
NUCLEAR

POLITICS

Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance

MARY KALDOR

An essential component of NATO strategy is the American strategic nuclear forces. In accepting a defense policy based on this strategy, the European members of NATO have placed extraordinary trust and confidence in the president of the United States, granting him the right to decide whether or not to engage in nuclear war in Europe. To put it bluntly, they have abdicated control over European lives. From this perspective, U.S. troops in Europe seem less hostages against the U.S. government's failure to act in the event of a Soviet invasion than against the danger that the United States might act and initiate a nuclear war.

From the point of view of the ordinary European citizen, however, is it any different for nations who possess independent nuclear forces? Decisions about nuclear weapons are, after all, taken in secret by a very few people. We now know how Prime Minister Atlee railroaded the decision to develop the A-bomb through a small subcommittee of the British cabinet in 1947 and how Callaghan, Healey, and Owen secretly went ahead with the Chevaline program to improve the Polaris warhead during the 1974-79 Labour government. And in France, according to Alfred Grosser, even "more than in the United States during the war and Great Britain after it, the activity of a small group of military men and high officials was carried on almost wholly outside the constitutional decision-making process

and with an almost total absence of any democratic control.”¹ How much difference does it finally make if the power of annihilation is in the hands of the British prime minister or the president of France, rather than the president of the United States?

In one sense, the ownership and control of nuclear weapons incarnates the relationships of power. The moment when Giscard d'Estaing handed to François Mitterand the codes for launching France's nuclear weapons was considered by the press and television to be the moment when Mitterand became president. Over the years an elaborate ritual, expressed in the language of deterrence, has been created to justify, explain, and cement the pattern of power established by nuclear weapons. And yet for historical reasons this pattern does not necessarily correspond to patterns of economic and political power. Indeed the ritual has become more and more remote from broader economic and political realities—in particular, the economic rise of Western Europe and Japan, the growing political importance of West Germany, the independence of the Third World, and the widespread popular demand in Western industrialized countries for greater political participation. The danger is that this disjunction could cause war. As the pattern of power delineated by nuclear weapons begins to break down, the ritual could be called to account. That is to say, any attempt to reverse the perceived decline in American power since the Vietnam War is likely to involve an increased emphasis on the use of nuclear weapons because other instruments of economic and political power are gradually being whittled away.

This paper outlines the changing relationships between Europe and America and explains the current debate about nuclear weapons in that context. The causes of the growth of nuclear arsenals are to be found among the institutions that create them—in the relationship between arms manufacturers, armed forces, civil servants, and scientists. But doctrine that is developed to justify each new generation of weapons has to be explained in wider political terms—in particular, in terms of the current divisions in the Socialist and Social Democrat parties of Northwestern Europe, which are symbolized in the nuclear issue. The present international economic and political crisis is fundamentally about the challenge to present patterns of power as defined by the ownership and control of nuclear weapons. It is a challenge both from those who wish merely to alter the pattern in order to establish a new and perhaps more “appropriate” ritual, and from those in the growing disarmament movement who reject the ritual altogether, who assert the individual human right to survive as fundamental.

Although I do not reject the idea of the Soviet threat, I regard it as secondary, now and ever since 1945, to the danger of nuclear war. Societies must of course be defended against external military threats and outside interference in political

¹ Alfred Grosser, *The Western Alliance, European-American Relations Since 1945* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 172.

affairs; but this matter is entirely separate from the question of nuclear weapons. The confusion of these two issues—the Soviet threat and the danger of nuclear war—has been an important and deceptive mechanism for upholding the nuclear ritual.

When NATO was formed in 1949, few leaders of opinion seriously believed in the possibility of direct Soviet military aggression against Western Europe.² That notion took on substance only after the outbreak of the Korean War in the summer of 1950. In March 1949, a month before the creation of NATO, John Foster Dulles said he did not know “any responsible official, military and civilian, in this Government or any Government, who believes that the Soviet Government now plans conquest by open military means”³—a statement corroborated by Secretary of Defense James V. Forrestal, by the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, by George Kennan (then director of the Policy planning staff at the State Department), and others.

In my view, the main purposes of NATO lay elsewhere. The main problem faced by American policymakers after the war was to establish peace and prosperity within the framework of a free enterprise system. The New Dealers and those that came after them were deeply convinced that the Depression and the Second World War had been caused by economic nationalism. Commitment to free trade was the condition of nearly all the wartime loans and aid agreements provided to Europe by the United States. But in the last resort, a liberal world economy had to be guaranteed by a powerful “international” state. Free enterprise could create prosperity but it also caused inequality. Prosperity is achieved through rapid change, through the rise and fall of companies, industries, and regions; capital tends to flow toward those that are rising and away from those that are falling. Only a strong “international” state can facilitate the free flow of resources—by providing a recognized international currency and dismantling barriers wherever they are erected—and only such a state can cope with the protest of those who are falling, kindly through aid or harshly through military force. Britain played the latter role in the nineteenth century: with the pound sterling acting as an international currency alongside gold, the City of London provided loans to investors and indebted governments, and British gunboats were sent to deal with recalcitrant peoples and states. The United States was Britain’s obvious successor. At the end of World War II, a week after Japan surrendered, Secretary of State James F. Byrnes made a speech in which he expressed his

firm conviction that a durable peace cannot be built on an economic foundation of exclusive blocs . . . and economic warfare. . . . [A liberal

² Parts of this section are drawn from my *The Disintegrating West* (London: Penguin, 1979).

³ Quoted in David Horowitz, *From Yalta to Vietnam* (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 80.

trading system] imposes a special responsibility upon those who occupy a dominant position . . . in world trade. Such is the position of the United States. . . .⁴

Alternative conceptions of the postwar order also existed. In the same speech, Byrnes referred to the fact that in “many countries our political and economic creed is in conflict with ideologies which reject both of these principles.”⁵

The war had been won by a broad coalition of social and political forces, resulting in an enormous growth in the movements of the Left—especially in Europe—who conceived the breakdown of the prewar international system less in terms of an interruption to the smooth workings of the free enterprise system and more in terms of the free enterprise system itself. The political makeup of postwar Europe was entirely different from the Europe of 1939. “Everywhere,” writes Alfred Grosser,

the view prevailed that a return to chaotic economic conditions and the social injustice of the pre-war period had to be avoided at all costs. The surprise at the victory of the Labour Party in the July, 1945 British elections can be ascribed to the failure to recognize a profound transnational movement. Everywhere, in France, Denmark, Italy, Germany and Belgium, a push toward the left was taking place. To be “left” meant to demand social change—which would be brought about by having the national community take charge of the economy. To the extent socialism can be defined, the Europe of 1945–6 was certainly right to call itself Socialism.⁶

Many of the ideas of the socialist parties were shared by the Christian parties that had become the right wing in several countries and even by some conservative parties like the Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP) in France. Internationally, these ideas were often associated with a “third force” ideology that envisaged a Europe independent of both the United States and the Soviet Union, independent of capitalism and of communism as practiced in the Soviet Union—a Europe in which peace would be preserved at least in part through the activities of the United Nations, and through new genuinely international economic institutions heralded by Keynes and others.

An additional problem in the postwar years in the United States was how to preserve the successful wartime alliance between the state and big business that

⁴ Quoted in Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–1975* (New York: John Wiley, 1976), p. 7.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Grosser, *The Western Alliance*, p. 52.

had served the American economy so well. In particular, the aerospace companies and naval shipyards that had expanded so dramatically during the war faced, in 1946-7, severe problems of excess capacity; they lobbied powerfully for a planned program of military procurement that would preserve their capacity for mobilization in case of another war. An initial response came in 1948 in the decision to create a seventy-squadron air force and to expand the navy, before either the formation of NATO or the outbreak of the Korean War.

The formation of NATO was the outcome of a complex political process involving both relations with the Soviet Union and internal Western politics. As subsequently became clear, the alliance did represent one way of solving both sets of problems. NATO provided a political framework within which the war-torn European economies could gradually work toward a liberal world economic system. Without NATO, Dean Acheson thought, "free Europe would split apart."⁷ At first, the military strength of NATO was of secondary importance; the military strength of the West was thought to reside in America's atomic monopoly, and there were no plans to augment conventional forces in Europe. After the outbreak of the Korean War, the integrated Command System was established, placing large sections of the European armed forces under the command of an American, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). The continued nuclear-weapon monopoly justified elaborate procedures of hierarchy and secrecy that confirmed American dominance and was later to cause considerable resentment, particularly in France. During the 1950s the extension of the principle of NATO to the Far East, through SEATO and ANZUS, to the Middle East, through CENTO, and to Latin America, through the Rio Treaty, provided an even broader foundation for postwar American authority. The link between the military alliance and economic relations was made explicit by the United States in negotiations over tariffs and troops, military aid and free enterprise; in exchange for the presence of U.S. troops in West Germany in 1968, a promise was extracted that the Germans not convert dollar holdings into gold.

The Soviet threat provided a scapegoat for NATO through which alternative political options could, over a period of years, be eliminated. By the late 1940s the provision of U.S. aid had already been used as a form of political pressure; in France and Italy, for example, Communists were removed from government in 1947. Funds from the CIA, often channeled through the AFL-CIO, were used to support the activities of Atlanticist factions within European trade unions and left-wing parties. After Korea, methods became more brutal; McCarthyism was extended to Europe, especially West Germany. Finally, NATO provided a rationale for increased military spending and the preservation of the

⁷ LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War*, p. 78.

wartime defense industries. One of the main purposes of military aid to Europe, provided under the 1949 Mutual Defense Assistance Act, was, according to a memorandum circulating in the U.S. State Department at the time, "to build up our own military industry."⁸

For the first two postwar decades, the U.S.-dominated system worked. The dollar provided a stable international currency; U.S. economic and military aid provided the resources for economic reconstruction; and the dollars that flowed out of the United States returned through the purchase of American goods. Wartime economic controls were gradually dismantled, and the United States encouraged the creation of a free trading area through the establishment of the European Community. High military spending, which stimulated the American economy, was thought to provide technological spin-off. The relaxation of the cold war in the early 1960s, the beginnings of detente, seemed to suggest that this was a stable political system, capable of securing world peace.

In fact, the world situation had begun to change in the 1950s. The economies of Western Europe and Japan were growing at a much faster rate than that of the United States. American multinationals began to invest abroad, especially in Europe, instead of at home. American military spending became a heavy burden on both the U.S. economy and its society, absorbing resources that might otherwise have been used for civil investment and innovation, and biasing the American industrial structure in favor of elaborate, expensive, and hierarchical types of technology. Americans began to buy more foreign goods, and foreigners bought fewer American goods. As the cost of aid and overseas military spending rose, the American balance of payments began to deteriorate, undermining the role of the dollar. No longer was the United States a beneficiary of the liberal world economic system. Resources were flowing not to America, but to Western Europe and Japan.

By the 1960s, the postwar structure had come apart. From 1965, the rate of economic growth slowed down. In 1971, the first trade deficit appeared, the same year, at the time of impending defeat in Vietnam, when the dollar was devalued. America could no longer afford to guarantee the international system, a fact, above all others, that explains the present economic and political crisis.

The policies adopted by the Nixon administration—including reduction in aid, the withdrawal of troops, and various indirect import restraints—amounted to a kind of parochialism that helped the American economy at the expense of the rest of the world. For instance, the dramatic rise in food prices worldwide during the 1970s was primarily caused by the end of food aid and the dismantling of grain reserves. The rise in the price of oil can be similarly explained: the United

⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 79.

States allowed it to happen because it hurt America less than it did Europe and Japan and because it benefited American oil companies. America thus became an agent in the erosion of the world economy. This policy was not consciously formulated; rather, it was a piecemeal response to a variety of special interests affected by the decline of the American economy—for instance, farmers hit by recession and inflation—and to the broader balance-of-payments difficulties. The cost of parochialism was borne by foreigners, particularly those located in the slow-growing regions of the world—the economic periphery of Europe (Britain, Ireland, Southern Europe) and by the underdeveloped countries. It gave rise to new forms of conflict and protest and encouraged the development of new centers of power able to provide wider protection against the vagaries of American power.

The trend to parochialism was opposed by American foreign-policy makers who had not adjusted to the new conditions of the world, and also by the powerful international business community in the United States. Although American labor, farmers, and domestic capital suffered from America's economic decline, U.S. multinationals continued to benefit from the dynamism of the European and Japanese economies. The Trilateral Commission, which informed the thinking of the Carter administration, represented an attempt to reestablish the liberal world order on the basis of power-sharing among the United States, Europe, and Japan. But it has proved impossible for an American president to act on behalf of this new internationalism, because it can be done only at domestic American expense. The renewed emphasis on military alliance and the Carter administration's efforts to cope with international problems of money, energy, food, and tariffs turned out to be expensive, both economically and politically. The posture of liberal internationalism resulted in a renewed trade deficit, the fall of the dollar, and draconian economic measures. The Carter administration's ambivalence, its failures, and ultimately its political defeat, all stem from a fundamental dilemma: whether to accept the national costs of being a world power, or the international costs, in terms of the breakup of the postwar system, of not being one. The new Reagan administration represents an undisguised nostalgia for the 1950s, when the interests of the United States and those of the capitalist world economy were the same—an attempt to reassert an American-dominated global order. Its policies are bound to come unstuck over the cost of defense and economic liberalism; the danger is that this failure could further encourage an increasing resort to military—rather than economic—instruments of power, and to repression both at home and abroad.

The decline of America has accompanied the rise of Western Europe. Economic growth has been concentrated in West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, northeast France, and northern Italy. In the 1950s, the United States en-

couraged the creation of the European Community as a contribution to a liberal world economy and as a way of minimizing the risk of alternative political options that might have still developed in France and Italy. The United States supported the membership of Britain in particular as a way of widening the free trade area and, it was thought, conferring an additional element of political stability. This Atlanticist conception of Europe was shared by multinational companies as well as those segments of society located in the fast-growing regions of Europe. In practice, of course, the European Community represented a compromise between the Atlanticists, who favored the creation of the free-trade area and, later, political integration and the creation of a stable European currency, and another group, Gaullist in approach, which reflected the interests of national producers—farmers, arms companies, etc.—and which viewed the Community as a form of wider protection against the United States. De Gaulle saw British membership in the Community as a threat to Europe; when he abandoned NATO in 1966, he revived some of the “third force” concepts of the early postwar ear. Elements of Gaullism persist in the Community in the common external tariff, the common agricultural policy, and cooperation on high technology projects such as armaments.

During the 1950s and 1960s, when the postwar American consensus was beginning to break down, a new consensus was developing in Western Europe. The Christian and liberal parties that were backed by big business and largely owed their position immediately after the war to American support adopted an Atlanticist stance at an early stage. Gaullism, and even old-fashioned nationalism, remained an element within conservative parties in France and Britain. In time, the lead of the Christian parties was followed by many of the parties of the Left.

The very success of the postwar system promoted the realignment of European politics. There was a general sense that the world had learned how to manage capitalist crises, and that capitalism, harnessed to a stable international political system and social reform, was relatively humane and successful. At the Bad Godesberg Convention in 1959 in West Germany, the Social Democrat Party adopted “an outspokenly revisionist programme which proclaimed the party’s attachment to Christianity, the profit motive, and a programme of modern social reform”⁹—an approach associated, of course, with a benign view of the United States as manager of the system. These realignments enabled the Social Democrats to enter government during the 1960s in some form or another in every European country except France and Ireland. During the late 1960s and 1970s, this political realignment affected the Communist parties as well, through the development of Eurocommunism. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) in particular,

⁹ Stanley Henig and John Pinder, eds., *European Political Parties* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967), p. 35.

in establishing a political stance independent of Moscow, relaxed its opposition to NATO as well as to many of the institutions of capitalism, a move that allowed for the "historic compromise" with the Christian Democrats.

The economic crisis of the 1970s has undermined the new consensus. The sucking of resources from the economic periphery of Europe has drawn attention to the unevenness of economic growth and made more visible its social and political costs: the growth of state power, the centralization of business, waste and pollution, the search for capital-intensive forms of energy, excessive expenditure on armaments. These developments have drawn protest not only from farmers, small businessmen, and workers in declining regions but from all groups that had effectively been excluded from the political process as it was established after the war. The protests have been expressed in the rise of movements for regional autonomy (Wales, Scotland, and Occitania); in new Poujadist tendencies in certain right-wing and center parties; in a series of single-issue campaigns about feminism, civil rights, nuclear energy, etc.; and above all in a new leftward move at the grass roots of the Socialist and Social Democrat parties and in trade unions, a move toward a reengagement of the Left in political and economic life.

The breakdown of consensus is apparent in the defeat of consensus parties—Giscard in France, Callaghan in Britain. A response to this breakdown can be seen in Britain in the phenomenon of Thatcherism. Like Reaganism, it is an attempt to return to the 1950s, to an alliance dominated by a "Special Relationship" between Britain and the United States, to a combination of successful capitalism and anticommunism. When members of the new British Social Democrat Party propose a realignment of British politics, what they are in fact talking about is an attempt to save the Atlanticist consensus of the 1950s in the face of new political forces that have emerged in the periphery of Europe—forces that, as the crisis deepens, will begin to affect the center of Europe—Germany, France, and Benelux.

The last and perhaps the most important of the protest movements to have emerged in the 1970s is the disarmament campaign, closely linked to shifts of opinion within the left-wing parties. It is, of course, the central issue, for it concerns the future of the NATO alliance and, by implication, the ways in which we can or cannot solve present economic and political dilemmas.

NATO strategy is based on the enduring myth of Soviet conventional superiority. We know from authoritative Western sources that there is, in fact, a rough conventional balance in Europe. The Soviet Union has marginally more men in Central Europe, although nowhere else, and has many more tanks, although these are to a great extent offset by NATO's antitank forces. During the 1970s, the conventional balance—as measured in quantitative ratios of men,

tanks, and aircraft—actually moved in NATO's favor.¹⁰ Only by a fantastic stretch of the imagination—made daily in NATO headquarters, in politicians' speeches, in the media—does the Soviet Union possess sufficient forces for a conventional attack on Western Europe.

But the myth endures. It does so because it is central to the ritual that surrounds the ownership and control of nuclear weapons. The ritual takes the form of an elaborate replay of World War II in which the Soviet Union plays the role of Nazi Germany charging across the North German plains in a conventional blitzkrieg, while gallant America, with its superior technology, comes to the rescue of the beleaguered Europeans. This drama, perpetuating the memory of the American victory in 1945, serves to justify our readiness to place Europe in thrall to American nuclear weapons. Only recently, the West German defense minister, Hans Apel, said of the growing disarmament movement: "The younger people in our country and in Europe have to some extent never learned the lessons of history. They don't know anything about Hitler."¹¹

The strategy governing the potential use of nuclear weapons was grafted onto existing strategy, partly because of the inability to take in the awesome implications of nuclear weapons and partly because of the way in which the military institutions were organized. The theory of deterrence was drawn from the experience of strategic bombing. And the language in which the theory was expressed, with its numbers and balances, seemed to imply that nuclear weapons were simply bigger and better versions of the weapons of World War II. To those who are not blinkered by the experience of 1945—perhaps the young people to whom Apel refers—there is an air of total and incomprehensible unreality to the debate about nuclear strategy.

When NATO was formed, the military strength of the West was seen to reside in America's atomic monopoly. From a political perspective, U.S. control over the use of nuclear weapons symbolized the cohesion of the West. After the Soviet Union developed the bomb and an effective means of delivery, the problem of U.S. credibility arose: Europeans could wonder if the United States would come to their aid in the event of a Soviet attack, for this would result in retaliation against American territory. In his well-known speech in Brussels in September 1979, Henry Kissinger stated that U.S. assurances to Europe "cannot be true, and if my analysis is correct we must face the fact that it is absurd to base the strategy of the West on the credibility of the threat of mutual suicide."¹²

10 See Dan Smith, *Defence of the Realm in the 1980's* (London: Croon Helm, 1980).

11 Quoted in *Washington Star*, March 26, 1981.

12 Quoted in Geoffrey Treverton, "Global Threats and Trans Atlantic Allies," *International Security*, Fall 1980.

But if U.S. readiness to engage in nuclear war is questioned, is not the significance of the possession of nuclear weapons weakened, and with it the hold of the alliance system over the political and economic order? This vulnerability was more obvious outside Europe, where there were real threats to American hegemony, than it was within the NATO alliance. By the late 1950s, it was becoming clear that the threat to engage in nuclear war was insufficient to prevent revolutions in Latin America and Asia. When the presence of an atomic howitzer did barely manage to stop the Chinese from taking Quemoy and Matsu in 1957, the question inevitably arose: What if it hadn't? The doctrine of flexible response elaborated by the Kennedy administration—that the United States would respond to threats with appropriate responses—was intended to increase the belief in American power by making it clear that the United States would engage in conventional as well as nuclear war. The doctrine paved the way for the Vietnam War, which drained the American economy and dealt a tremendous blow to U.S. credibility.

In Europe the doctrine of flexible response also comprised the idea of tactical or "limited" nuclear war, although there was never complete transatlantic agreement about what that meant. The official doctrine, known as MC-143, was described as a "ladder of escalation options [that] would subsequently exist from conventional to strategic forces, via the nuclear forces deployed in the European theater, both those for tactical use and those longer range systems assigned to SACEUR."¹³ The doctrine was the outcome of a debate in Europe about the sharing of atomic control, which was expressed in the language of credibility. The development of independent nuclear forces in Britain and France can be seen in terms of the persistence of nationalism in these two countries. In Britain, it was an attempt to share the power to engage in nuclear war—an attempt justified in terms of credibility. The argument was that, in an era of Mutual Assured Destruction, the United States would be reluctant to come to Europe's aid in the event of a Soviet threat. Various proposals for power-sharing in NATO were put forward, including the MLF proposal; but, in the end, the doctrine of flexible response, together with deployment of so-called forward-based strategic systems—Poseidon submarines and F-111's assigned to SACEUR—was thought to allay European fears. It was argued that the United States would be less reluctant to engage in a "lower level" option, i.e., conventional, tactical nuclear, or even Eurostrategic war, because this would not necessarily involve U.S. territory; thus, U.S. support for Europe would be more convincing. The implication was that the United

¹³ *The Modernization of NATO's Long-range Theater Nuclear Forces* (Report prepared for the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, by the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, December 31, 1980, Washington, D.C., 1981), p. 11.

States had reasserted its power over the alliance because its willingness to engage in nuclear war in Europe, its power over American lives had, once again, become credible.

During the 1970s, the notion of flexible response hardened. If Vietnam undermined the belief in American conventional military power, then the power of American nuclear weapons had to be reasserted, through a new emphasis on weapons for fighting as opposed to deterring war. Schlesinger's Counterforce Doctrine and Presidential Directive 59 were all part of this new emphasis. So were the "Nuke the Ayatollah" stickers; and so was the new Vietnam revisionism, according to which the United States lost the war not because it misunderstood the political nature of the war, not because the technology was too sophisticated and capital-intensive, not because there was a breakdown in military authority—but because the government was constrained by unpatriotic elements in the media and the universities from using its military power to the full.

U.S. targeting plans always included military (i.e., tactical) targets; and war planning for Europe always included the option of battlefield nuclear weapons, which were introduced in Europe as early as 1954. The new emphasis on nuclear weapons was simply a change in stated doctrine. Further, as many of the proponents—except perhaps the more extreme Reaganites—have made clear, the new emphasis does not *actually* envisage limited nuclear war. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, in his Naval War College speech, expressed the view that limited nuclear war could never remain limited. Instead, it is intended to enhance deterrence by convincing the Russians that America is more ready to start a limited nuclear war than an all-out strategic—i.e., mutually suicidal—nuclear war. Is it supposed to convince the Europeans as well?

Few Europeans ever accepted the American version of flexible response. From the very beginning, they saw battlefield nuclear weapons as political symbols of the American strategic guarantee. And the ambiguity about the role of the weapons remained in the differing transatlantic perceptions of the doctrine of flexible response. An increased emphasis on U.S. credibility and on war fighting was essentially a way of emphasizing the American role within the alliance. From the late 1960s, this no longer appeared desirable for the Atlanticists in Europe, since American power was not now being exercised on behalf of the international community. Although concerned to preserve the alliance, European Atlanticists also wanted to prevent it from being abused in the interests of American parochialism. Their aim, in keeping with the views of the Trilateral Commission, was to develop power-sharing within the alliance. West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt placed great emphasis on "partnership"; during the 1970s, Germans were placed in several senior positions in the NATO military hierarchy.

The aim of nuclear strategy was to ensure that Europe and America were "in it together," that there was no way in which the United States could exercise control over European lives without also involving American lives. "Limited" nuclear war, far from being a way of "decoupling" the U.S. strategic guarantee, was in fact a way of ensuring that the United States could not act independently of European interests—because such a war would inevitably escalate.

This difference of perspective has been central to the whole debate about cruise and Pershing missiles. The role of nuclear weapons in cementing the alliance is accepted by Atlanticists in both Europe and America. The issue turns on whose behalf the alliance is being cemented. For the Americans, cruise and Pershing represent an additional option between tactical nuclear warfare and all-out nuclear war—a way of further enhancing credibility. It is interesting to note that one of the guidelines of the High Level Group established by the NATO Nuclear Planning Group in October 1977 to make proposals for the modernization of American forward-based systems—so-called Eurostrategic systems—was: "To satisfy public perceptions concerning the credibility of response, it was considered that the systems should have as much visibility as possible. Hence, a preference for land-based systems."¹⁴

Was this to demonstrate to the public NATO's readiness to resist Soviet aggression or the extent of U.S. control over Europe? As it turned out, the concerned public was much more worried about the latter implication. Likewise, the main advantage of cruise missiles—in contrast to Pershing II's, which are much faster and less vulnerable—was that cruise provided "the capability of attacking a wider range of targets from several different bases thereby increasing the opportunity for participation among member countries through deployment on their soil,"¹⁵ i.e., further increasing "political visibility" of American power. That the Americans viewed the new land-based systems as a way of increasing their readiness for nuclear war in Europe is suggested by one of the main arguments for cruise and Pershing, the fact that existing forward-based systems were "too closely associated with central strategic systems, a factor which might inhibit an American President from using them."¹⁶

For the European Atlanticists, the case for cruise and Pershing was precisely opposite—a way of ensuring that the U.S. strategic systems were closely tied to Europe, that because cruise and Pershing were to be part of the strategic arsenal, the United States could not engage in nuclear war in Europe without risking suicide. The argument was as always couched in terms of the Soviet threat. Schmidt and others argued that the SALT negotiations had detached American strategic

14 Ibid., p. 20.

15 Ibid., p. 23.

16 Ibid., p. 32.

systems from Europe, largely because Soviet backfire bombers and SS-20's assigned to the European theater had been left out of the negotiation. In my view, Schmidt was primarily concerned to tie negotiations on theater nuclear weapons to the SALT process in order to make more explicit the link between Europe and the strategic guarantee. His IISS lecture of October 1977 was more a demand for negotiations on European theater nuclear weapons than a demand for new forward-based systems. When the decision on cruise and Pershing was taken, the German insistence that these remain exclusively under American control was an insistence that these systems are part of the U.S. strategic deterrent, and not in any way limited to Europe. Thus the Atlanticists in Europe support cruise and Pershing as an element of the U.S. strategic deterrent, tend to oppose the existence of battlefield nuclear weapons in Europe, and emphasize the continuation of the SALT process and the inclusion of negotiations on theater nuclear weapons. This position corresponds to the views of the former liberals in the Carter administration, the participants and supporters of the Trilateral Commission.

But the cruise issue remains ambiguous. Members of the Reagan administration attacked the decision to place these missiles in Europe because they believed that cruise and Pershing were not adequate for war fighting; Secretary of State Alexander Haig described the decision as the result of "political expediency and tokenism." On the other hand, many Europeans fear those very characteristics that suggest that the United States might, in fact, engage in nuclear war. According to Simon Lunn, director of the North Atlantic Assembly's Military Committee:

Finally, the LRTNF [Long Range Theatre Nuclear Forces] modernization decision constitutes a pragmatic decision between those who believe that European based nuclear forces have a functional war fighting role to play and those who argue that the role is purely to enhance deterrence. The decision, therefore, left unresolved a number of deep-seated issues concerning the appropriate role of nuclear weapons in alliance strategy. It did not satisfy those who believe that to be credible, nuclear weapons should be usable; and it displeased those who regard nuclear weapons as political instruments of deterrence and who believe that the political costs of modernization far outweigh the gains in military capabilities. This disagreement on NATO military strategy is now more likely to become a political debate.¹⁷

There is no resolving these issues. The Atlanticist position contains a fatal flaw, one that reflects an underlying political reality. If limited nuclear war inevitably escalates, how do European theater weapons increase credibility? For there

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

is no way in which the Atlantic system can be restored in such a way as to act truly in Atlantic and not American interests. As the Americans are squeezed economically and politically, more frequent and more threatening reassertions of American power are likely. The Atlanticist Europeans are caught between two options. First, they can try to create an alternative European-based international system, perhaps linked with the European community. This would imply, in nuclear terms, the possession of independent European nuclear forces—an alliance with the European Gaullists. That such an option could be dangerously divisive is beginning to be recognized in Atlanticist circles.

Their second option is to join with the growing disarmament movement in rejecting nuclear weapons altogether. This is in keeping with antimilitarist sentiments in West Germany and Japan, the two centers of successful capitalism. However, this might result in new domestic political shifts threatening to the liberal world order. The aims of the disarmament movement include an explicit rejection of current relations of power and are therefore closely associated with new developments on the left. The protest movements in Europe in the 1970s arose out of a sense of frustration over the exclusion of the individual from politics, and of helplessness in the face of big business and big government; the desire was to regain control over the social and economic environment, a desire represented on a more fundamental level by the disarmament movement. The demand for disarmament is a demand for control over life itself. Disarmament can only finally be achieved through the transformation of our political institutions so that it is never again possible for a small group of politicians or bureaucrats to conspire to develop or produce nuclear weapons.