

NATO and the Warsaw Pact

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Can security in the NATO/Warsaw Pact area be achieved without nuclear weapons, or with significantly reduced reliance on them? Many religious leaders and other concerned citizens in Europe and America are asking this question while NATO political and military authorities are deliberating about how NATO should improve its nuclear posture in Europe (the so-called theater nuclear posture).

No one can be smug or even satisfied about depending on nuclear weapons for security. One hardly need recount the destructive power of individual nuclear weapons (up to twenty-five or fifty times the explosive power of the bombs dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki) or count the thousands of warheads in current nuclear inventories on both sides. Seemingly sophisticated theories of deterrence and counterdeterrence tend to give a premium to firing most of these weapons in a few massive salvos should deterrence fail, so that there is widespread belief that nuclear war is totally uncontrollable. In fact, many moralists argue that, in order that it remain unthinkable, no one should try to devise ways to control it. For such people, the only "security" nuclear weapons have provided or can provide is the belief that the consequences of their first use are so terrible that fear will keep everyone from using them.

Under these conditions the prophetic, or religious, leader must ask: "Why should we depend on a weapon that is so terrible?" Can't we put an end to this dependence? Haven't our own political and military leaders declared such dependence to be mad, counting as it does on mutual assured destruction (MAD)? Shouldn't we now take the bold, humane, and maybe divine step of declaring that "this must end"—if not quickly and deci-

sively, at least slowly but surely. Especially when NATO is contemplating some steps to increase its nuclear capability in Europe, shouldn't we now press particularly hard to reduce this dependence?

THE SITUATION AND THE THREAT.

There can be no doubt that the nations of NATO confront, in the Warsaw Pact, formidable military forces—strategic nuclear, theater nuclear, and conventional. These forces represent both a threat and a mystery. The main outlines of the threat are well known. They derive primarily from the central Warsaw Pact power, the Soviet Union. In fact, the nuclear threat derives almost completely from the Soviet Union, both at the intercontinental (so-called "strategic") and at the continental (so-called "theater") levels. At the conventional level too the twenty-seven Soviet divisions stationed in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland constitute the hard core of the military threat.

Within the last ten to twenty years we have seen significant changes in this threat—virtually none of which has served to lessen, ameliorate, or in any way reassure us about whether these military forces constitute a "clear and present (or future) danger." Perhaps too many shepherds of NATO's capabilities have cried "wolf" too often and too shrilly over the years for us to be fully attentive now, but that phenomenon should not deafen or blind us to the capabilities that do exist any more than the voices of those who proclaim "Peace, peace" when there is no peace.

The clear strategic nuclear superiority of the U.S. vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the early Sixties assured most Europeans that their security was provided by an implicit "doctrine" of massive retaliation. That assurance has disappeared. The disappearance of U.S. strategic nuclear superiority has been accepted, if not endorsed—at least rhetorically—in SALT I and SALT II by most Western political leaders, without clear or full acknowledgment and disclosure of what this important change means to NATO deterrence or defense. Perhaps there should not be such disclosure—politics and

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deterrence depend on degrees of ambiguity—but the implications of this significant change in the Warsaw Pact threat to NATO should haunt any discussion of whether NATO can achieve security without nuclear weapons.

At the theater nuclear level, the Soviet Union has long maintained (since 1959-61) a capability for massive nuclear destruction of Western Europe. The MRBMs (Medium-Range Ballistic Missile—500-1,500 mile range) and IRBMs (Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile—1,500-4,000 mile range) aimed at Western Europe from the Western Military Districts of the Soviet Union have numbered in the hundreds for about two decades. Without a direct or symmetrical counterweight to these, NATO leaders have judged them to be offset by the U.S. strategic, or intercontinental, nuclear superiority. Indeed, some have interpreted them as being about the only “strategic” nuclear forces the Soviet Union could afford at the time their deployment was begun. They seemed to provide the Pact with its principal deterrent to a putative NATO attack during the time of U.S. strategic superiority. Since there was very little we could do to dissuade the Soviets from deploying them and we did not really believe they would want to use them to initiate a war of conquest that would leave the object of conquest obliterated, we got used to them. In recent years, however, the Soviets have significantly increased the potential military capability and use of continental nuclear forces by the introduction of the SS-20, a mobile, multiple-warhead intermediate-range missile with greatly improved accuracy. While improving the second-strike (or “deterrent”) utility of the continental force, this missile adds a significant first-strike or counterforce potential to that force.

Improvements in the Soviet’s longer-range continental nuclear forces have been accompanied by improvements and quantitative increases in the battlefield or tactical nuclear weapons available to forward-deployed Soviet ground forces also. In the early Seventies most Western analysts felt the advantage in tactical weapons lay with NATO, since Defense Secretary McNamara had announced that U.S. tactical nuclear warheads in Europe numbered about seven thousand. The tactical (battlefield) as well as longer-range theater balance now appears to most analysts to have shifted in the Soviet-Warsaw Pact’s favor. While the Soviets have increased and modernized their capability, NATO theater nuclear capabilities have remained more or less constant and have even diminished in some respects. Quick-reaction-alert (QRA) forces have been radically reduced to avert dangers of accidental war. Some dual-purpose tactical aircraft have been reassigned to a principally conventional role, both to increase conventional capability and to lessen dependence on a nuclear response or reaction to any attack. The shelf life of most of the deployed warheads is uncertain and is probably being approached rapidly. No significant new warhead designs have been introduced into this force. As a result of improved Soviet delivery means and warheads and apparent Soviet doctrinal emphasis on seizing the initiative (including a nuclear initiative) in a short war, there is a serious question about the vulnerability of NATO’s nuclear war-

head storage sites and delivery means.

The conventional balance—or, better, imbalance—which has long been Europe’s most immediate concern, appears also to have shifted more in the Pact’s favor since the late Sixties. The five Soviet divisions introduced into Czechoslovakia in 1968 remain there. Their strength is beyond what could be regarded as necessary for maintaining internal Pact stability. New tanks and artillery systems and infantry fighting vehicles have modernized Pact forces. Expenditures to sustain the Pact’s formidable array of conventional forces have not abated and appear to have increased. Meanwhile, NATO nations struggle against competing domestic demands, inflation, and energy shortages to maintain the much smaller forces they have committed in peacetime. NATO’s presumed technological superiority has all but disappeared, except in a few areas such as precision guidance of selected munitions. Chemical defense is almost nonexistent in the face of both significant offensive and defensive Pact capabilities in this area.

To be sure, NATO is now embarked on a program to enhance its conventional posture after what General Haig dubbed its “decade of neglect.” This includes an attempt to increase budget commitments by 3 per cent per year in real terms, increased emphasis on standardization and interoperability of weapons and equipment, and the Long-Term Defense Program (LTDP) to plan and implement priority improvements in readiness and reinforcement in ten major areas including the theater nuclear area.

In terms of hard capabilities, the Warsaw Pact threat appears to be real and stronger than ever. Yet—as suggested above—this threat remains and is perhaps now even more a mystery than before. The mystery is at several levels and concerns Soviet intentions. Is the Pact military threat to NATO merely an expression of the Soviet Union’s desire to overcome its historic sense of inferiority vis-à-vis the West? Is it the result of continuing paranoia about a potential resurgence of Germany, still nurtured by aging Soviet leaders who remember World War II? Is it really misconstrued by Western analysts who forget that the Soviet Union may be more fearful of an antagonistic China than the West? Is it—in apparent reversal of Stalin’s approach in Korea—really a feint to divert NATO and the West generally from economic, political, and even military competition in the less developed world? Would the Soviets really want to take over Western Europe by military means, their “prize” devastated and with questionable chances for recovery in a foreseeable future? And what about their professed interest in arms control, détente, and peaceful competition? Are there not real, human forces behind those within the Soviet Union that—however treacherously past or present leaders may behave—must be found and supported by similar human forces in the West so that the dominance of military threat and response can be transcended on both sides? In the final analysis, even if the military threat is implemented in some act of aggressive madness, should the West’s or NATO’s response really be to engage in mutual nuclear suicide? If not, what would be the consequences now of declaring that we should not resort to the use of nuclear

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weapons because we believe this would amount to mutual suicide or be an unforgivable crime against humanity?

These are not rhetorical questions. They should not be regarded as such either by those who want to improve NATO's nuclear posture or by those who want to decrease reliance on it or even to dismantle it.

POLITICAL-MILITARY ISSUES. According to newspaper accounts, the critical decision that NATO will face with respect to the theater nuclear posture is whether to add a European-based nuclear missile capable of reaching the Soviet Union. Since mid-1977 a "High Level Group" (HLG), chaired by the U.S. assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, has studied the problem of improving the theater nuclear posture. Besides recognizing the erosion of U.S. strategic superiority and the aging character of NATO's theater nuclear posture, the HLG has been particularly concerned about the deployment of the Soviet SS-20—the mobile and MIRVed intermediate-range missile that poses a first-strike type of threat to Western Europe and to NATO's theater nuclear weapons deployed principally in West Germany.

Since the early Sixties, NATO—except for France since 1971—has had no land-based missile capable of reaching the Soviet Union from European soil. As long as overwhelming U.S. strategic nuclear superiority could be assumed—and deterrence in Europe was coupled to it through battlefield nuclear weapons, nuclear strike aircraft based in Europe, and the assignment of Polaris-Poseidon missiles to SACEUR, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe—this lack did not seem severe. Under those conditions the Soviet continental nuclear posture could be interpreted primarily as a second-strike deterrent, and the danger of a nuclear attack on NATO that would be confined to European soil seemed remote and senseless.

Combined with other ominous indicators at other levels of military force development and Soviet military doctrine, deployment of the SS-20 seems to change all that. The International Institute for Strategic Studies *Military Balance* of this year reports about 120 SS-20s deployed since 1977. That increases the number of Soviet IR/MRBM launchers by about 20 per cent, but, with three warheads per launcher for the new missile, the number of warheads has increased by almost 60 per cent in this category. This addition seems quite unnecessary for second-strike deterrent purposes—especially because NATO conventional and tactical nuclear forces had been standing still or even deteriorating during the period immediately preceding this deployment.

What is the meaning of this deployment? There are three questions we should try to answer. First, does it mean that the Soviets would want—at some future time of crisis—to be able to threaten or to undertake a nuclear attack confined to Western Europe without fear of reprisal from the U.S. strategic arsenal? Second, does it mean the Soviets merely want increased political leverage to use against NATO? Third, does it mean the Soviets are truly fearful of NATO's military power and

a possible NATO attack? No one in the West can say with any degree of certainty, but it seems clear that the first two of these questions are worth pondering seriously. If the answer to either is "yes" or "maybe," then security in Western Europe seems to require an improved theater nuclear posture for NATO unless we seek some other "security" than what is generally meant by national security. If the answer to the third question is "yes" or "maybe"—and to the other two is "no"—then we may have a real opportunity to change direction by forgoing improvement in NATO's theater nuclear posture.

While there may be a "yes" or "maybe" to each of the preceding questions about Soviet motives or intentions, I believe a "yes" or "maybe" to the third question is unlikely. The SS-20 deployment and other indicators strongly suggest Soviet assertiveness—by political means based on intimidating military power if possible, by military action if necessary or if, from their point of view, relatively safe. There may well be some remaining Soviet sense of inferiority or even paranoia that drives them to add every available increment of technological-military power to enhance their own "security" and "defense," but in addition to playing a relatively weak role in their strategic decisionmaking, this putative paranoia is exceedingly hard to deal with.

The contemplated deployment of the neutron warhead by NATO for battlefield purposes almost two years ago is a case in point. That warhead was invented and designed for use against the massive numbers of Soviet-Warsaw Pact armored forces that might penetrate NATO territory in the event of an attack. It has very little immediate value or potential as a weapon for aggressive or offensive purposes, compared to existing arsenals. Yet the Soviets mounted a ten-month propaganda campaign to portray it as aggressive and inhumane in the extreme and have done absolutely nothing in a year and a half to respond to or to show similar restraint since President Carter announced in April, 1978, his decision to postpone a decision on deployment.

The decision that NATO faces now on whether to add to its theater nuclear posture a land-based missile—either an extended-range Pershing ballistic missile or a ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) or both—capable of reaching the territory of the Soviet Union is addressed to the Soviet-Warsaw Pact nuclear threat to Western Europe rather than to the conventional ar-

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mored threat. In many ways, I believe, this is a more critical and problematic political-military decision for NATO. It probably has been more adequately debated within the inner circles of NATO governments, but there is no assurance that the HLG will achieve a clear consensus that will have the necessary political support.

In brief, this so-called long-range option for NATO seems to be necessitated—from a military point of view—by the new combination of intercontinental nuclear parity and a direct, first-strike (or preemptive) type of nuclear threat to Western Europe symbolized by the SS-20. West Europeans—and West Germans in particular, on whose territory most of the targets for the SS-20 lie—would appear to need a direct deterrent (second-strike or retaliatory) capability to offset this threat. Yet there are four types of political issues that severely complicate the decision to adopt what appears to be militarily necessary.

First, the Germans have reportedly indicated their willingness (or desire) for NATO to have this capability, but only if the land-based missiles will be deployed on the territory of other NATO partners as well as on West German soil. So far, reportedly, no other continental European NATO state has indicated its willingness or desire to accept deployment on its territory.

Second, a European-based second-strike deterrent capability such as is contemplated could have an ambiguous effect on the longstanding issue of the coupling of Europe's security to the U.S. strategic-intercontinental arsenal. A European dilemma—almost schizophrenia—exists on this issue. Security in Western Europe seems to be tied to the U.S. strategic arsenal and yet it should not be tied so closely that security is placed primarily in the hands of the superpowers and threatened by the ups and downs of their bipolar relationships. Both SALT II and the pending HLG decision refocus and raise again this longstanding issue for Europeans.

Third, for some Americans, European reluctance to base a new increment of deterrent capability on European soil could look like another issue of "burden sharing," which is in many ways the other side of the coupling coin. Americans too face a dilemma, if not schizophrenia, here. They have always been after Europeans to increase their contribution to NATO's security, but frequently fearful—as, for example, in the case of the French nuclear capability—of too great a show of "independent" strength.

Fourth, on both sides of the Atlantic there exists a reservoir of concern about the short-term and long-term arms control and détente implications of a significant improvement in NATO's theater nuclear posture and capability. Only this past spring—very belatedly some would say—NATO created a high-level, special arms control group to work in parallel with the HLG on the theater nuclear posture. How to coordinate and reconcile arms control and military planning is a dilemma for all of us. There was a time in the Sixties when a burst of intellectual activity in strategic studies seemed to see arms control and military planning as two sides of the same security coin, both leading to rational and reduced military spending. Now it may be that SALT II can be

ratified in the U.S. Senate only if major new military programs are undertaken at significantly increased levels of spending. I cannot dismiss that phenomenon as merely self-contradictory. We do not yet know the dimensions of a possible similar phenomenon in the NATO/Warsaw Pact area of Central Europe.

THEOLOGICAL-ETHICAL ISSUES. In addressing the religious concern to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons, I will be exceedingly brief. My comments relate to the applicability of the principles of proportionality and discrimination of the just war doctrine, which I believe must discipline our thinking.

I am fully aware that there are moral theologians—such as Father J. Bryan Hehir of the U.S. Catholic Conference—who would argue that the use of nuclear weapons in war cannot be sanctioned by either the principle of proportionality or the principle of discrimination (see his essay in our joint effort, *The New Nuclear Debate* [CRIA, 1976]). Such men argue that nuclear weapons are by nature weapons of mass destruction and incapable of controlled or measured use—which would be essential for either the principle of proportionality or the principle of discrimination (i.e., noncombatant immunity). Father Hehir and others are, however, willing to give a tentative or temporary warrant to the threatened use of nuclear weapons as opposed to the actual use in order to maintain "deterrence of war" through the potential for mutual assured destruction. Political and temporal realism more than theological ethics or the just war tradition evidently justifies this warrant, but if the just war doctrine argues against actual use of nuclear weapons (about which we know very little), it ought also I believe argue against threatened or implied use. Other moral theologians—such as Father Francis X. Winters of Georgetown University—would argue that the just war tradition argues against both the threat and the use of nuclear weapons (see his two essays in the volume he edited with Harold P. Ford, *Ethics and Nuclear Strategy* [Orbis Books, 1977], and his September, 1976, *Worldview* article, "The Nuclear Arms Race: Man vs. War Machines").

I have stated my objections to this line of reasoning in other forums (see my essay, "Deterrence and the Defense of Europe," in *Ethics and Nuclear Strategy*). I would add here that the just war tradition must also be used more proportionately and discriminatingly than is implied in this line of reasoning. "Proportion" requires us to recognize that NATO Europe confronts a threat that is now nuclear as well as conventional, emanating from a potential aggressor—not merely from the existence of nuclear weapons. Our reasoning must address how to deal with a nuclear-armed adversary, not merely with "nuclear armaments," as though our security were threatened primarily by their existence. Similarly, discrimination requires us to address different types of nuclear weapons systems and different types of potential or actual use of them differently. "Indiscriminate" support of or condemnation of a neutron warhead merely because technology has offered it and military leaders

have requested it is not particularly helpful. Both those who support deployment or oppose deployment of new or additional nuclear weapons systems should have better arguments than that they belong to the class of nuclear weapons. We will, and have, come out at different ends of this argument, but let us be sure we have been proportionate, discriminating, and fair in our arguments.

Should NATO adopt the "long-range" option and plan for the deployment of land-based missiles in Western Europe capable of reaching the Soviet Union? On the basis of proportionality I would argue at least a qualified "yes." They would be "proportional"—that is, designated as a responsive deterrent—to an aspect of the threat that has recently emerged in a disturbing way. In the past we have too readily believed that the Soviet-Warsaw Pact threat to Western Europe was principally conventional, except if conventional war escalated to the nuclear level (perhaps by NATO's first use of tactical nuclear weapons). The danger of nuclear attack—if one existed—seemed to be a danger principally to the U.S. Now, together, we must consider the possibility that the Soviets may wish to have at least an apparent capability—together with its political leverage—to attack Western Europe with nuclear weapons first, combined with a capability to deter an intercontinental U.S. response.

If NATO's response to this development is to be discriminating as well as proportionate, we must be careful to assure to the best of our ability that the response is directed to the particular threat and does not constitute an indiscriminate response that either appears to signal a new aggressive or splendid "war-winning" strategy for NATO, or appears only to involve Western Europe more directly in threats of mutual assured destruction. Again, I believe a principle of discrimination can give a qualified "yes" to the proposed long-range land-based missile option. My own views would tend to favor ground-launched cruise missiles over Pershing IIs on the grounds that they are more of a second-strike as well as discriminating type of weapon system than ballistic missiles, which could be attractive in a first strike. However, that distinction is not one that can be drawn decisively on grounds of technological characteristics alone. The far more critical issue is how deployment of either system will be interpreted, explained, and guided by political authorities in NATO doctrine. In my judgment, a no-first-use declaration with respect to these particular systems may be a very appropriate and important accompaniment of a decision to deploy them.

In fact, we may have reached the point in which a no-first-use declaration by NATO with respect to all but short-range nuclear systems may be appropriate. This has always been resisted in NATO—correctly, I think—because of the dependence of Western Europe's security against conventional attack on the U.S. strategic nuclear arsenal. The SALT process has already tacitly accepted a kind of no-first-use principle for intercontinental systems. The current concern to strengthen NATO's conventional posture partly recognizes this development. Concern to improve NATO's theater nuclear posture springs from this development as well as from the Soviet-Warsaw Pact continental nuclear threat.

In my view the conventional theater imbalance is rooted in geography as well as in the politics of each alliance and requires, for the foreseeable future, a first-use option for NATO of the type Harvey B. Seim and I have discussed (in *Improving NATO's Theater Nuclear Posture: A Reassessment and A Proposal* [Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1977]). Such a first-use should involve only relatively short-range, extended battlefield types of systems directed at immediate reinforcements and tactical support forces on Pact territory. I believe NATO must have and be willing to exercise this option—both as a contribution to peacetime deterrence of a conventional attack and as an "intrawar" or wartime deterrent to further aggression.

However, deterrence of nuclear attack—either on Western Europe or on the U.S.—depends on a second-strike nuclear capability. It must be clear, of course, that a no-first-use declaration is not a nonuse declaration: If the Pact attacks with nuclear weapons, it should expect a response that could involve both intercontinental and continental systems. If NATO adopts the long-range option for the theater nuclear posture, no harm would be done to a second-strike deterrent posture by a declaration concerning the no-first-use of these systems. On the other hand, political support for such a decision, improved control of their usage by principles of proportionality and discrimination, and the placing of this decision in a context of future arms control and détente may be significantly enhanced by such an announcement, and even formal acknowledgment of the extension of the no-first-use declaration to all nontactical systems. Moreover, I see no major reason why in fact or in perception—under such circumstances—a no-first-use declaration by NATO, clearly and explicitly exempting the tactical systems, would involve or imply any decoupling of Western Europe's security from the U.S. intercontinental systems.

NATO Europe confronts a new nuclear threat that requires a measured and coordinated response. Already the Soviet Union has mounted a propaganda campaign and grimly warned the West against alleged NATO attempts to "alter" the theater nuclear balance.* Security against the Soviet-Warsaw Pact intimidation or possible attack cannot be achieved without nuclear weapons. But as we move to improve NATO Europe's security, we can and must move in directions that clarify and discipline the roles we expect nuclear weapons—intercontinental, continental, and tactical—to play vis-à-vis different types of threat. **WV**

*As we go to press, Leonid Brezhnev has just used the carrot as well as the stick in his speech commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the East German Democratic Republic. The surprising announcement that "up to" 20,000 Soviet troops and a thousand tanks would be unilaterally removed from East Germany over the next twelve months was clearly aimed at influencing the pending NATO decision.