteed that other states would have the same interest in collective action.

Some operations might be justified by a wider interpretation of national interests. Threats to vital raw materials, such as oil supplies, are normally seen only in national security terms if they are posed by the use of force; if they arise from market forces, or from environmental considerations governments are more likely to take the view that private firms and individuals must adapt in response. States are more likely to respond with the threat or use of force when supplies are disrupted by war. For example, the oil-importing Western European states and Japan perceived an economic interest in trying to prevent the Iran-Iraq war spreading and some of them deployed naval forces to protect their shipping in the Gulf. However, their interest was not so strong that they ever contemplated intervention to end the war and most historical evidence suggests that it is very difficult or impossible for outside powers, even with the best of intentions, to impose a permanent settlement on warring states or parties to a civil war.

This is not to say that direct intervention on the field of conflict is never justified. The reports of both select committees mentioned above clearly recognised that in certain circumstances military interventions, ranging from low-key peacekeeping operations through to large-scale enforcement actions such as the expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, would continue to be necessary.

C. Global interests and humanitarianism

However, such interventions may be easier to justify in the name of a global approach to security which does not look for narrow national interests, but rather takes as its starting point the proposition that all states have a common duty not only to observe international law themselves, but also to enforce international law. This is the "general need to support the UN" invoked by the Defence Committee. The belief that all states, but in particular those with the most resources at their disposal, have an ethical obligation to contribute to global welfare, including global security, is not universally accepted - indeed it is regarded in some quarters as utopian and misguided - but it is upheld in principle by most governments, as well as by churches, political parties and charities around the world and is encouraged by television news coverage.

While the interest of British citizens in Bosnia, apart, perhaps, from a small number with relatives there, is entirely altruistic, it is based on a sense of common humanity and a moral imperative, which translates into support for a government policy of using military assets, as far as it is feasible, to assist the international humanitarian relief effort.

Apart from the wish of individuals to behave in a generous and humane manner, individuals and groups within society, including private enterprises, may have good reasons for wanting their government to pursue global welfare aims, including, if necessary and feasible, by the use of force. For example, individuals have an interest in controlling the availability of dangerous narcotics to their children. The armed forces of the United States are already directly involved in programmes designed to intercept narcotics and help South American governments to stem the supply. British forces have also helped occasionally in these programmes. Similarly, British tourists and business people have a direct interest in the security of the countries which they visit and while it is only rarely necessary or possible for British armed forces to come to their direct assistance (for example, the evacuation of Aden in 1986), any successful peacekeeping operation in which British forces take part is likely to benefit British trade and tourism sooner or later. The long-standing UK contribution to the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus could serve as an illustration of this.

D. Non-military threats

There are also long-term interests which are not susceptible to the use of military force, but which might influence decisions about resource allocation and which are, in a sense, of a strategic nature. For example, it is sometimes argued that various forms of environmental degradation, including ozone depletion, are a greater threat to human health and wellbeing than any military threat. Although Western Europe lived in the shadow of Soviet nuclear weapons for four decades, it was only when a civil nuclear reactor in the former Soviet Union exploded that an actual radiation threat arose. Both Austria and Germany, with relatively high-risk civil reactors in the former communist states close to their borders, have perceived a national interest in paying for their decommissioning or modernisation. The United States, Britain and several other countries are also contributing to the costs of dismantling nuclear weapon systems in the former Soviet Union.

The extent to which the wealthy states of the world are prepared to transfer resources to the poorer states in the pursuit of common environmental goals was one of the central issues of the Rio Summit. A series of documents setting out British government programmes and strategy in response to environmental challenges were published on 25 January 1994 (Cm. 2426-9). P H Gleick has argued that:

a nation or region bent on protecting its "security" in the future will have to concern itself as much with the flows of the planet's geophysical capital as it does today with the flows of economic capital; as much with the balance of

atmospheric trace gases as with the balance of military power; as much with monitoring the earth's vital signs as with monitoring the arsenals of destruction.

(Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, April 1991, 19)

There have been many attempts to broaden the security agenda to take account of non-military threats, for example by the report of the Palme Commission on **Common Security** in 1982, but national security is still seen primarily as a matter for Defence and Interior ministries. The more holistic approach to security which is frequently advocated at international conferences seems to yield to the more familiar concept of defence against military and quasi-military (eg terrorist) threats when it comes to national decision-making. These military threats are seen as posing fundamental challenges to the state which are qualitatively different from those posed, for example, by economic challenges, even when the latter are perceived as deliberate hostile acts.

E. Sharing the responsibility - specialised roles

Unfortunately, the acceptance of some degree of indirect international responsibility to counter any threat in association with other states does not determine what the nature and scale of this responsibility ought to be for any particular state. As far as threats which may be susceptible to conventional military force are concerned, the UN Secretary-General has tried to promote the idea that states should " earmark " certain forces to be available for UN operations. The Defence Committee comments on this proposal in paras 62-66 of its report and there is a government response in HC 988 of 1992-93 (para 29). The Committee points out that in practice it is the British forces which would normally be assigned to NATO which are most readily available for UN duties and, while there has been no formal " earmarking ", there is a general presumption that it is the forces which the NATO/WEU states make available for regional security which will, in future, be potentially available for international duties, provided that they are not simultaneously required to carry out their primary role. Thus, for example, British forces normally based in Germany were available to take part in the Gulf War operations in 1990-91 because there was no danger that they would be required to engage in operations against the Warsaw Pact.

For the UK the hardest issue may therefore be to decide the future size, shape and command of any forces to be allocated to NATO. In the past such forces were largely based in Germany in order to be close to the NATO/Warsaw Pact front line. The need for permanent basing in Germany is now much reduced, but even if these forces were to be entirely withdrawn to the UK, which would involve many practical difficulties over accommodation and training, their equipment and infrastructure would still have to be distinct from that allocated to the defence of the UK (including Northern Ireland) and they would have to

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remain in some sense "additional"; otherwise, the margin of forces available for any international duty could vanish entirely. Some categories of forces, such as armoured divisions, are unlikely to be of much relevance to the immediate defence of the UK and are justified only in as far as they might be used on the continent of Europe, or in other land operations such as the liberation of Kuwait.

One approach to the problem of determining the size and shape of future UK contributions to security beyond the British Isles is to think in terms of specialised roles. It has long been argued that it is not possible for any medium-sized state to maintain a significant intervention capability in every type of military force. Within NATO planning the UK has long accepted certain specialised responsibilities, for example by maintaining amphibious forces for the potential reinforcement of northern Norway. However, this is only one of a wide range of responsibilities. The *Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993* sets out thirteen separate tasks involving all three services which the UK accepts within the NATO context (Cm 2270 pp39-43). The *Statement* also makes the point that:

Britain's balanced mix of maritime, land and air forces - characteristics required for national purposes - allows the United Kingdom to contribute to all three force categories.

(Cm 2270, p35, para 403)

Thus, while Britain does take on certain specialised defence roles, it also maintains at least a token capability in a very wide range of conventional and nuclear roles. One of the questions which a fundamental review would have to ask would be whether or not this is still necessary or desirable. There is scope for much argument about which roles could potentially be dropped and also about whether any resources released should be reinvested in the remaining specialised roles, or regarded as savings to the defence budget. The arguments which have always taken place when defence commitments are under review invariably reawaken old debates about British military history and the respective importance of maritime and continental power. It is possible to argue from geography that France and Germany, now firm allies of Britain, are better placed to specialise in land forces, while Britain, along with the Netherlands and Italy is destined by nature to concentrate on naval forces. Or it is possible to argue from history that the wars that have determined the course of British history, at least since the early nineteenth century, have been fought mainly on land and their outcome decided in the heart of continental Europe. Britain could not have fought the Falklands campaign without its naval forces, but it could not have contributed to the Kuwait campaign without its air and land forces.

What is certain is that any attempt to rationalise Britain's potential contributions to international security by means of further specialisation would depend on the reliable

coordination of roles with the other members of the European Union, WEU and NATO. The existence of three different cooperative organisations with different memberships also complicates planning. To what extent should European planning assume a continuing contribution to European security from North America (Canada is already withdrawing; the USA will have reduced to 100,000 service-men and women by 1996)? Should WEU place absolute reliance only on the military assets of its original core members, or should it fully integrate its new members and associates? How prepared will the European Union be, should it develop the common defence identity referred to in the Maastricht Treaty as an eventual aim, to accept both the responsibilities and the new contributions implied by enlargement to the east?

V The contribution of the British nuclear deterrent to international security

A. The function of the nuclear deterrent

The strategic nuclear weapons systems of the UK relate to only some very specific categories among all the possible threats to national security. These threats would be posed by states with sufficiently massive military potential and aggressive motivation to attack the territory of the UK or one of its allies in NATO and to persist in aggression despite meeting resistance from conventional forces; or by states with nuclear weapons which might attempt to gain some advantage by threatening their use, but would be deterred by the likelihood of nuclear retaliation. Since the UK belongs to a mutual defence pact and the other members of this pact straddle western and southern Europe, it can be assumed that any potential aggressor would be taking on the whole alliance, or at the very least, several of its core members.

For the foreseeable future neither threat is apparent. However, potential threats to national security must be considered far in advance. For example, the decision to replace Polaris with Trident was taken in 1980, but the first submarine is not expected to be operational before 1995. Once in service, the Trident submarines, missiles and warheads could have a life-span of 20-30 years. The system could continue in use indefinitely with its individual components being replaced as they wear out if there are no great advances in defensive systems, but this is an unreliable assumption to make. A comprehensive test ban treaty negotiated in the next few years could slow down the rate of technological advance in offensive systems, and the ABM Treaty may continue to restrain the development of strategic defence technologies, but it cannot be assumed that other existing technologies, for example those connected with the detection of submarines, will stand still.

B. Decisions to come

The United Kingdom is therefore likely to be faced with at least a preliminary decision before the end of the century, as to the options for continuing with a strategic nuclear deterrent when one or other element in the Trident system becomes obsolescent. It is not possible to predict quite when and how such a decision might arise. It could come about because of a decision by the USA not to continue manufacturing and maintaining Trident missiles, or, as suggested above, by an advance in the ability of other states to detect submarines on patrol, or by a significant change in missile defence technologies, or because of the obsolescence of the submarines or their nuclear reactors. Another factor could be the difficulty of maintaining a warhead research capability for the future without any active project to create a successor system. A decision could take many possible forms: it could involve agreeing to purchase a new system from the United States, assuming that the United States is willing in the next century to continue with the close collaboration which has existed since the Nassau Agreement of 1962; or it could involve collaboration with France, assuming that this was not prevented by past agreements with the USA; it could involve merely ordering replacement submarines; it could involve a radically different weapon design and delivery system; or it could involve a withdrawal from nuclear weapon status altogether, possibly in connection with further rounds of multilateral reductions in warheads and success in preventing nuclear proliferation. A decision of the last kind would not necessarily be linked with the obsolescence or otherwise of Trident and could theoretically be taken at any juncture.

Another range of decisions to be faced in the future could involve the state of readiness of the Trident system, the numbers of submarines on patrol and the numbers of warheads carried. The British government has already announced on two occasions that the Trident D5 missiles will carry fewer than the theoretical maximum number of 17 warheads. Until recently the limit was set at 8 warheads per missile, ie 128 per submarine, the level assumed by START I for US missiles, but in a speech to the Centre for Defence Studies on 16 November 1993 Mr Rifkind said that "each submarine will deploy with no more than 96 warheads, and may carry significantly fewer". There will now be no maximum ceiling to the number of warheads carried on an individual Trident missile, but the limit for each submarine would produce an average of 6 warheads per missile. Clearly there is scope for further variation of these limits in the future. A recent ISIS paper on *A Role for UK Nuclear Weapons after the Cold War?* has suggested that the UK's sub-strategic and strategic criteria could be satisfied by a force deployment of one "mothballed" submarine, one in refit and two in the operational cycle, each carrying 6 single-warhead missiles and 6 MIRVed missiles with four warheads each. Such a deployment would require no more than 90 warheads altogether. Clearly there are many other possible permutations.

C. Co-operation with France?

How much pooling of a nuclear deterrent with France would be acceptable? This too has often been seen as salient question in the light of the creation of European Union and given the possibility of a future loosening of Transatlantic nuclear defence relations. To what extent is the possession of a separate national deterrent necessary to both British and French attitudes towards national sovereignty within the European Union and to their claims to separate membership of the UN Security Council? In its report in the 1991-92 session on *Anglo-French Defence Co-operation* the Defence Select Committee took a very cautious view, pointing out the significant contrasts between the priorities and past history of British and French nuclear weapons policy:

While the UK's military nuclear programme has throughout involved close co-operation with the United States, France has put great emphasis on the independence of its military nuclear programme. While the UK has concentrated on its SSBN force, France has developed a triad of air, land and seabased systems, which have together accounted for some 20% of the defence budget. Whether each element of this triad is to be retained, in the light of changes in the security environment and budgetary pressures, is currently under review. The UK's nuclear forces are assigned to NATO and targeting information is shared with the US; France's forces are independent of NATO and unilaterally targeted. In view of these differences in approach, unless one country radically changes its philosophy, co-operation can at best be at the margins. There are, however, areas in military nuclear co-operation which we believe are worth exploring.

(HC 91 of 1991/92, xi)

D. Non-nuclear options

The Green Party and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) favour the option of complete withdrawal from military nuclear roles on environmental and ethical grounds. Such a case could also be argued on economic grounds, by those who believe either that the resources currently devoted to nuclear weapons and related systems would buy more security for Britain were they to be diverted either into conventional armed force, or that investment in civil programmes (housing, training, health, science etc) would be of greater value to society in the long term. Such arguments are difficult to analyze because it is impossible to weigh the value of "national security" against other goods. Similarly, it is impossible to quantify the return on investment in nuclear deterrence against the investment in conventional defence.

A policy favouring non-nuclear defence for the longer term would have to take account of the need to find safe approaches to decommissioning. Because of this, and as a matter of military prudence, it would probably involve the retention of a nuclear research capability, in the same way that a research capability in chemical warfare and protective technologies has been retained long after Britain opted out of offensive chemical weapons in 1957. Such a policy could be approached gradually, by allowing existing systems to be phased out by stages or "mothballed", or it could be accompanied by a major diplomatic initiative to encourage other states to follow suit. In the latter case it could involve a formal change of status under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The gradual approach would involve no immediate change of status in international law, but Britain would steadily move into a new category of states which have knowledge and experience of dealing with nuclear weapons, but do not choose to retain an operational capability.

VI Nuclear weapon proliferation

A. The Non-Proliferation Treaty

In the minds of some the proliferation of states possessing or seeking to possess nuclear weapons has replaced the Russian/Soviet threat as the principal reason for states in Europe to possess nuclear weapons.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968 sought to freeze at five the number of states possessing nuclear weapons. The treaty came into force in 1970 and states in Article X that after twenty-five years (ie in 1995) a decision will be taken by a majority of the parties to the treaty whether to extend it indefinitely, or for a fixed period or periods. A review conference for this purpose is due to open in New York on 17 April 1995.

After communist China took over the Chinese seat at the United Nations in 1971 the five nuclear weapon-possessing states corresponded to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council: the USA, the USSR, China, France and the UK. A few states, including Israel, India and Pakistan, have never agreed to be bound by the NPT, but the great majority of states did agree not to develop nuclear weapons, in return for assurances from the nuclear five concerning their security and right to develop civil nuclear power, and in return for a commitment from the nuclear five to "pursue negotiations in good faith" with the goal of nuclear disarmament.

B. Proliferation despite the Treaty

Several major states which did not originally accept the NPT "bargain" have now done so. These include France, China, Brazil, Argentina and South Africa. However, the aim of avoiding proliferation has been undermined in three significant ways in the 1990s. Firstly, three states which have quite clearly built up a potential either to hold warheads in near-ready form or to cross the threshold to possession very quickly should the need arise, are still not parties to the NPT. These are Israel, India and Pakistan. All three have close and mainly friendly relations with the UK and with the other recognised nuclear weapon states and do not pose any threat to them, but all three have also been involved in long-running regional conflicts and there is a continuing worry that new rounds of regional warfare might have the potential for escalation.

A second cause for concern is that some states which are parties to the NPT seem to have violated it by developing their civil nuclear capability in military directions. Since the defeat of Iraq early in 1991 it has become apparent that the Iraqi government was working systematically to acquire a nuclear weapon and might have acquired a small stockpile later in the 1990s had its efforts not been thwarted. There have been similar suspicions about the intentions of Iran and North Korea. All three states in this category have a record of troubled relations with the UK and with the UN Security Council and have been involved in military or diplomatic conflicts with the USA.

Thirdly, the breakup of the Soviet Union into its constituent republics left strategic nuclear weapons in three of them, in addition to the Russian Federation which is the legal successor to the Soviet Union for the purposes of the NPT. It was the general view of the UN permanent five and of other parties to the NPT that all of the Soviet successor states apart from the Russian Federation should accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon possessing states. Belarus and Kazakhstan are now committed to this course and to full military denuclearisation. In January 1994 the president of Ukraine also reached agreement with his Russian counterpart about the terms for a similar process of decommissioning and the Ukrainian parliament endorsed these on 3 February by removing the qualifications which it had placed on ratification of START 1 and accession to the NPT. Nonetheless, doubts about the implementation of all these agreements will linger until all of the weapon systems have been destroyed or returned to the Russian Federation.

John Simpson comments in the January 1994 issue of *International Affairs*:

The threat generated by the nuclear arsenal created by the USSR is now perceived to arise more from its dissemination and proliferation than from any direct use upon Western Europe and the United States.

(p17)

The concern extends to the possibility that materials and know-how from the former Soviet Union might "leak" to one or other of the states in the first two categories which are believed to be seeking a nuclear weapon potential.

C. Implications for the UK

A world in which many more states possessed nuclear weapons would be less secure for the United Kingdom whether it possessed its own nuclear weapons or not, since there could be little confidence that a posture of nuclear deterrence would be fully effective against fanatical and unstable regimes. There is therefore a strong British interest, shared with all of the other nuclear weapon states, all European states and the great majority of other states around the world, in preventing nuclear proliferation.

There are many possible approaches to this issue, not all of them entirely straightforward. The NPT has proved a useful political and legal instrument for establishing a balance of interests between states possessing and not possessing nuclear weapons and is due to be reviewed in 1995. The British government, along with many others, has already stated that it hopes to see the Treaty extended unconditionally and indefinitely (HC Debates, 28 January 1994, 467w). It is also possible for Britain, along with other NPT signatories, to put pressure on other states to accede to and abide by the NPT, making assistance and co-operation conditional on this. However, the NPT is neither comprehensive nor entirely watertight and cannot serve as an absolute guarantee against proliferation.

D. Preventing proliferation

In cases where the NPT and its compliance mechanisms are not sufficient, it is possible for action to be agreed by the UN Security Council, as it has been in the cases of Iraq and North Korea. This can take the form of political pressure or of sanctions, but, in the case of prolonged non-compliance, could be backed by the use or threat of force. To date the credibility of such threats has depended mainly on the willingness of the USA to supply the force. As long as a would-be nuclear regime had not actually completed the process of acquiring warheads and a delivery system, its intentions might be frustrated by accurate and concerted use of conventional weaponry, as in operation Desert Storm directed against Iraq. To what extent should Britain and other Western European states, all of which have a clear interest in non-proliferation, also be prepared to use force if necessary to enforce a Security Council resolution designed to prevent the acquisition of nuclear weapons, or indeed other

weapons of mass destruction, by a regime like that of Iraq?

Should Britain and Western Europe also plan for the possibility that a potentially hostile state might acquire a nuclear weapon capability before the United Nations had come to terms with the immediacy of the danger? In these circumstances it could be too risky to launch a pre-emptive attack on the offending state. Would this be an argument for developing a doctrine and capability for nuclear deterrence specifically directed at new and potentially dangerous nuclear weapon states?

There are several points of view on this awkward question. Beatrice Heuser, in her recent contribution to the *Review of International Studies* ("Containing uncertainty: options for British nuclear strategy", in the July 1993 issue), feels that there is still a potential for deterrence of a future "nuclear Iraq" by possession of strategic nuclear weapons:

The only plausible role for British and French nuclear weapons in such a context would be as deterrents of enemy first use, either against Western forces in the theatre of war, or against West European or other allied cities.(260)

However, there are technical reasons for doubting that the strategic weapon systems designed to deter the use or threat of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union would serve this new purpose. These weapons have been designed specifically to create massive, and therefore unthinkable damage in a retaliatory strike against the Soviet Union in order to deter it from contemplating a first strike. Such damage might just (though the experience of Chernobyl suggests otherwise) be contained within a very large country, but could not possibly be contained within a small one, and would therefore affect that country's neighbours, making the threat less credible. Similarly, the threat of possible nuclear weapon use would not be credible if, as might be most likely in the event of a regional crisis, friendly and allied forces could not be protected from the effects of a strategic attack. It is also most likely that an irresponsible and aggressive regime would have abused and terrorised its own population and that the governments trying to contain and counter the aggression would be "self-deterred" from threatening to inflict nuclear weapon attacks on them.

It was this logic, in a different context, which led NATO planners to develop and deploy theatre and tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, leaving the strategic systems as a last resort deterrent targeted on the cities and nuclear weapon sites of the Soviet Union. Some commentators use it to support the development by the United States of mini- and micro-nuclear weapons, which could, they argue, be a credible deterrent against future Saddam Hussains (Dowler and Howard in *Strategic Review*, Fall 1991), or to support the modernisation of sub-strategic nuclear weapons (Ramos, *ibid*).

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Others, perceiving that strategic weapons have no deterrent value against small "new" nuclear weapon states conclude that the only justification for strategic weapons lies in the Russian threat. This is the view of Lawrence Freedman ("Set to sail without a helmsman", *The Independent*, 5 March 1992) and also of Kaysen, McNamara and Rathjens ("Nuclear Weapons after the Cold War", *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1991). Freedman has also suggested that nuclear weapon proliferation could have the effect of reducing the ability of the USA and the other "great powers" to regulate and influence regional conflicts.

The safest conclusion to draw from such scenarios might be that all possible efforts ought to be directed towards not allowing such circumstances to arise. Heuser comments on this:

It is clearly in the interest of the United Kingdom as of its allies that proliferation should be fought by all technical means available. Without an expansionist power on the Continent, it is above all long-range missiles with NBC [nuclear, biological or chemical] warheads which could threaten Britain and her allies. Measures to increase and monitor export controls, to impose more stringent verification measures, to increase considerably the power (and budget) of the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Authority] and of intrusive verification are already being discussed.(262).

E. A comprehensive test ban treaty?

This author also notes that the successful negotiation of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty could not in itself prevent proliferation (for Israel and Pakistan are believed to be very close to possessing nuclear weapons without having carried out a test explosion), but would create extra impediments to proliferation. Negotiations for such a treaty, which could build on the moratorium which has been observed by all the nuclear powers except China since October 1992, began in January 1994 at Geneva. While some states have announced a target of 1996 for the treaty to be in place, the United Kingdom has resisted the imposition of a strict timetable. In each of the nuclear weapon states there are mixed feelings about a test ban in the short term because the defence ministries and nuclear laboratories have hitherto relied on live tests to ensure the reliability of new designs (see Research Paper 93/73 *Nuclear Testing and the UK*).

The ending of nuclear testing would have positive effects on the natural environment, particularly in the Arctic and South Pacific, where Russia and France respectively have test sites which have caused concern about possible contamination of the oceans. The most significant political effect of the treaty might be to strengthen the bargain implicit in the Non-Proliferation Treaty by assuring the non nuclear-weapon states which accept that status that the nuclear weapon states are serious about their pledge in article VI to end the nuclear arms

race. While it may be unrealistic to expect a CTBT to be ready in time for the NPT review conference in 1995, the long-term future of the treaty and of voluntary restraints on nuclear weapon proliferation in general may hinge on the willingness of the nuclear weapon states to abandon their pursuit of ever-more sophisticated warheads and delivery systems.

Conclusions

It has not been the aim of this paper to provide answers to the many questions posed, but rather to sketch in the areas of debate and uncertainty.

The tone of the debate is constantly affected by new events, particularly in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. For example, the unexpectedly high vote for Zhirinovskiy's party in the Russian election has already led many commentators to revise their estimates of the stability of the new Russia and the likely development of its foreign and defence policies. Similarly, the trend of events in Bosnia has altered perceptions of the likely duration and nature of NATO military involvement from one week to another.

The collapse of communism in 1989-90 and the rebirth of nations in Eastern Europe made it seem that the underlying insecurity of the cold war had ended. Preliminary settlements in South Africa and Palestine have shown that some apparently intractable conflicts can be transformed by political and diplomatic means. However, it has also become increasingly obvious that such political transformations do not automatically produce peaceful outcomes. One form of insecurity may be replaced by another.

It is impossible to foresee confidently how events will unfold in Russia or in any other part of Europe and unwise to base current foreign and defence policy too firmly on any particular assumption. The will and ability to adapt promptly to new circumstances may determine the extent to which the United Kingdom can contribute to security and prosperity at large.

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