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Karl Kaiser

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Nato Strategy Toward the End of the Century

by

Karl Kaiser

Any attempt to review the problems Nato strategy is likely to encounter until the year 2000 is a risky undertaking. History remains as unpredictable as man who makes it. Nevertheless, it is possible to extrapolate certain visible trends, to make assumptions based on relatively stable structures or behavior patterns in order to get a sense of where the Alliance seems to be heading and of the kind of problems it is most likely to encounter.

To think about problems of strategy almost two decades ahead is imperative for several reasons. First, the political process of modern Western democracies tends to focus on the immediate and on short-term problems and usually has great difficulties in addressing itself to the long-term questions. Second, the very nature of the field of strategy requires a constant effort to take a medium or long-term perspective since many political and military decisions require a very long time until they have an effect, and then it may be in an environment which might then be quite different. Finally, the Soviet Union, because of its prevailing ideology and view of history, by habit tends to consider problems both in an immediate operative environment as well as in a longer term perspective.

A review of future Nato strategy must consider strategy in its widest meaning: as a long-term approach to prevent war, to maintain a free society and to receive the support from a democratic public. Such a notion of strategy goes beyond the military component. In fact, the necessity of paying more attention to the nonmilitary dimensions does constitute one of the problems for the future. For the sake of this discussion, four assumptions will be made about evolutionary trends in international politics which are of particular relevance in considering future problems of Western strategy.

Continued Relevance of the East-West Conflict. Since neither the expansionist nature of Soviet foreign policy nor the repressive character of its regime are likely to disappear in the next 20 years, the East-West conflict will in all probability remain the most important conflict in world politics. That is even likely to be the case if successful attempts are made to attenuate the conflict

or to stabilize it through arms control. The Soviet Union's remarkable performance in the field of armament—and in striking contrast with the civilian sector—is likely to further feed the East-West conflict and to deepen concern whether the military-industrial sector in the Soviet Union is still under political control. There is growing likelihood that the East-West conflict may extend to areas outside the classical borders of Nato. Moreover, nuclear weapons may decrease in megatonnage and warhead numbers, but they will increase in terms of sophistication, and their political impact is likely to become more important in comparison with the military dimension.

Instability in Third World Countries. The Third World is likely to be even more unstable than today, since progress in overcoming underdevelopment will be confined to a few states or compensated by population growth or growing difficulties in purchasing necessary raw materials such as oil. Moreover, overindebtedness is likely to remain a structural problem for the Third World. Most important, however, the Third World will grow in importance as an area of armed conflict due to the manifold conflicts within and between Third World countries and the presence of modern armament which they accumulate to a degree unprecedented in their history.

Structural Difficulties of Industrialized Societies. The present problems of Western societies are not transitory in character but structural and therefore likely to persist to the end of the century. Adaptation to technological change, notably leaps in productivity, and sharpened international competition will continue to plague Western countries. Unemployment and conflicts about the distribution of work are likely to remain a long-term concern of Western democratic politics. Under these circumstances the process of allocating scarce resources, e.g., for defense or social policy, will be even more difficult than today. In fact, this state of affairs could be aggravated by partial ecological breakdowns requiring drastic action or by an even more serious international recession brought about by a collapse in international finance. Democratic policymakers are therefore likely to work under even more difficult circumstances in the coming years than is the case at present.

Growth of Politics of Dissent. The process of opening those areas of policy to public participation which were hitherto the realm of experts will continue. Moreover, because of the communications explosion of modern media politics, minorities and dissent have access to the public as has never been the case before. As a result the challenge of orthodoxy and the overrepresentation of deviating opinions are likely to be a relatively permanent characteristic of politics in democratic societies. Although this process must not make democratic societies ungovernable, as some analysts fatalistically submit, it renders decision-making rather difficult in all those fields in which

democratic policymakers have to reconcile public demands and long-term interests in a strategic and international environment with adversaries that follow different internal procedures. This is particularly true in the field of strategy which is characterized by a fundamental asymmetry of policy-making. In the case of Western democracies the process is open and subject to the pressures of minorities and the public; whereas the Soviet Union, with its hierarchical political structure, pursues policy according to the priorities set by the power elite and unperturbed by opposing domestic demands.

Challenges to Present Strategy

The Crisis of Nuclear Deterrence. The crisis of acceptance or legitimacy of nuclear deterrence in some sectors of Western opinion is subtly linked with the problems of an adversary who is supposed to be deterred but may no longer believe that the strategy is wholly credible. The difficulties nuclear deterrence encounters inside and outside the decision-making process points to a paradox: if effectiveness of security policy is measured in years without war it can be argued that never in recent history has there been such a discrepancy between, on the one hand, publicly articulated doubts about contemporary security policy and, on the other hand, its real effectiveness in terms of preserving peace for several decades.

Nato's strategy of flexible response has come under attack by articulate minorities, notably in Western Europe. The origin is political and caused by a loss of confidence. The logic of deterrence which requires a demonstrable capacity to fight and limit conflict at every level is reinterpreted as an *intention* to fight limited nuclear war in Europe. This mistrust is directed both at the Americans and the Soviets. Flexible response which replaced the former doctrine of massive retaliation—in order to deter more effectively limited aggressions in Europe—is questioned by the antinuclear protest movement and even by a number of conservatives who have doubts that the West might be willing and capable to actually apply the doctrine in case of crisis.

But criticism of nuclear deterrence is not an exclusively European phenomenon. Mutual Assured Destruction has come under attack in the United States both from the establishment—as Henry Kissinger's speech of September 1979 aptly demonstrated—and from a protest movement. Though most of the arguments are not new, they have never had such support from important groups such as the Catholic Bishops in the United States. The old debate whether the ends of Western policy justify the means of nuclear destruction has been resumed with unprecedented vigor.

Fear of nuclear war, as Michael Howard observed,[1] has become independent of the political conflict behind it. The concern with nuclear weapons and their awesome physical impact remains in the foreground of public

debate causing unprecedented anxieties. There is little debate on what kind of conflict might actually lead to the use of these weapons. In fact, to many critics the East-West conflict barely appears as a problem connected with the potential use of nuclear weapons. Given these doubts people need reassurance that a strategy actually protects them.

The West has entered a new phase of public nuclear politics which removed the issue of nuclear deterrence from the arcane realm of experts and which gives a prominent place to dissent and challenge of established policies. It has as its core a protest movement composed of a generation that had its critical political socialization in the 1970s, the decade of détente and East-West agreements. Many of them find it difficult to accept the basic premises of deterrence, including the possibilities of a war between the very states which they observed as partners in a process of dialogue and selected cooperation. To many of them the threat of mutual suicide as the basis of Mutual Assured Destruction is morally objectionable, as it is to many critics *in* the establishment, although no alternative system is so far available.

As a consequence, Western democratic societies are going through a period of profound internal debate about the desirability and the instruments of nuclear deterrence while at the same time the Soviet society and political system are barely affected. Although political parties and governments that adhere to the notion of nuclear deterrence have received majorities in political elections, it is not enough to rely on narrow majorities. Security policy needs a broader consensus and must therefore try to recreate a wider acceptance of a strategy that is intended to continue the deterrence of war as effectively as in the past.

The Erosion of Intra-Western Consensus on East-West Relations. Since the Carter administration, a growing rift has developed between the United States and her allies on how to proceed in East-West relations. Notably the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Polish crisis sharpened disagreements that first surfaced in the context of differing approaches toward human rights. The arrival of the Reagan administration deepened the differences. The rhetoric of the campaign and the first months of the new administration looked to Europeans like a reversal of what had been Alliance consensus since 1967 when—during the Harmel exercise—Nato agreed on pursuing selected cooperation and negotiations with the East, in addition to an effective deterrence policy through adequate defense. Détente came to be interpreted differently on both sides of the Atlantic. Whereas the new administration tended to see the détente period as being responsible for the decrease of American defense expenditure and only saw negative implications, Europeans—though more skeptical and aware of the shortcomings than at the beginning of the 1970s—perceived détente as a process that had brought about positive results in humanitarian, political, and economic terms.

Despite considerable convergence of policy between the United States and her allies, basic disagreements on East-West economic relations have persisted and occasionally took the form of sharp controversy. This was especially evident when the Reagan administration applied sanctions on allied countries in order to put pressure to conform to American policy. Differences arose on the questions of sanctions, transfer of high technology, subsidized credit, energy supply, and general trade with communist countries. Two questions lie at the core of these disagreements: first, what role does the West assign to the Soviet Union in the international system of the future? Should there be a legitimate place if the Soviet Union can be induced to a moderate and prudent behavior? Second, how can the West affect Soviet behavior? Though some of the more technical questions that derive from these fundamental problems have been settled superficially in the form of pragmatic compromises, basic philosophical differences remain.

These disagreements on how to proceed in East-West relations are of immediate relevance for strategy. They affect the images of the United States in Europe and the legitimate basis of security policy, notably with regard to nuclear deterrence. The negative image which the Reagan administration created at the beginning of its term corroborated the critical view of sections of the young generation in Europe on nuclear deterrence. President Reagan's well-known remark during a press conference—in which he considered limited nuclear war in Europe as a possibility with which one has to reckon and for which all efforts should be made to keep it limited—was reinterpreted by the critics of American policy as proof for an intention to fight limited nuclear war in Europe. Five years earlier that remark would not have attracted attention since it correctly reflected Nato orthodoxy. But the preceding rhetoric of the Reagan administration both on East-West relations in general and on arms control specifically had created an image which contributed to a new and negative interpretation of official American statements.

At a time of profound doubts about nuclear deterrence, the general approach to East-West relations of the alliance is of greater importance than ever before, if we are to preserve and enhance the democratic legitimacy of contemporary major strategy. For these reasons the establishment of a *minimum* consensus on the basic goals and instruments of East-West relations represents an essential prerequisite for the political and democratic foundation of alliance strategy.

Security Threats Outside the Nato Area. Western security policy, basically, developed around Europe. Institutions of defense and policy coordination and the habit of cooperation evolved around issues connected with the security of Europe. In terms of probability of conflict, however, not Europe, but the Middle East is a more likely theater of conflict that will involve

Western countries. Although all Western countries are likely to be affected by a crisis there, almost all of them remain only marginally prepared.

Obviously, Nato as such cannot deal with crises outside the Treaty area, but any major conflict in the Middle East can turn into an East-West conflict and thereby spill over into Europe. Moreover, conflicts in that region can lead to an interruption of oil supplies to both Europe and Japan and consequently disrupt their economies. The preparation for political and military contingencies in this area, therefore, remains a major task for Western countries.

Tasks for the Future

Preserving Deterrence. In looking at the future one should be reminded that the three goals of strategy are: prevention of war, maintenance of a free society, and the preservation, as well as the mobilization, of democratic support. Efforts that concentrate on one of these goals at the expense of others are likely to fail in the long run. Strategies which lose legitimacy at home will eventually collapse for lack of domestic support. War can always be prevented at the price of submission; consequently a strategy which excludes the preservation of a free society fails in a fundamental respect—a point which may be less obvious to a world power than to the medium and small powers of Europe. Moreover, the three goals of strategy are intimately linked and difficult to separate from each other. For example, a strategy which demonstrably succeeds in preventing war and in preserving a free society should, at least in theory, be able to mobilize public support.

No Use for First Use? The Alliance is going through a debate on nuclear weapons and nuclear strategy that is unprecedented in scope and intensity. Criticism focuses on the Alliance strategy of flexible response which uses the threat of using nuclear weapons at various levels as a means to deter aggression and prevent war. A proposal to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons was submitted by four Americans (McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara and Gerard Smith) in *Foreign Affairs* and *Europa-Archiv*[2] to which four German authors (Karl Kaiser, Georg Leber, Alois Mertes, and Franz-Joseph Schulze) formulated the counter-arguments.[3] Since then the debate on no-first-use has become an important element of the discussion of Nato strategy that takes place in a wide variety of groups, including, for example, the Catholic Bishops of America.

The central proposition of the supporters of a no-first-use agreement between East and West is based on an assumption, namely that nuclear war cannot remain limited and that *any* initial use of nuclear weapons, even of smaller yield, is likely to unleash nuclear holocaust. A no-first-use agreement is therefore regarded as a necessary instrument to introduce a firebreak in order to avoid the situation where every military conflict unleashes

armageddon. Adherents argued that such an agreement in no way changes the commitment of the United States to the security of Europe and acknowledge that it presupposes a conventional balance.

Among the various counter-arguments three shall be mentioned here. First, a no-first-use deprives the strategy of flexible response—which has the prevention of war as its main goal—of its central element. It makes war more likely and not less likely since it liberates the Soviet Union from the risk of damage to its own territory as a result of military moves into Western territory. Everybody abhors nuclear weapons, particularly in Germany where nuclear war, if it ever were to break out, would have its first victims. But thus far history speaks clearly for the peace-preserving effect of nuclear weapons in Europe although neither the opponents nor the proponents can, of course, provide final evidence. We are nonetheless in the realm of a relatively convincing degree of probability, for we cannot fail to notice that during the postwar era we have witnessed in the world outside Europe more than 140 wars with untold deaths while Europe remained an island of stability where no shot was fired between East and West. The fear of unleashing nuclear destruction has been the strongest incentive for prudence. Nobody can afford to conduct experiments with the present strategy by removing the option of first use, for the price of certainty that we owe stability to nuclear weapons would then be war in Europe.

Second, contrary to what the proponents of no-first-use suggest, such a change does amount to a substantial reduction of the present commitment of the United States to European security. If the nuclear guarantee of the United States is confined to a nuclear attack of the Soviet Union on Europe it would mean that even in case of a conventional defeat—and that would also imply a defeat of the American ground troops—an American president would not give the order to use nuclear weapons. If that were the case the Soviet Union would not have to fear any harm to its sanctuary and as a consequence, the basic precepts of the security system of the postwar period would be fundamentally changed. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Soviet Union has proposed no-first-use since the 1960s and has now announced its application unilaterally.

Third, it is a misleading proposition to regard a conventional balance as the essential prerequisite for no-first-use. Though greater conventional strength would enable Nato to raise the nuclear threshold, a conventional balance would not remove a basic geo-political advantage which the Soviet Union enjoys: it can change the balance in case of war and replace forces from the relative proximity of Soviet territory. Moreover, a total absence of any nuclear risk to a Soviet sanctuary, even for a protracted military operation, significantly changes the calculation for Soviet political leaders by eliminating a risk as it never existed before in history.

The familiar counter-argument that nuclear war (especially in Germany) is even more horrible than conventional war, is, of course, correct. But the West must guard itself against the tendency, which one can observe in the present debate and in the peace movement itself, to belittle the horrors of conventional wars. It must remain the goal of strategy to prevent all kinds of war.

At a time of renewed and profound doubts about nuclear weapons and their destructiveness, the no-first-use proposal creates the illusion of reassurance. It appears like the magic key that locks Pandora's box of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, no-first-use agreements will not eliminate nuclear weapons from this world. Moreover, agreements are likely to have an asymmetrical effect. In the West they are likely to be followed by public pressure to translate agreement into a real reduction of deployed weapons whereas such pressure does not exist or can easily be withstood in the East.

Nevertheless there are legitimate doubts whether Nato does have a genuine option of first use as a deterrent. Some weapons may never be usable, e.g., nuclear artillery for they may be taken by the opponent by the time the complicated procedure of requesting and releasing their use has produced a result. For this reason Senator Sam Nunn and others have proposed for years to reduce or remove "obsolete" battlefield nuclear weapons from Europe. Moreover, in case of war politicians will be under extraordinary pressure to forgo the use of nuclear weapons. The ongoing public debate on nuclear weapons may have increased that reticence. Since the adversary is aware of these new constraints the deterrent value of the first use option may have been reduced. The answer to this situation does not lie in a no-first-use agreement, but in efforts to raise the nuclear threshold, and that is an entirely different matter that can be approached within the existing strategy of flexible response.

Giving Flexibility to Flexible Response. When flexible response became official Nato doctrine in the 1960s Nato decided that for political and social reasons it could not match the conventional strength of the opposing alliance. Instead, it chose the cheaper alternative of relying on tactical nuclear weapons to be used at an early stage should conventional defense turn out to be insufficient to hold an intruder. Since then Nato has been heavily dependent on an early use of tactical nuclear weapons in case of an aggression. Today this dependence represents a problem for the political and military reasons analyzed above.

If the debate on no-first-use has had any positive impact, it consists of drawing attention to the possibilities and necessities of decreasing dependence on an early use of nuclear weapons. This is what General Rogers had in mind when he pointed to the possibilities of new technology when dealing with a Warsaw Pact attack. If one reviews Soviet warfighting doctrine, the structure of forces and the likely war scenarios in connection with the

European environment (as the ESECS study did),[4] new military technologies do offer possibilities for effectively fighting Warsaw Pact forces. Conventional technologies are now available for missions for which heretofore only nuclear weapons could be used. Conventional techniques are also available for target acquisition and suppression of high-value fixed targets such as airfields or command sites or the creation of chokepoints to impede Warsaw Pact forces. New technologies can be used for the attrition of Warsaw Pact air power and, particularly important, the interdiction and disruption of Warsaw Pact follow-on forces.

As a result Nato can maintain its doctrine of flexible response, which calls for an initial resistance against aggression with conventional weapons but reserves a capacity to use nuclear weapons. Within this doctrine, Nato should move promptly to upgrade its conventional capability in Europe and "raise the nuclear threshold," i.e., make it practicable to defer as long as feasible, and if possible prevent, a situation in which Nato might be obliged to face a decision on the use of its nuclear weapons.[5]

An initial nonnuclear defense may be more effective as a deterrence than a strategy which has to resort to nuclear weapons at an early stage. Consequently such a posture not only increases deterrence and makes war less probable, but helps to create support in a public which is concerned that military conflict might escalate into nuclear war at an early stage.

Of course, such an approach must guard itself against creating new conventional illusions. The option of a first use must be retained in order to maintain uncertainty and thereby the nuclear element in the risk calculation of a potential aggressor. Moreover, such an approach will take some time until it takes effect and, in the meantime, the classical posture will have to prevail. In any case, raising the nuclear threshold requires additional expenditure which has been estimated in the ESECS study at roughly an added one percent in defense expenditure. If a reduction of dependence on an early use of nuclear weapons represents a politically relevant goal, such an expenditure appears acceptable—difficult as it is to even maintain the present level of defense expenditure. So far the politicians have not presented this option to their public. If the case is rationally explained, courageous politicians have a good chance of shifting strategy toward a better conventional posture and at the same time of increasing public support for security policy.

The Politics of Nuclear Weapons: The INF Issue. In December 1979 Nato passed its so-called double-track decision. It represented a genuinely innovative approach because for the first time an arms advance by one side, in this case the Soviet Union, was not answered by compensating armament. Instead, there was an offer to eliminate an imbalance by negotiations and only to introduce Western systems in case the Soviets were unwilling to provide for an adequate reduction. Since this offer was made, Intermediate

Nuclear Forces (INF) have become the most controversial issue in the history of arms control policy of the Western Alliance.

At the core, the issue is one of preserving extended deterrence. If the West were to accept the Soviet Union's vast superiority in the field of INF, the point would sooner or later arrive when the credibility of the American nuclear guarantee in Europe would be eroded and "decoupling" would take place. The net result would be a destabilized system. Although there is room for argument as to what American systems might provide coupling, the medium or long-term proposition is that the unchecked growth of the Soviet INF potential unquestionably undermines the stability of deterrence. There also exist equally important political issues that appear to have been lost in the heat of the ongoing controversies.

First, if Nato were to follow the advice of the opponents of the double-track decision, the Soviet Union would continue to expand its vast arsenal of long-range, medium-range, and short-range nuclear missiles—as well as aircraft. By the late 1980s or early 1990s, the Soviets would have achieved an overwhelming superiority of nuclear might that covers its global periphery stretching from Japan to China, Southeast Asia, India, the Near East, North Africa, and Western Europe. That area includes the two technological centers of Western civilization outside the United States. If the West were to allow this to happen, the global balance would drastically change to the disadvantage of the United States and the West.

Second, a continuation of the Soviet buildup of INF, if unchecked by Western approaches, would represent a breach of basic rules of the nuclear age by the Soviet Union—the adherence to rough parity and the avoidance of unilateral military advantages in the nuclear field. The Soviet Union would, in fact, acquire a potential for political pressure, if not nuclear blackmail in the second half of the 1980s. The Soviet Union once used nuclear weapons for political purposes in 1956 but remained ineffective because of American nuclear superiority. That superiority is gone, and under conditions of democratic publics, deeply affected by anxieties about nuclear war, the Soviet Union might be tempted to use its vast superiority to put pressure on Western Europe for accommodation to Soviet demands. Nuclear superiority could thereby be politically exploited without ever using it militarily, thus gaining a potentially decisive edge over the United States in the competition between the two world powers. That edge could be crucial if an East-West confrontation were to take place in the Near East and if Europe could thereby be neutralized.

Third, the double-track decision is opposed by an influential and articulate minority, but this minority in the end has to accept the decisions of democratic majorities. If, in the case of the double-track decision a democratic majority remains unable to implement its position, the question arises whether future security policy can be pursued against the will of a small and determined minority.

Nato Strategy 79

Strategic Stability. Stability in strategic nuclear weapons between the two superpowers remains an essential prerequisite for world peace. Although there have been and still are weaknesses in the US strategic posture, opinions differ on their impact on stability. Many American and most European experts do not endorse the view that partial vulnerabilities in the strategic arsenal of the United States could lead to a first strike of the Soviet Union. Such a behavior would be in striking contrast to Soviet prudence whenever facing military might. It can be discarded as a practical possibility as long as the American second strike potential can still destroy the Soviet Union as a functioning social and political system.

Nevertheless, measures that increase stability through unilateral action or by agreement with the Soviet Union remain a paramount objective. Reductions in the strategic arsenal as they are being attempted in the START negotiations and further measures to enhance stability through better crisis management remain in the interest of the United States as well as of the West as a whole. A successful implementation of the recommendation of the Presidential Commission on the MX Missile to move away from MIRVed ICBMs and, instead, to build up single warhead smaller and mobile ICBMs would stabilize the strategic relationship between the superpowers by eliminating attractive first strike targets and by creating a survivable second strike capability.

Stability in the strategic relationship and genuine efforts by the United States to improve stability through negotiations and unilateral action are likely to have a positive impact on the political atmosphere in Western democracies and on public support for security policy. The real and perceived difficulties and breakdowns of communication between the two superpowers in the wake of Afghanistan, the Polish crisis, and the arrival of the Reagan administration were one of the factors that contributed to the rising fear of war and the growing dissatisfaction with the policy of nuclear deterrence.

Whether space defense is likely to be of real relevance to strategy before the end of the century cannot be determined today. The development of new techniques is slow and cumbersome on both sides. A significant advance would, of course, have an impact on the ABM question. But as long as no principally new weapon development is in sight with expectation of success, the matter resides in the domain of theory.

Strengthening Legitimacy of Strategy. In a democracy, policy on questions of peace and war requires constantly renewed legitimization. In the field of strategy mere numerical majorities, though formally sufficient from a constitutional standpoint, are not enough to provide the necessary broad support which is needed for a policy which requires long-term commitments and major resources. At a time when minorities have an unprecedented

Naval War College Review, Vol. 37 [1984], No. 1, Art. 7

access to the public process and when protest against nuclear deterrence is particularly active, a special effort is necessary to broaden the consensus to back up strategy. Though, as was argued before, success in terms of preserving peace is a prerequisite for support for a strategy, the task is essentially political in nature. Under contemporary circumstances two questions appear of particular importance.

Facing the Issue of Nuclear Weapons. For reasons that were explained earlier nuclear deterrence is going through a phase of criticism and doubt in Western societies. The critique focuses both on flexible response and on Mutual Assured Destruction. Obviously, one way of dealing with the anxieties that conflict will immediately escalate into nuclear annihilation would be to decrease the likelihood of using nuclear weapons if war should break out. For the reasons explained above, a stronger emphasis on the conventional aspect of Nato military posture in Europe could help to decrease the dependence on early use of nuclear weapons and, thereby, help to recreate support for a system that provides added flexibility.

But there is no way out of the nuclear world. Even if the West succeeds in playing down the importance of nuclear weapons or of reducing the nuclear arsenals through some unilateral measures (e.g., in the field of battlefield nuclear weapons) or agreements with the Soviet Union, nuclear weapons are likely to remain the backbone of a system of deterrence that has shortcomings and dangers but that has effectively prevented war for several decades. Even if the West were willing to go much further in "denuclearizing" the security system, it cannot be done without parallel action by the Soviet Union—which in its actual armament behavior during the last years has displayed a contrary attitude by its persistent and vigorous program of expanding her nuclear armament.

Much of the critique of nuclear deterrence would like to preserve the stabilizing effect of nuclear weapons while, if possible, getting rid of the weapons themselves. The debate is thus caught in contradictions which have not been sufficiently clarified. Those who object to the warfighting elements in nuclear deterrence tend to overlook that deterrence in its war-preventing consequence only works if the nuclear weapons are real and the capacity to use them demonstrably exists, for otherwise it will not be taken seriously by the adversary. When the Catholic Bishops of America assert that nuclear deterrence does have a peace-preserving function and at the same time come very near to arguing against *any* use of nuclear weapons, even in response to a nuclear attack, they are caught in a fundamental contradiction. It is ludicrous to think in terms of winnable nuclear wars, since every survivor will be a loser. But nuclear war cannot be prevented by deterrence without demonstrating that nuclear weapons exist and can be used.

Only a public debate conducted with patience and rationality is likely to make those who have doubts become aware of both the paradoxes and the

requirements of the nuclear age. Such a debate requires courageous politicians to face the issues presented by a public which for good reasons is worried about the long-term impact of nuclear arms competition.

Reestablishing Alliance Consensus on East-West Relations. The internal disagreements on East-West relations which have plagued the Alliance create problems for strategy in two different ways: they have an immediate operative impact in the field of Western arms control policy where they complicate the task of coordination, and they undermine public support for strategy. Although it would be unrealistic to expect agreement on all points among democracies which are characterized by an internal plurality of opinion, a minimum consensus on some essentials is necessary if Nato is to conduct strategy in an effective way.

Militant rhetoric at a time when significant sectors of public opinion are worried about the possibility of military conflict is obviously counterproductive. The Alliance requires a credibly public consensus on the necessity of a minimum cooperation with the adversary in the field of arms control, diplomacy, and economic relations. But selective cooperation with the adversary must not become a mere tactical device to acquiesce a worried public; such a policy is part of a modern approach to security which pursues both minimum defense and deterrence as well as efforts concerning détente and cooperation, arms control and confidence building.

Security Threats Outside the Nato Area. As Third World instability grows for the reasons described, the likelihood will increase that they affect the security interests of some or all Nato members. Within the Alliance the members have not always agreed on the relevance of certain Third World conflicts to Nato. However, Nato can live with some of these disagreements but in crisis areas of strategic importance for Nato as a whole, a minimum agreement is necessary.

There is little doubt among Nato members that crises in the Near East are of strategic importance to the Alliance. Internal instability, intrastate war, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the East-West conflict can, separately or in combination, lead to crises which can immediately affect the West in two ways: the supply of energy to the West can be interrupted and cause unacceptable damage; or a crisis could escalate to an East-West war in the region which would spillover into Europe. Although that likelihood appears unlikely at the moment, the situation is fluid and the chance of such a conflict more likely in the future.

Nato as an organization cannot deal with such crises, but consultative mechanisms and commitments have been established in case one should arise. These contingencies are obviously cases in which only some members are willing and capable to act. But others are partners in a community of shared risks. Although the United States will remain the main power that is able to

Naval War College Review, Vol. 37 [1984], No. 1, Art. 7

act effectively, Europe will have to play a greater role if it wants to shape the events that directly affect its interests. For the time being the intergovernmental contingency planning and the coordination of possible approaches—political, economic, and military—is marginal. Moreover, there is little public debate or preparedness in countries which are so overwhelmed by other pressing problems, such as the issue of nuclear weapons and the economic crisis, that these issues do not attract attention. If the major countries of Nato want to be better prepared for conflicts which are more likely to erupt in the remaining years of the century—than military conflict in Europe—it is incumbent on them to better understand the political, economic, and military measures they should be prepared to undertake.

Notes

1 Michael Howard, "Re-Assurance and Deterrence: Western Defense in the 1980s." *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1982/83, pp. 309-324.

2 McGeorge Bundy, et al., "Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1982, pp. 753-768, and *Europa-Archiv*, No. 7, 1982.

3 Karl Kaiser, et al., "Nuclear Weapons and the Preservation of Peace: A German Response to No First Use," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1982, pp. 1157-1170, and *Europa-Archiv*, No. 12, 1983.

4 *Strengthening Conventional Deterrence in Europe. Proposals for the 1980s*. Report of the European Security Study (ESECS) (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

5 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

6 For a Proposal of a New Role for the European Community in the Field of Security Policy see a study supported by 5 leading West European Institutes of Foreign Policy: Karl Kaiser, Cesare Merlini, Thierry de Montbrial, Edmund Wellenstein, William Wallace, *The European Community: Progress or Decline?* (Bonn, Rome, Paris, London, The Hague: 1983).

Professor Karl Kaiser received his education in Europe, served as a visiting professor at Harvard and Johns Hopkins Universities, and is a director of the prestigious Research Institute of the German Council on Foreign Relations.

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