4 The Imperatives of Political Change

This study equates the concept of an organic security order with a specifically European security order. After World War II Winston Churchill was of the opinion that Europe should restore itself as a political “world region.” Such a restoration was necessary to create a more stable world order based on “regional pillars,” with a “unified Europe” as one of those geographically organic pillars. Churchill’s hope concurred with the views of, among others, George F. Kennan, who in his capacity as one of the chief planners of the postwar foreign policy of the United States advocated a strategy of a federated Europe “into which the several parts of Germany could be absorbed.” Unfortunately, none of these plans was ever realized. Instead, a divided Europe emerged and the military alliances became the symbol of this failure.

As stated above, the two alliances did not constitute symmetrical substructures within the European bipolar structure, although the hegemonic position of the superpowers within their respective alliances has de facto legitimized the spheres of influence drawn by the dividing line in Europe. The Warsaw Pact has been an instrument for the Soviets to maintain ideological and political control over Eastern Europe: in 1956 in Hungary and in 1968 in Czechoslovakia, the Soviets used military force to crack down on antisocialist uprisings. Although it has frequently been denied that any kind of delimitation of spheres of interest exists in Europe, the vague Western reaction to the implementation of the Brezhnev Doctrine has led many to believe that the superpowers have had a mutual interest in supporting Realpolitik in terms of the division of Europe. At a certain point in the mid-1970s there even seemed to be an interest within the U.S. government in declaring this attitude in doctrinal terms. A member of the Ford administration, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, went so far as to state that the tasks of the United States included, among other things, ensuring that the relationship that developed between the East Europeans and the Soviet Union was an “organic” one. This so-called “Sonnenfeldt Doctrine” was wrongly regarded as an explicit recognition of the Brezhnev
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Doctrine. However, one would be justified in claiming that Sonnenfeldt foresaw future developments in Eastern Europe more clearly than many of his colleagues. Indeed, in the 1980s Sonnenfeldt's prophecy seemed to come true: the Brezhnev Doctrine became obsolete and a more organic relationship began to emerge between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, the crisis symptoms in the socialist world increased and the future for it became clouded. The Soviet Union was confronted with “dramatic alterations of the international and internal environment,” and it was already feasible for experts to predict that “in the 1980s the Soviet Union will be facing issues and events which may make for incremental changes—conceivably even fundamental changes.” Indeed, behind the facade of economic development, stable political systems, accepted party leaders and unassailable Soviet hegemony, a process of destabilization had started. At the same time, world capitalism had sailed through the economic gales of the 1970s and early 1980s with surprisingly little difficulty. It had entered a new technological phase successfully. The socialist community was not able to make it. As Eric Hobsbawm states, “socialism was incapable of moving fully into, let alone generating, the new high-tech economy and was therefore destined to fall ever further behind.” In addition, in a society marked by global communications, media, travel and transnational economy, it was no longer possible to insulate socialist populations from information about the non-socialist world, that is, from knowing just how much worse off they were in material terms and in freedom and choice. This economic stagnation led to political destabilization.

Furthermore, ecological catastrophes and popular resistance to nuclear weapons fostered political disintegration, prompting the questioning of the leading roles of the Communist parties; consequently, a final pillar of stability and cohesion was crumbling. As early as 1980 both these factors, economic decline and weakened party rule, caused the rise of the Polish "Solidarnosc" that shocked the Soviet leaders and the whole “socialist community.”

THE EROSION OF THE EURASIAN SECURITY SYSTEM

From a historical perspective, Russia has traditionally been a peripheral power of some significance in Europe, a competitor for