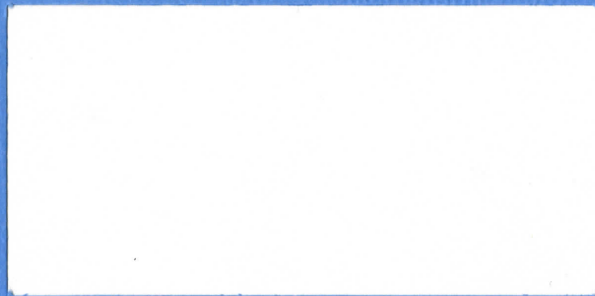


Program in Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security

ACDIS KOL:9.
1985
OCCPAP
ACDIS Library



University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



5/2/85

**SDI and British-French Nuclear
Modernization Threats to Alliance
Coherence, Cohesion, and Confidence
and to East-West Nuclear Stability**

**Paper Presented at the
Wingspread Conference Center
May 2-5, 1985**

on

"Rethinking the Nuclear Dilemma in Europe"

**Sponsored by the Harold E Stassen Project for World Peace, Hubert H Humphrey
Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota and the Johnson Foundation,
Racine, Wisconsin**

**Edward A Kolodziej, Director
Program in Arms Control, Disarmament
and International Security (ACDIS)
University of Illinois**

**SDI and British-French Nuclear Modernization Threats to Alliance
Coherence, Cohesion, and Confidence and to East-West Nuclear Stability**

Edward A Kolodziej, Director
Program in Arms Control, Disarmament
and International Security
University of Illinois

Summary

Assumptions

- 1 The stability of the East-West balance depends on the response of the western states to two imperatives coherent and cohesive alliance strategies to meet Soviet and eastern bloc threats at all levels of potential hostilities and public support for national and alliance policies
- 2 Differences over strategic policies in the West, while structural, have, until now, been manageable They derive from rival conceptions of nuclear and conventional arms stability The factors explaining these differences are multiple differing national strategic needs, geographic and historic circumstances, economic and technological capabilities, dissimilar (albeit open) domestic political consensus-building and decision-making systems as well as leadership styles, divergent conceptions among alliance partners of their regional and global roles in promoting security, and contrasting perceptions of the Soviet threat and assessments of the probabilities of achieving reliable and verifiable arms accords with Moscow
- 3 Structural differences within the alliance, already difficult to surmount under the best conditions of mutual confidence among western governments, are exacerbated by the existence of a significant body of European opinion profoundly suspicious of most American military and arms control measures and convinced that U S policies are more a part of the European security problem than a solution to it

Problem

Unless properly and promptly managed, SDI and British-French nuclear modernization will place serious strains on alliance cohesion and coherent policy-making, deepening, conceivably to a breaking point, the structural differences already evident in the strategic policies pursued by alliance partners

SDI (a) may weaken human and political control over the evolution of alliance strategy and the East-West balance, (b) may initiate a new arms race at great cost and may de-stabilize the East-West balance with a net decrease in security for alliance members, (c) may hamper allied efforts to meet lesser but critical threats at levels of conflict lower than strategic nuclear war, (d) may undermine the ABM treaty and progress on specific arms control accords, and (e) may erode alliance cohesion, strategic coherence, and mutual confidence in

responding to Soviet threats. In the latter instance, SDI may create the illusion that the American homeland can be made a sanctuary, while leading to the deployment of active defense systems by the superpowers whose principal impact will be the depreciation of the British and French nuclear deterrents.

British-French nuclear modernization advances a generational trend in the evolution of the East-West nuclear balance toward the progressive multilateralization of deterrence. Soviet and American strategies must increasingly take account of British and French nuclear capabilities, the announced and operational strategies directing these forces, the circumstances under which they might be threatened or used, their relation to conventional deterrence and defense, and their implication for arms control accords and global proliferation.

In carrying out their own autonomously directed strategies, British and French planners, whether publicly acknowledged or not, are logically impelled to assess the impact of superpower policies on their nuclear systems and the impact of their systems on each other over the same set of concerns confronting Soviet and American strategists. Alliance inattention to these concerns is a potentially significant threat to alliance coherence, cohesion, and confidence -- all the more so if the problem of growing British and French nuclear capabilities is not addressed in tandem with SDI.

Remedy

None is readily apparent. A precondition for progress, however, is clearer recognition than marks current western policies of the complex problems posed by multilateral deterrence -- among the western nuclear allies and between them and the Soviet Union. The Geneva talks are too narrow and confining to be an entirely satisfactory framework within which to diagnose and remedy alliance and East-West ills rooted in strategic policy.

A more formally structured and continuing process of multiple bilateral talks than exists today between the four autonomous centers of nuclear decision-making in the West and in the Soviet Union should be initiated to encourage a common western response to the Soviet threat and to enhance East-West nuclear stability. On the western side, the purpose of these consultations would be to bridge existing differences over strategic policy or at least not to widen them. On the Soviet side, bilaterally directed talks between the western nuclear powers and the Soviet Union can be aimed at assuring Moscow that its legitimate national security interests can be addressed in terms of the differential threats posed by the existence of three western nuclear powers. Meanwhile, Moscow can be held to a rigorous standard in meeting the specific security needs of the western democracies.

**SDI and British-French Nuclear Modernization Threats to Alliance
Coherence, Cohesion, and Confidence and to East-West Nuclear Stability**

Edward A. Kolodziej, Director
Program in Arms Control, Disarmament
and International Security
University of Illinois

The nuclear modernizations programs, offensive and defensive, now being implemented or seriously proposed by the western nuclear states and the Soviet Union pose critical problems for the stability of the European and global nuclear balance. The Reagan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and the dramatic growth of British and French nuclear capabilities add new strains on the arms race now underway between the superpowers. Current and emerging instabilities must be addressed promptly along a broad political front, within and outside the framework of the Atlantic Alliance, before they split the alliance and damage efforts, principally those being pursued at Geneva in the superpower arms control talks, to manage the nuclear balance and the conflicts that divide the two blocs in Europe and elsewhere.

Part one diagnoses the disturbing elements of the evolving nuclear environment which promotes instability. Part two suggests an approach that might be considered to bring these destabilizing trends under control to promote the development of more coherent, cohesive, and mutually confident alliance strategic policies than exist today and to enhance East-West stability.

Instabilities within the East-West Nuclear Environment
and Their Implications for the Atlantic Alliance

Requirements of a Stable Western Deterrent Posture

Strategic stability between East-West and the preservation of an effective and credible deterrent posture hinge, from the perspective of the West, on two

critical imperatives coherent and cohesive alliances strategies to meet Soviet and eastern bloc threats at all levels of potential hostilities and public support for national and alliance policies Included within this rubric are (a) agreed upon policies for the use and threat of nuclear weapons, (b) accord on conventional and nuclear force levels, deployments, and C³I systems, and, finally, (c) a common approach to arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union The second imperative derives from the need to generate domestic approval of national and alliance use, threat, and arms control policies These imperatives must be simultaneously met if the western alliance is to preserve a stable deterrent posture in meeting the Soviet threat and in maintaining a stable nuclear balance that deters war

Maintenance of a stable western strategic deterrent posture is challenged by three unfavorable trends The first stems from continued Soviet military build-up of conventional, theater-nuclear, and strategic forces that appear to be in excess of legitimate security and defensive concerns Second, there are serious rifts between the U S and West European government and among the latter about the proper strategic and arms control response to the Soviet challenge These rifts have now been extended to the public at large within the western states, further deepening intergovernmental and bureaucratic misunderstandings and suspicions The Reagan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) is only the latest of what now appears to be chronic perturbations in western security relations

To the differences now dividing the West should now be added the modernization programs of British and French nuclear forces While global and European strategic stability still primarily depend on U S and Soviet behavior, the West European term of the equation of strategic balance must be accorded

more weight today as a source of instability than in the past Unless controlled through allied consultation and accord, uninhibited pursuit of SDI and European nuclear forces may split the alliance wider than it is at present -- so wide as to be unmanageable and irreparable

Soviet Military Build-up

Much of the problem of strategic stability and western cohesion lies with the Soviet Union However much American initiatives and U S -European differences and misunderstandings may have contributed to current instabilities, the expansion of Soviet theater and long-range strategic forces, together with the development of impressive air and ballistic missile defense research programs and conventional force modernization, has been responsible for much of western concern about maintaining deterrence On these points most of the western governments appear agreed Sir Geoffrey Howe in his recent and widely reported March speech, which raised serious questions about SDI, took pains to underscore Soviet ABM programs as a threat to East-West nuclear stability ¹ The Mitterrand government has consistently accused the Soviet Union to be the principal de-stabilizing force in Europe ² German governments, have invariably assumed a similar stance, opposed to Soviet expansion and modernization of its missile and bomber forces as a threat to the West

At the European level, Soviet Backfire bombers, tactical aircraft, air defense forces, and SS-20, SS-4, SS-12/22, and shorter-range Scuds, FROGS, and SS-21 missiles pose a serious threat to NATO forces, including British and French nuclear systems At a global level, heavy Soviet rockets, particularly 308 SS-18s with up to ten 750 kt warheads, threaten American ground-based systems The Krasnoyarsk phased-radar system may well be in violation of the

SALT I treaty It may also signal a determined Soviet drive to assume a lead in battle-ready ABM systems, providing justification for American and allied expansion of ABM research and development

American and European Differences over Responses to Soviet Nuclear Modernization

Structural Opposition to U S Policies

Differing U S -European responses to Soviet strategic behavior also undermine the stability of the western deterrent posture and the East-West balance The sources of these differences are both structural and conjunctural The former need only concern us here as background to an analysis of the contribution of SDI and French and British nuclear programs to real and potential divisions within the western camps

First, a significant but still minority body of European opinion is, for a variety of reasons, deeply suspicious of most American military and arms control measures calculated to match or moderate Soviet strategic moves Measured by the past, its numbers appear to be growing although at different rates across the spectrum of European states If the INF controversy is taken as a crude index, opposition to nuclear modernization is particularly strong in Britain, West Germany, Belgium, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries of NATO Among larger states, only the governments of France and, to a lesser degree, Italy have escaped recent heavy domestic pressures to oppose U S policies

The presence of this resistant body of European opinion to American strategic and arms control initiatives at once limits the ability of NATO governments to cooperate with the U S on nuclear and conventional arms modernization and provides the Soviet Union with opportunities to manipulate

western public opinion and governments. In anticipation of these domestic forces and to better manage them, the Europeans insisted on an INF deployment procedure in the December 1979 accord that included strong arms control provisions.³ The Reagan administration's zero option position was as much aimed at European public opinion in an effort to quiet domestic opposition to eventual Pershing II and cruise missile deployments as it was a challenge to the Soviet Union to dismantle its SS-20 forces.⁴ The formula worked, aided by the firmness of the administration as well as by the rigidity of the Soviet Union in refusing to compromise and its mishandling of the Korean Airline 007 incident. The failure of the "walk-in-the-woods" proposal, rejected by both superpowers, suggests that neither was willing to budge much. For the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the prize was West European public opinion and governments and a Germany anchored to the West. These prizes surpassed in importance the nuclear hardware advantage that might be accorded to the East or West in deploying intermediary nuclear weapons in Europe.

Structural Constraints on Atlantic Strategic Accord

Second, even in those governmental, bureaucratic, and public quarters on both sides of the Atlantic where good will and mutual confidence are high, one must continue to expect major differences among the Europeans and between them and the United States over security policies. At issue are rival conceptions of nuclear and conventional arms stability. The factors explaining these differences are multiple: differing national strategic needs, geographic and historic circumstances, economic and technological capabilities, dissimilar (albeit open) domestic political consensus-building and decision-making systems as well as leadership styles, divergent conceptions among alliance partners of

their regional and global roles in promoting security, and contrasting perceptions of the Soviet threat and assessments of the probabilities of achieving reliable and verifiable arms accords with Moscow

It is against this background that one is able to explain why Europeans generally prefer a posture of nuclear deterrence over American demands for a flexible response defense strategy capable of meeting Soviet aggression over a broad range of conventional, tactical, theater, and strategic nuclear threats. Germany excepted, the Europeans have successfully resisted American pressures over the past quarter century to increase Europe's conventional forces to a level deemed adequate by Washington to match Soviet non-nuclear modernization. American threats of pull-out or hedging over the first-use of nuclear weapons have failed to stir the Europeans to increase spending substantially for their non-nuclear forces. The British and French have developed their own nuclear forces partly at the expense of conventional forces.

Most Europeans also prefer a strategy accented toward detente and arms control over a policy of nuclear modernization aimed at matching Soviet nuclear capabilities. The INF controversy exposed the deep roots of West Germany's inclinations to find a solution to nuclear modernization that would be least provocative to the Soviet Union. While the Kohl government has been staunch in supporting Washington on INF, strong elements within the present German CDU-Free Democratic coalition temporized over Pershing II deployment while many of their opponents in the SPD were dead set against the INF deployments, whether the Soviet Union dismantled its theater nuclear forces or not. Detente has yielded tangible gains for the Germans which they are wary to risk by provoking Moscow. These concerns translate into a go-slow approach toward nuclear build-ups and to a search for confidence building measures and stabilizing arms control accords.

The British and French positions are, for different reasons, also inclined more toward arms negotiations with the Soviet Union or to diplomatic maneuver over political conflicts than Washington. It is no accident that Soviet Premier Mikhail S. Gorbachev should have made his initial forays in foreign policy, even before his predecessor's death, by visiting Britain. The Howe speech essentially called for a long look at SDI before launching into a program that might damage the possibility of reaching some kind of arms stabilization and diplomatic accord with the Soviet Union. As the Thatcher government moves into elections, it will have to strengthen its record in East-West peace-making, not unlike previous English governments dating back to Prime Ministers Harold Macmillan and Harold Wilson. The cyclical need of European governments to seek peaceful settlements and to appease Soviet demands appear to be permanent features of the European electoral landscape.

French governmental and public opinion has, ironically, been more disposed to American firmness than other European allies in the face of Soviet military expansion. Until Washington's launching of SDI, Paris urged German adoption of INF, partly to reinforce Germany's commitment to NATO and partly to ensure against a neutralist-leaning West Germany whose moorings to the West might progressively weaken and set the center of Europe adrift. At a strategic nuclear level, Paris prefers deterrence cum detente to Bonn's detente cum deterrence.

The modernization of French nuclear forces, discussed below, evidences the determination of the French, whether on the Right or the Left, to maintain an independent nuclear force which can credibly counter the Soviet Union and, as a bonus, solidify French military dominance on the western half of the European continent. This strategic posture reinforces France's privileged status under

the Four Power accords governing Berlin and Germany. Its nuclear forces afford Paris, at least in its eyes, the choice of the empty chair in NATO nuclear bargaining or of entering East-West arms control talks depending on conjunctural need. What appears important to France is bolstering its nuclear position as a precondition for encouraging the detente process on its terms. Like Washington, Paris aims to parley. But in contrast to Washington, the Mitterrand government is disposed to assure Soviet security concerns in eastern Europe — and certainly those outside Europe — to a greater degree than U S policy makers. These differences stem from their dissimilar regional and global interests and roles.

All European states also have a major stake in greater East-West trade, increasing sales of high technology to eastern Europe, exploitation of investment opportunities, and enhanced access to Soviet raw material reserves. These economic attractions are not only instruments of detente but important in their own right. The European economies have not enjoyed the same economic resurgence as that of the United States. They are economically much more dependent on eastern Europe than the United States. This dependency makes them more vulnerable to manipulation by Moscow. While they may be counted upon to stand with Washington when a critical issue, like INF, is joined, it strains credibility, as the fiasco of the pipeline episode evidenced, that they will hold ranks when economic advantages are to be had by moderating their diplomatic stances and by relaxing economic restrictions on trade with the eastern bloc and the Soviet Union.

SDI A New Challenge to Atlantic Cohesion

The Strategic Defense Initiative, coming on the heels of the confusion of the Carter years, the concern over the nuclear arms race fueled by the Reagan administration, and the controversy over INF, threatens to create new, serious cleavages between the United States and Europe that will certainly complicate and even possibly preclude the achievement of a stable and coherent allied response to Soviet nuclear modernization. Europeans are more ready than Americans to identify a stable nuclear deterrent with low levels of invulnerable offensive nuclear systems on both sides and with arms control accords with the Soviet Union to confirm a balance based on some notion of essential equivalence. Over the past decade, the American security community has progressively questioned whether the Soviets can be trusted to keep such accords, whether MAD makes sense if deterrence breaks down, and whether balanced nuclear capabilities, defined by essential equivalence of nuclear weapons (in the coinage of throw weight, launchers, and warheads) is sufficient to support American diplomacy and bargaining posture vis-à-vis the Soviet Union or its surrogates in the developing world.⁵ Unlike Europeans, the U S has never been comfortable with MAD or with the necessarily simpler civilian targeting plans of French and British nuclear forces. Even after the McNamara Defense Department's acceptance of mutual assured destruction was proclaimed, American nuclear planning and targeting remained keyed more to military sites than soft, high value economic and population centers. In a word, the American posture has always been MAD-plus.

Evolving nuclear doctrine and the pursuit of arms control accords with the Soviet Union during the 1970s have been consistent with MAD-plus — not simply

MAD The Schlesinger doctrine and President Carter's PD-59 sought simultaneously to provide the American president with a wide menu of nuclear options to fight a controlled and even a lengthy limited nuclear war and to include the Soviet leadership into the calculus of deterrence PD-59 specifically identified the Soviet power structure as a prime target despite the difficulties that would inevitably be encountered in attempting to keep a nuclear war limited if the Soviet leadership were annihilated early on in the war ⁵ The American security community has always been more concerned than Europeans about maintaining deterrence at all levels of possible hostilities It is also preoccupied with the post-attack environment and with bringing a nuclear conflict to a swift conclusion on terms favorable to the West

American concern for fighting a nuclear war and for maintaining escalation dominance until a nuclear war can be brought to a favorable close has generated high offensive military requirements, crystallized in the later Carter years and in the first years of the Reagan administration in proposals to modernize U S offensive nuclear forces Justification for these requirements was based not only on the need to match Soviet capabilities at all nuclear levels, negating the advantage perceived to be enjoyed by the Soviet Union in heavy missiles and launchers, but also to develop a nuclear posture to underwrite extended deterrence in Europe and elsewhere Arms control accords were to serve a demanding war-fighting test as well as a perceived American need -- given what appeared to be incessant increases in Soviet European and global nuclear capabilities -- to bargain from a position of strength with the Soviet Union over arms accords themselves and over conflicts in and outside Europe where American and allied interests might be engaged If the Soviet Union could not be trusted to keep arms control accords, then trust in the Soviet leadership

would be rendered irrelevant either by the dominant position that would be attained by the West in modernizing American, NATO, and European nuclear forces or by imposing stiff arms control and verification requirements on Moscow, tied to deep cuts in Soviet strategic forces, especially its ground-based systems

European governmental opinion is at odds with American planners on several key points. These differences revolve around the desirability of lowered nuclear levels, risk-taking with the Soviet Union in negotiating on lower levels rather than in forcing them on an intransigent Moscow by gaining a dominant western nuclear posture, and appropriate and verifiable restraints on research and development programs -- specifically SDI -- that promise a technological breakthrough beyond MAD or MAD-plus. It therefore is no accident that Sir Geoffrey Howe should have characterized SDI as a fourth option in preserving the West's "defence into the next century" in contrast to his third -- and preferred -- option of maintaining "sufficient forces to deter any aggression against us and our allies, and to seek at the same time balanced reductions in these forces on both sides" ⁷

Howe's evaluation of SDI essentially summarizes much of the concerns of Europeans with the most ambitious claims made for the Reagan proposal. They are worth summarizing because they identify most of the major reservations that allied governments, with a long record of cooperation and with Washington, have in addressing SDI. What was not said by Howe is equally significant -- viz., the threat that an American SDI and its Soviet counterpart poses for the independence and credibility of French and British nuclear forces. This consideration adds to the potential for rift in the alliance if SDI goes forward in the absence of allied consultation and cooperation.

Howe's reservations, varyingly echoed in other European capitals despite the reported success of the Reagan administration in bringing allies into line, signify a yawning gap in European and American thinking about active defense systems. Discord turns on several key points:

1 SDI threatens to narrow political direction of the nuclear modernization program since a commitment will be made to an expensive technological program before its ramifications for strategic stability and mutual confidence-building between allies and the Soviet Union have been fully explored. Politics will be put at the mercy of technology.

2 Highly computerized, electronically controlled systems would reduce human control over reaction time to threats.

3 Limited defense of military installations, if effective, may have the undesired effect of upgrading more vulnerable, civilian targets in Soviet targeting.

4 Countermeasures to SDI are readily at hand, including non-ballistic missile systems such as aircraft, cruise missiles and even covert action for which new and potentially expensive defenses will have to be built.

5 Defensive and offensive forces must be viewed as different elements of the East-West strategic balance. Neither can be considered apart from the other. As a result, an expansion of defensive systems is likely to provoke not only a similar Soviet counter action but an expansion of offensive arms.

6 The costs of building a multi-tiered active defense system would likely be in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

7 The opportunity costs of SDI, in foregoing other nuclear and conventional systems needed for stability, would be high and potentially destabilizing as NATO would not be able to implement a flexible response strategy.

8 Arms control would be undermined

— as suspicions grew in Soviet quarters that the U S and the West sought nuclear superiority,

— as the ABM treaty was eroded,

— as hedges were taken by both sides to increase their offensive nuclear weapons and to accelerate active and

passive defense programs, and

-- as opportunities to make real arms control gains, such as limits on ASAT systems, were ignored in the controversy inevitably raised by new defense programs

9 Allied mutual confidence would be damaged in the long transition process toward implementation of SDI

-- Uncertainties about the stability of the nuclear balance would arise,

-- Doubts would grow in western capitals that the same sense of the indivisibility of NATO territory was not shared by all allies. As the U S was able to reduce damage to its territory and sanctuarize its homeland, it might be prepared (as French critics alleged) to pursue its own notion of detente with the Soviet Union at the expense of its west European allies 8

The latter point is of special importance from the perspective of western and, specifically, U S -French-British cohesion. An enlarged active defense system might well be ineffective vis-à-vis the superpower, but it promises to have attractions for the Soviet Union against British and French and third state nuclear forces. For differing reasons the superpowers may have an interest in pursuing and deploying a limited active defense system. Such a course -- whether consciously undertaken or the unwitting result of an offsetting superpower arms race -- would potentially have its most damaging impact on British and French nuclear forces. What may well be intended by Washington as an escape from MAD-plus promises to end by pitting the United States in an arms race with its own allies, with the Soviet Union as the only net gainer. It is in this context that British insistence on holding the Reagan administration to its pledge to negotiate any deployment of SDI with the Soviet Union can be understood as a claim by London to have a veto or lien on U S security policy in this area 9

The Threat Posed to Allied Cohesion by
British and French Nuclear Forces of the 1990s

The French and British nuclear systems, already impressive, will be formidable by the mid-1990s if current modernization plans are executed. France is scheduled to have seven nuclear submarines available, six of which will be armed with M-4 SLBMs, each armed with 6 150 kt MIRVed warheads. A seventh submarine will carry 16 M-20 1 mg warheads, making a total of 592 strategic warheads. To these forces will very likely be added up to 100 to be developed mobile IRBMs to replace the 18 vulnerable IRBMs on the Albion Plateau. Eighteen Mirage IVs and approximately 140 Mirage 2000s and Super-Etendards will be equipped with a medium-range air-to-surface missile (ASMP) armed with a 100-300 kt warhead 10

The British fleet of 4 Trident Submarines, each carrying 16 Trident II launchers and armed with from 8 to 17 warheads, will match French striking power. If one assumes 14 warheads per missile with MV warheads of 150 kt, the British will dispose almost 900 warheads, over four times what the present Polaris fleet is estimated to carry. The Tornado, which will come into full service by the end of the decade, will also very likely be assigned nuclear missions 11

Combined, the British and French nuclear strategic missile forces may well dispose almost 1500 warheads by the mid-1990s, not counting aircraft launched missiles and warheads. These forces can no longer be viewed with indifference by either superpower — or by Britain or France of each other. From the Soviet perspective, planners will have to take these European systems into account in deciding their offensive and defensive requirements and in targeting increasing

absolute portions of the Soviet strike force against these systems. What may have begun as a bargaining ploy in START -- to count European nuclear systems against American and NATO totals -- is likely to be a permanent factor in Soviet calculations. Arms control agreements, already difficult, will prove that much harder to achieve since four, not two, autonomous systems will be factored together.

The British and French systems, officially viewed since the Ottawa declaration as a net addition to the western deterrent, must themselves be re-examined to determine whether they add or subtract from a stable East-West and West-West nuclear balance. From an American viewpoint, British and French forces pose several acute problems. First, they are autonomous. While decentralization may complicate Soviet planning, it should also increase American anxiety about when, where, and under what circumstances nuclear weapons will be threatened or used.

Second, European systems, while powerful, are still smaller, and potentially more vulnerable than the American system. They may be more easily blinded by a Soviet first strike than their American counterparts. Improvements in ASW or bombardment techniques to create giant waves may render them increasingly susceptible to Soviet suppression. Under crisis conditions, incentives to pre-empt these forces may be overwhelming.

Third, European systems may trigger American nuclear forces -- wittingly or not -- in their attempting to stop Soviet aggression. French and British nuclear forces have less time and space within which to maneuver than those of the United States. Fourth, once begun, controlling a nuclear conflict will be increasingly difficult. Both France and Britain essentially follow proportional deterrence strategies in which each threaten the Soviet Union with damage in

excess of any possible gain that might arise from an aggressor's attack on their vital interests. Given their smaller systems, prime targets are presumably economic and population centers. The kind of escalation control or calibrated nuclear exchanges, envisioned by American planners, promise to be nullified as French or British strategies are potentially forced on the superpowers.

Several contrasting sets of incentives arise from these strategic choices facing the western nuclear states. First, American efforts to gain greater control over the British or French systems is likely to meet with opposition, increasing conflict and tensions between the western allies. Here the past is prologue. The French succeeded in developing their systems independently of the U S over American objections. Washington sold the Trident system to Britain, fearing that London would penalize conventional readiness and reduce its NATO commitments in order to save its nuclear autonomy. U S collusion with the Soviet Union against its alliance partners is possible, but not very probable -- much less desirable. The current deep suspicions surrounding U S -Soviet relations preclude fruitful cooperation along these lines. Washington would also have to reverse itself in considering some proliferation as a bolstering of western deterrence. It might also begin hedging on its commitments to its allies, although much of the justification of increased American nuclear power and the two-track decision for INF deployment was presumably aimed at reinforcing extended deterrence.

Encouraging Western Cooperation and East-West Stability

The increasing multilateralization of nuclear deterrence must now be accepted as a fact of strategic life. The modernization and expansion of nuclear forces has created a complex set of deterrence relations between adversaries and,

implicitly, between allies who have an interest in knowing and in controlling each other's nuclear behavior -- announced and operational. Several simultaneous mutually dependent bilateral relations can be identified between the superpowers, between each of them and the French and British systems, and between the British and French nuclear deterrents. These four interdependent deterrent systems also have an impact on the capacity of other European states, in and out of NATO, in realizing their security interests. Most critically, the problem of German perceptions and anxieties over security again arise and, with them, the adequacy of western policies in reassuring not only each other but also their key allies.

Untangling, analytically, these interdependencies and identifying those elements that might be influenced to preserve or enhance a stable nuclear balance are not easy tasks. As noted earlier, a western nuclear deterrent must meet two tests: sufficiency in deterring Soviet aggression through alliance cohesion and domestic support. The SDI proposal, however much it may address Soviet capabilities, clearly complicates alliance cohesion, so also does the uninhibited modernization of independent nuclear systems within the western bloc threaten alliance cohesion, coherence and mutual confidence, and, by these tokens, the stability of the East-West nuclear balance.

The western nuclear allies have several options. First, they can ignore the problem -- but only at their peril. Second, they can attempt to bring pressure on each other to conform to their preferred strategies, force postures, and arms control stances. The record of achievement by going this route is not encouraging. Third, they can begin recognizing their shared, if differential, problems in dealing with the Soviet Union and themselves and begin to develop a systematic consultative and negotiating framework between and among themselves.

to relax, if not resolve, their differences. It is not sufficient for the requirements of strategic stability that only the superpowers meet at Geneva. The growth of independent nuclear systems and, now, the possibility of an SDI points to the need for sustained bilateral talks between the western nuclear allies to arrest the erosion of western confidence and cooperation.

Because of the constraints of national autonomy and the myths of independence entertained by the western nuclear powers, as well as the record of failure in creating multilateral nuclear decision-making bodies for the alliance, like the proposal of President Charles de Gaulle for a NATO nuclear directorate, it would seem best that a strategy of complex bilateralism be adopted as a useful way to proceed. Each western state would approach its nuclear ally as an political equal aware that its differential strategic needs will have to be bargained about. The special British-American relationship should be deepened between London and Washington and extended by London and Washington -- each, however, acting independently -- to Paris. The aim of these talks would be to achieve some shared notion of western nuclear stability, including accepted rules and guidelines on modernization and negotiating postures vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. No one set of bilateral accords can ensure stability, but it should be the goal of these institutionalized discussions as well as associated intergovernmental nuclear and conventional planning sessions that over-all deterrence be enhanced and that the East-West balance be preserved at tolerable levels of shared risk and cost, acceptable to the home populations of the western states.

The agenda is rich for these bilateral talks. The list itself identifies many of the powerful incentives -- positive and negative -- that prompt serious consideration of new bargaining and negotiating frameworks within the West.

First, the western nuclear states have a keen interest in each others targeting priorities, strategies of implementation, nuclear capabilities, and C³I systems. All have some need to avoid catalytic war, prompted by an ally, redundancy of targeting, uncontrollable nuclear exchanges, and common efforts to bring a nuclear war to a swift conclusion.

Except for some joint planning discussions within NATO, primarily focused on the European theatre, and bilateral British-American talks, France, Britain, and the United States have developed their own targeting systems quite independently of each other. It has served their interests to retain maximum autonomy over their targeting plans and to keep them secret from each other. While overcoming these barriers is not likely to be possible in the near future, any hope of developing mutual allied confidence in each other hinges on working toward some broad accord in this area.

The implications of offensive nuclear systems and active defensive forces for raising the costs and risks of preparing or fighting nuclear war need also to be jointly explored to the degree that the negotiating parties are prepared to address these issues. All of the western nuclear states have an interest in avoiding accidental, unauthorized, unintended nuclear war as well as slowing or dampening the rate of the current arms race and its mounting costs.

These agenda items are linked to the perennial of conventional deterrence. Mounting credible conventional warfare strategies implies some control over nuclear expenditures and allied cooperation in the first stages of battle. The French have been the most reluctant to join in such discussions and planning and, for well-known reasons, will almost certainly continue to resist allied pressures to agree on joint military plans and to accept a designated alliance role for their conventional forces. As in the past it will most likely insist

on autonomy of decision, most especially in utilizing its conventional forces as an instrument of its deterrence maneuvering¹² While there is some evidence that the incentives for splendid isolation have slackened in French strategic circles,¹³ they cannot be counted upon in the near term to overcome French reservations about any hint of automatic participation in the forward defense of Europe

The incentives to encourage more bilateral discussions with the French and with the British are logically related to their common interest in American strategic moves, the implementation of U S first use doctrine, and in keeping American forces in Europe as a visible and credible pledge of the American security guarantee, coupled to access to the American nuclear arsenal U S assistance in decreasing vulnerable French C³I systems promises to be an incentive worth manipulating to bring France to a bilateral French-American bargaining table that might well include cooperation in conventional areas on use-strategies, in dividing responsibilities (tacitly or explicitly) in Europe, and even on joint development and purchase of conventional arms

SDI is an especially significant area for inner-allied discussions The concerns voiced by Sir Geoffrey Howe and the obvious threat posed by active defense systems to British and French nuclear forces generate incentives for mutual discussions and bargaining over the material terms of allied deterrence The U S has taken a correct step in suggesting joint US-European cooperation on technological development of such defense systems This step re-affirms the principle of allied cooperation in nuclear affairs pursued throughout the INF episode What is not clear is whether the application of this principle will be to soften allied anxieties over SDI by dangling the possibility of sharing in technological advances, not to mention lush defense contracts, or to divide them

by placing them in competition with themselves in bidding for Washington's favor. The first reaction of the French was to organize a European bloc apparently to bargain with Washington from a position of strength or, failing in that scheme, to go it alone in building a European active defense program — or at least the technologies closely associated with this initiative (e.g., optical electronics, high powered lasers, and artificial intelligence). What is important to recognize is that there are incentives at play that are attractive to the Europeans to be on the ground floor of any major technological push in this area.

Those more concerned about the arms control rather than the technological implications of SDI, like the British, also have an incentive to open bilateral talks with Washington, although it is far from clear whether American security policy-makers are prepared to accept a potentially constraining dialogue with their allies over SDI in order to gain more leverage over the latter's nuclear policies and their commitments to alliance conventional deterrence and defense. For the U.S., SDI may be seen as a bargaining chip to bring about greater alliance cohesion. For the Europeans, participation in SDI may yield technological gains — civilian and military — and (as Sir Geoffrey Howe's March address suggests) leverage over the evolution of American arms control policy.

Bilateral American-British, American-French consultations do not preclude French-British talks along the same lines. Nor, as French initiatives illustrate, do joint European efforts to progressively Europeanize European security imply moves adverse to American interests. Within an evolving European framework motored by intense bilateral negotiations, West Germany may well be able to pursue its security interests on terms that re-affirm its renunciation

of nuclear weapons under the West European Union treaty. Any effort to encourage the Europeans to assume increased responsibility for their own defense within the Atlantic Alliance framework promises more long term stability than the current disarray that ignores or attempts to paper over the deep fissures within the alliance.

Finally, there is the Soviet Union. France and Britain maintain that they will not reduce their systems until the superpowers decrease theirs. The nuclear capacity of the European states and the interest they have in restraining the superpowers, whether admitted by them or not, raises their brave front into question. Allied anxieties about bilateral allied talks with the Soviet Union are likely to be quieted if more confident and confidential talks are held between the western nuclear powers first. At a minimum all parties have an interest in avoiding accidental warfare and in lowering (though at different rates and levels) the costs and risks of nuclear war. All have an interest, too, in slowing the rate of vertical proliferation of their arms races and in regulating the negative impact of vertical proliferation on horizontal proliferation. None of these problems can be addressed in the absence of coordinated western nuclear policies and the cooperation of the Soviet Union.

Conclusions

The growing interdependence and multilateralization of nuclear deterrence are permanent parts of the strategic landscape surrounding the decision-making of the western nuclear powers and the Soviet Union. To meet the Soviet threat and to ensure a stable nuclear balance between East and West, the western nuclear powers have strong incentives to abandon their essentially unilateralist approach to nuclear strategic policy in order to develop the coherence,

cohesion, and mutual confidence required to meet the test of stable deterrence. This need offsets the dubious value of uncertainty created in the minds of Soviet planners by the decentralization of the western nuclear systems. The uncertainty generated within the alliance by the growth of offensive nuclear systems and doubts about the reliability of allies when they are most needed do not compensate for the attributed benefits of keeping Soviet planners guessing.

The SDI proposal, unless carefully managed and orchestrated in the West, risks straining to a breaking point the structural problems that already characterize allied strategic relations. The Geneva talks do not appear wide and deep enough to contain the powerful forces and interests at play within the Atlantic Alliance. The western states must address their problems on a scale commensurate with their dimensions. A process of complex bilateralism offers some promise of reconciling continuing assertions of national autonomy with the imperatives of multilateral deterrence and the imperatives of interdependence and cooperation generated by the overlapping strategic dilemmas confronting the western nuclear states and the Soviet Union.

NOTES

- 1 "Defence and Security in the Nuclear Age," Speech of Sir Geoffrey Howe to the Royal United Services Institute, London, March 15, 1985
- 2 See, for example, Ministère de la Défense, France's Defence Policy, Information Bulletin, No 69, (Paris Service d'Information et de Relations Publiques des Armées, May, 1982), passim
- 3 These points are reviewed in Christoph Bertram, "Implications of Theatre Nuclear Weapons in Europe," Foreign Affairs, Vol LX, No 2 (Winter, 1981-82), 305-326 Also relevant is Gregory Traverton, Nuclear Weapons in Europe, Adelphi Paper No 168 (London IISS, 1981)
- 4 This is one of the implications of Strobe Talbott's analysis of INF in his Deadly Gambits (New York Knopf, 1984)
- 5 The evolution of American strategic thinking is detailed in Lawrence Freedman's The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy (London IISS, 1983)
- 6 Richard Richelson, "PD-59, NSDD-13, and the Reagan Strategic Modernization Program," The Journal of Strategic Studies, VI, No 2 (June, 1983), pp 125 ff Also relevant is Desmond Ball, Targeting for Strategic Deterrence, Adelphi Paper No 185 (London IISS, 1983)
- 7 Howe, p 3
- 8 Ibid , pp 4-11 See also David S Yost, "European Anxieties about Ballistic Missile Defense," Washington Quarterly, VII, No 4 (Fall 1984), 7-19
- 9 See Howe, especially pp 3 and 9-11
- 10 Current and future French strategic forces are sketched in Robbin Laird, "French Nuclear Forces in the 1980s and 1990s," Comparative Strategy, IV, No 4 (1984), 387-412 David S Yost, France's Deterrent Posture and Security in Europe, Part I Capabilities and Doctrine, Adelphi Paper No 194 (London IISS, 1985), pp 13-28.
- 11 See George M. Seignious II and Jonathan Paul Yates, "Europe's Nuclear Superpowers," Foreign Policy, No 55 (Summer, 1984), pp 40-53
- 12 French reservations are succinctly yet exhaustively treated in Yost (n 9) and in his France's Deterrent Posture and Security in Europe, Part II Strategic and Arms Control Implications Adelphi Paper No 195 (London IISS, 1985)
- 13 See Yost, Parts I and II and Robert S Rudney, "Mitterrand's New Atlanticism Evolving French Attitudes toward NATO," Orbis, XXVIII No 1 (Spring 1984), 83-101