

# NATO of the Future: Less is More

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*In 1982 the Atlantic Alliance descended into one of its periodic tailspins of discord and mutual recrimination over issues ranging from trade to security to international development. Inevitably, questions have resurfaced about the future viability of the Alliance. Dr. A. W. DePorte addresses these questions in a restatement of the case for the Atlantic Alliance, arguing that its primary goals are being met and that the Alliance need not be threatened by occasional (and inevitable) disputes over non-central issues. Following a discussion of the various perceptions of what the Alliance should accomplish and how it has in fact responded, the author suggests that the Alliance will continue to perform very well if it is released from the burden of unwarranted expectations.*

The quarrels and divisions among the North Atlantic allies seem to be as numerous as the sands of the sea. The United States appears to disagree with its principal allies, who often also disagree among themselves, with respect to how to deter Soviet aggression in Europe, conduct trade and other "normal" relations with the Soviet Union and deal with developments outside Europe that affect the interests of the allies. The Alliance partners also disagree on how to manage their own economies and the international trading and monetary system so as to minimize divisive competition while at the same time trying to emerge from the slough of recession which has engulfed them all. If our only evidence for the state of the Alliance was the front-page stories that have appeared since the Bonn and Versailles summits, or since the advent of the Reagan administration or the Carter administration, we might wonder how it manages to survive at all in the face of the almost permanent state of discord which characterizes it.

Response in the United States is diverse. Some observers, who have been called "American Gaullists," welcome quarrels and disputes as the birth-pangs of a new and better international system. They think that the United States has maintained a hegemonic protectorate over Western Europe too long for its own and Europe's good, and that everyone would be better off if Atlantic ties were loosened and the strong, confident and resurgent allies (as this group describes Western Europe) were left to take

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care of their problems, including their security needs, largely on their own. This school sees every new blow to alliance confidence and solidarity as a step in the right direction. Alert for years and even decades to every sign of disintegration, these observers find in the current cascade of Atlantic divisions more reason than ever before to believe that their long deferred expectations may at last be realized.

Another group, which might be called the "old-line Atlanticist," reads the same news pessimistically, believing that Alliance quarrels may end by destroying an imperfect but still useful system and putting nothing better in its place. They think that the Alliance can be saved only if the allies redouble their efforts to achieve common policies and world outlooks. Some call for more and better consultations, the creation of new institutions, or declarations of principle to guide future policy making along convergent lines.

A third group agrees with the "old-line Atlanticist," that the Alliance should be maintained, but doubts, because of their reading of Alliance history, that extraordinary measures to that end are either needed or possible. In their view it would be better for both the United States and a still divided and relatively weak Western Europe to keep the alliance intact in more or less its present form at least until the Soviets withdraw from Central Europe, or Western Europe becomes strong enough to make a plausible show of being able to deter Soviet attack or pressure, or China becomes a meaningful counterweight to Soviet power on the Eurasian landmass. Since all these alternatives to the Atlantic status quo seem equally visionary with respect to any time period relevant to current policy, the allies, in this view, have no rational choice but to keep the Alliance going. Since quarrels among them have been chronic from the beginning, have often failed to be resolved, and yet have never prevented the allies from maintaining the minimum degree of necessary cooperation in Europe, present quarrels should prove no more lastingly damaging than past ones.

This use of historical perspective has been proven sound up to now. The Alliance has survived every crisis and division for more than one-third of a century and is still alive and well enough today to continue performing its core functions with respect to European stability and West European security.

But the fact that the allies have overcome or bypassed a thousand ruptures and quarrels does not mean that their cooperation will necessarily survive the thousand-and-first. It can always be argued, and never disproved, that today or tomorrow's difficulty, unlike all the others, may be terminal. This contention is particularly appealing when troubles come, as now, in battalions. The convergence of strategic, political and economic differences of great weight among the allies is, it seems to some, unique in the history of the Alliance and likely to prove uniquely disruptive.

To this fear, some of those who have thought that the lessons of history were essential for understanding the Alliance's survival up to now would reply that the lessons, if properly applied to the present situation, can point to very different policies for trying to preserve the Alliance and very different prospects for its future. In their view the time has come, first in policy analysis and then in policy making, to admit openly that there has always been an awesome gulf between what alliance cooperation was and what it aspired to be. Once this is admitted to have been the natural state of things among the allies since the beginning, we would be on guard to avoid overloading the alliance system with policy initiatives whose propensity to failure might eventually overwhelm the system altogether. At the least the allies would be spared some futile disagreements. At the best we would learn, over time, how to apportion our policy energies among Alliance and other channels in ways that would realistically reflect the capabilities of each for meeting our needs.

If we go beyond statements in communiqués and speeches about what the Alliance should be and do, the actual history of its behavior tells us that the allies have constantly asked of themselves greater cooperation than they have usually been able to achieve. Or, put another way, the Alliance has in fact been a system of state relations in which the members have not cooperated on all important policy issues, despite repeated professions of the need to do so, but have not allowed this failure to get in the way of their effective cooperation on some.

The ambitions of the Alliance are indicated in many texts, of which only three will be quoted here.

1. Our Alliance cannot therefore be concerned only with the North Atlantic area or only with military defense. It must also organize its political and economic strength on the principle of interdependence, and must take account of developments outside its own area<sup>1</sup>
2. Ministers further agreed that the stability of regions outside NATO boundaries, particularly in the South West Asia area, and the secure supply of essential commodities from this area are of crucial importance. Therefore, the current situation has serious implications for the security of member countries. The altered strategic situation in South West Asia warrants full solidarity and the strengthening of Allied cohesion as a response to the new challenges<sup>2</sup>
3. The treaty establishing the Atlantic alliance defines the geographical area in which its security guarantees are effective.

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1. U.S. Department of State, *Department of State Bulletin* 38 (6 January 1958): 12.

2. U.S. Department of State, *Department of State Bulletin* 80 (July 1980): 13.

But we as allies have recognized from the start . . . that developments beyond the treaty area are relevant to our well-being . . . .

In order for us to deal more effectively with such cases, we must develop a common interpretation of the nature of events in the developing world and their implications, as we must also devise appropriate ways in which we can act to protect our interests and our values

It is precisely at the level of perception that we should broaden the alliance consensus on problems beyond the treaty area<sup>3</sup>

The current-sounding language in the first passage is drawn from the NATO ministerial communique of December 1957. The second is from the communique of May 1980 (after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan). The third is from a speech made in October 1981 by Walter Stoessel, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs.

These and many other such declarations reflect both a self-evident statement of fact (that events beyond the strict scope of the Alliance affect the well-being of its members) and the conclusion that the allies can and should act in common with respect to such events. But it does not require detailed knowledge of Alliance history to notice that the members have not always acted together in such cases, nor have they shared common perceptions of the issues themselves. The Alliance has clearly been a failure if success is to be judged by approximation to these self-set standards of behavior. Yet the Alliance still exists, Europe is still stable, and Western Europe is still as secure as anyone should expect it to be in this tumultuous age. It would surprise the fathers of 1949 to hear this state of affairs described as a failure of policy. And, of course, it most certainly is not.

Why, then, do we go on thinking that we must judge the Alliance's performance by these never-achieved standards? Why should we use them to weigh its present problems and appraise its future prospects? Or to set the goals for policy? Neither history nor logic suggests that the faulty expectations and unrealized aspirations of years past, however noble or desirable in themselves and however widely held, provide a better guide for realistic prediction of the future behavior of the same actors than the hard record of those years.

Perhaps the time has come for those who think the Alliance is still useful to reverse explicitly the traditional argument. Rather than presupposing that the Alliance's survival requires that the allies achieve common policies on all major issues, in Europe and outside, it is perhaps time to admit

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3. U.S. Department of State, *Department of State Bulletin* 81 (December 1981): 54.

and proclaim, first, that they have never done so; second, that they are not likely to be able to do so; and third, that this fact of life need not impair essential alliance cooperation in Europe unless we insist perversely that it must and act accordingly.

Once we have disabused ourselves of historical myths and fanciful expectations, we would find that much of the dark cloud that now hangs over contemplation of Atlantic relations and policy-making dissipates. Instead of constantly having to minimize differences of outlook, interest and policy we could then indulge in the luxury of taking them as they come and building policy on the basis of fact. Instead of deluding ourselves with superficial expressions of agreement in cases where the allies clearly disagree on important matters, we could freely accept what is obvious and devote our efforts to pursuing agreement where it is, in fact, possible because it is necessary, leaving the rest to be dealt with as best we can.

The most promising area in which to pursue this approach is the area of policies toward the Third World. In 1980, during the Iranian and Afghanistan crises, alliance relations reached a recent low point when the European allies failed to respond as Washington wished to American policy demands. That this was practically forgotten a year later is characteristic of the pattern in which each "crisis unto death" pushes the last one from public and even official consciousness. That the situation in 1980 was as serious as it was, and that it aroused American public opinion against allied behavior to a degree rarely seen before ("Where are the allies when we need them?"), is indicative of the underlying gravity of such disagreements and the threat they will repeatedly pose to Allied cooperation in Europe if they continue to be perceived as they have been in the past.

What needs to be done now is to face the fact that U.S.-European differences on such issues have been and are likely to remain deep, to enlighten the public in all countries on this fact, and to make clear to policy-makers and the public alike that this disagreement, much as we may deplore and seek to remedy it, has never interfered with Allied cooperation in Europe and need not do so unless we insist on believing that it must. Since it is in no one's interest to insist that European failures to support U.S. policies in Afghanistan, Angola, Salvador, or elsewhere must necessarily lead to a dismantling of the edifice of cooperation in Europe, it should be in everyone's interest to clear the air on this subject in advance of the next crisis, rather than rush into another round of open quarrels which will end, if they follow the pattern of the past, with the crisis forgotten but with a residue of divisive and possibly cumulative rancors left behind.

The present U.S. administration believes that its struggle with the Soviet Union is the top priority of foreign policy and, moreover, though

this does not necessarily follow, that practically every episode of change or threatened change throughout the world has a direct impact on that struggle, and should be addressed accordingly. There are some in Europe who share this view, but a substantial majority in almost every country does not. The West European view of change in the Third World has, in fact, quite different premises and gives rise to quite different policy conclusions.

European differences with the United States have much less to do with divergent interests than is commonly stated. Few Europeans want to see, any more than Americans do, an expansion of Soviet influence in the Third World or a cutoff of Persian Gulf oil. The basic differences have to do, rather, with perceptions of reality.

The West Europeans have a longer familiarity with political change, quite often violent, and a wider experience of political options at home than do Americans. Several European nations have experienced the trauma of decolonization since 1945. For these and other reasons, they think the United States is ignorantly narrow-minded if it believes that radical change in the turbulent Third World can be halted, or that all such change necessarily benefits the Soviet Union and hurts the West.

From this follows the European view that the West in many cases will not be able to do more to save threatened friendly regimes in the Third World than it was able to do for Chiang's China or Farouk's Egypt or Hashemite Iraq. Nor, they think, should the West make heroic efforts to save such regimes. Its efforts may often make a bad case worse. At the same time, most of the new radical regimes, beginning with Communist China, have proved not to be Soviet satellites. With patience and economic ties, they think, such countries can be won back to tolerable if not always harmonious relations with the West.

Most Europeans do not believe that there can be a system of order throughout the turbulent world of the late twentieth century, and certainly not a system which will suit Western interests in most respects. The stability and relative security of Western Europe, they believe, reflects a special situation caused by special reasons, not duplicatable elsewhere by anything the West can do in the near-term. Periodic U.S. efforts to build such a system of order therefore seem to them misdirected and even dangerous insofar as they blind American leaders and citizens to the unpleasant and often unmanageable realities of the times.

It follows from this general approach that most Europeans are much more inclined than Americans to think that the West will win some and lose some in the Third World as, in fact, has been the case since 1945, but that the long-term trend is by no means negative provided the Western nations can learn to accept change that cannot be avoided.

This kind of thinking, I need not say, is not much in vogue in Washington these days. There were some inchoate hints of it in the Carter administration but they were not enunciated and certainly not followed through in practice. Indeed, U.S.-European relations reached their lowest point in many years in 1980 when we asked the allies to act with respect to the Iranian and Afghanistan crises in ways they thought useless, costly and/or dangerous.

The allies, of course, have interests outside Europe as well as we do and their interests and analyses of situations can coincide with ours in given cases. But to expect systematic cooperation with the Europeans on matters where U.S. and European perceptions of events are often so different is to expect too much. Nor will they always support or defer to American policies even on occasions when Washington, as superpower and alliance pontiff, declares *ex cathedra* that the issue at hand concerns not only American interests but also those of the Alliance and the West. Open or implicit threats that the relations of the allies with the U.S. *within* Europe may be affected by European non-compliance with our wishes elsewhere will rarely be effective. The allies are too convinced that the United States protects Europe for its own sake as well as theirs.

The problem, then, is to achieve as much agreement as possible among the allies with respect to issues in the Middle East, Southwest Asia, Central America and elsewhere as they arise while at the same time acting on the judgment that our common interests in Europe are sufficiently important on their own merits to enjoin cooperation no matter how much or little we can achieve elsewhere. To be able to do this in moments of tension, the way must be prepared in advance by education among policy makers, pundits and the public so that their expectations will be realistic rather than, as too often heretofore, at first excessive and then bitterly disappointed.

A second area in which Allied cooperation falls short of the standards set for it by Allied pronouncements is that of economic management. The wrangles among the Atlantic allies in 1979-80 concerning the U.S. "export of inflation" and in 1981-82 over its "export of deflation" are only the most recent symptoms of the failure to pursue united, concerted or even systematically coordinated economic policies. Each has its distinctive heritage and political priorities for economic policy making concerning growth, full employment and monetary stability, and each uses a distinctive mix of policy actions to deal with distinctive national problems, comparable though these may be to those of other countries. In short, each ally is still a sovereign power with respect to running its own economy. It is difficult to see how these democratic countries, whose governments are judged by their electorates on conditions of the national life, might behave otherwise, short of formal political union.

At the same time, it is also difficult to look at the free world economic system without noticing that it is, after all, a system and not simply a sum total of national economies. This system, in fact, is becoming ever more integrated and the national economies more interlocked. What confuses us is that the system is not managed by a single authority or by agreements worked out among the leading national governments, but by a complex amalgam of inter-state, national governmental and private decisions in which the role of the private sector is often overlooked even in this age of multinational banks and corporations.

This system has proven flexible enough to survive the upheavals of the 1970s but not ingenious enough to surmount the successive challenges of inflation and recession. It has not, so far, given rise to national discords in the economic realm so severe as to impair the ability of the principal Atlantic allies, who along with Japan are the dominant players in the system, to cooperate as needed for European security.

Predictions about the future in this sphere and at this moment cannot be made or accepted with much conviction. It is sufficient in the present context to note that the policies of the Atlantic governments (and others) have been pushed into more or less parallelism by international circumstances if not by common planning. This is a sign both of the weight the system imposes on all its participants and of the weight the United States economy, troubled as it is, imposes on the rest.

It is hard to believe that a more formal economic structure associated with the Atlantic Alliance, or including its main members, would produce better or more closely aligned national economic policies than do the many structures, formal and informal, that now allow them to work together to the extent that their interests (diverse but convergent) and their understanding of the situation (imperfect) permit. Unfortunately for such hopes of improvement via structure, American economic policies have more effect on the system than those of any of its partners while, at the same time, American policy has more autonomy than most others. Only when the U.S. government is prepared to subordinate domestic economic decisions to the well-being of its partners or the international system can we expect progress to be made toward strengthening the structures of international economic decision-making. Short of that, we will have to put up with the existing tangled web of national policies and international and private decision making which now defines the international system. At best the allied governments and those banks and industries they guide will do well to avoid overt clashes of national economic policy. This is no small task.

A particularly acute aspect of this overall issue is the question of managing Western economic relations with the Eastern bloc, a problem as much

political as economic. The United States, in certain phases of the national mood, talks or dreams of concerted Western policies to regulate high technology exports to the East and to reduce overall trade, thereby forcing the Soviet government to divert resources (economic and psychic) from expansionism to internal development, or even forcing the Soviet regime to change drastically or collapse.

It is difficult to know whether thinking of this sort is, in fact, the basis of Reagan administration policy, though it is in the minds of some of those who make policy. But, whatever may be the situation in Washington, the allied governments are no more likely to be willing to go much beyond the long established system of limiting strategic exports than they are to follow the American lead on Third World issues under the name of "global strategy." They do not believe that such economic sacrifices on their part would damp down Soviet expansionism or undermine the regime. They believe it is both chimerical and dangerous to try to "prevail" over the Soviet Union, by these or, indeed, any other means. Most of the allies, in fact, are quite reconciled to living with the Soviet regime indefinitely, preferably in the framework of an alliance with the United States which will continue to maintain the long established stability of Europe but will also not interfere with their desire to maintain a modicum of normal relations (notably economic) between the two blocs along the lines that have been developed since the 1960s.

Here too is a set of vexatious issues which we cannot expect to see resolved to American satisfaction as long as the United States and the allies hold to their respective views. In this case, at least, the difference may not remain as acute as it is now. It is easier, however, to imagine a change in the American view one day, in the form of a return to some mix of containment and "peaceful coexistence" (no doubt under a new name), than a European shift toward pre-detente confrontation of the kind (whatever the details) now favored in Washington. At any rate, the differences as now defined run too deep for improvement by more profound consultations or new Alliance machinery. The best that might be expected in the near-term, if both sides choose to be wise, is a common decision to mute differences that clearly cannot be bridged, as was conspicuously not the case in the gas pipeline issue. If left unmuted, these differences might begin to do grave damage to the core business of the Alliance — security in Europe — which none of the allies so far seems foolish enough to want to jeopardize.

Disputes about that core business itself seem to fall into a different category as compared to the kinds of issues discussed up to now. However minimalist a view one might take of the feasible and necessary scope of allied cooperation, it seems indisputable that the allies must agree at least

on how to plan and deploy for the defense of Western Europe against possible Soviet attack if they are to be confident that such an attack will continue to be deterred.

Yet, if we look with a cold eye at the history of the allies' behavior since 1949, we cannot but notice that agreement even on strategy and planning has not been a habitual fact of life. Shifts in basic strategy have not always been accepted happily by every ally. Each setting of levels for defense expenditure has not been readily implemented by all. The results of these disagreements have included much visible wrangling about sharing the burden of defense. Notwithstanding these open divisions among the allies, Soviet attack has been deterred.

Even so, it is not satisfactory to say simply that the allies have been arguing about defense issues from the beginning without excessively or dangerously straining their relationship and will no doubt continue to do so indefinitely. If there are any issues which could eventually drive a fatal wedge between the United States and one or more of the allies, they are likely to be in the area of security policy, which is not only the main business of the Alliance but which, for all the money and hardware involved, touches on psychological intangibles of deep emotional importance. If we are to overcome these issues, or at least prevent them from becoming more disruptive than they have been in the past, it is essential to grasp why they have been so persistent and divisive. Allied differences of outlook and even interest run as deep here as in any of the problem areas I have been discussing. For Americans these issues involve the willingness of the rich, skilled and vulnerable nations of Western Europe to make their due contribution to their own security in a framework of cooperation they have voluntarily entered. For the Europeans they involve no less than the political and physical survival of their nations and themselves. That is, they are literally issues of life and death.

The Atlantic Alliance is more than an anti-Soviet military pact, but it came into being because the West Europeans felt some sense of insecurity, to say the least, about their proximity to this huge, powerful and totalitarian state of whose purposes they knew too little for comfort. It has remained intact for over thirty years at least in part because the West European member governments and a majority of their electorates have continued to feel this insecurity, even during the heyday of detente in the 1970s, though in different ways, at different times and in different places. Having this view of the Soviet Union, and being unable or unwilling to arm themselves to the degree that would permit them to live in relative comfort next to it without the American alliance, a majority of West Europeans continues to find alliance with the United States not only useful but even necessary to their national security and to their psychological well-being.

But we in the United States tend to overlook the psychological implications of the fact — so plain to Europeans — that the alliance is one of unequals. This fact has created ambivalences in Europe from the beginning. A habit of dependence on a distant superpower for essential physical security and psychological reassurance creates fears and tensions of its own. The West Europeans do not control the American government. They do not fully understand what moves American decision makers and voters. They know that the United States has maintained the Alliance for decades but also that the well-being of Europe is not a top priority for every American. The sharp swings of American leadership and policy in the 1970s have not increased Western Europe's sense of confidence in America.

There has been less change in that respect than we sometimes think. It is a myth that there was once a golden age when Europeans followed American leadership compliantly and cheerfully and put their faith in American power and goodwill without question. On the contrary, the history of the Alliance is a long history of disagreements between the two sides of the Atlantic with respect to security policy as well as many other things. John Foster Dulles was not the most popular statesman in Europe. Nor was John Kennedy or Richard Nixon. The fact is that, however inspired and successful American leadership may have been or might be again, Europeans are bound to be uneasy when they contemplate the fact that the global superpower on whom their security depends is an ocean away. The only imaginable thing worse than this unequal alliance with a troubling ally would be its absence. But that does not make the Europeans any more happy with their predicament.

The situation is not made easier by the fact that the larger European states were world powers only forty years ago — not very long in European history, though an age in American thinking. The Europeans have on the whole adapted well to their loss of status. The elite disparagement of American mass culture has not disappeared but has much less weight as their own societies have modernized along lines which were formerly scorned as the "Americanization of Europe": the assembly line, the quick lunch, the car in every garage, secondary education for every child, and so forth. Even France, whose actions surprise those who do not understand that history affects behavior, has succumbed to these trends though, happily, after its own fashion.

Notwithstanding European realism concerning Western Europe's geopolitical position, a large dose of Atlantic interdependence, and a considerable degree of societal convergence, the dependence on a huge and distant upstart offspring whose power often seems to loom larger than its wisdom is not a state of affairs entirely comfortable for everyone in Western Europe. The habit of four decades, and the fact that the United States has played

its part in deterring Soviet attack or pressure, make the Alliance intellectually acceptable and desirable. Common institutions and values make it seem natural. But the concerns and resentments stemming from inequality remain. We must face the fact that they are inherent in the relationship and ineradicable, at least for as long as Western Europe remains divided, and never lose sight of these when we consider Alliance policies and differences.

This necessary yet uneasy relationship among unequals would be difficult to manage even if the details of security policy could be worked out once and for all. But military technology marches on, and the needs of defense change. Each change has stimulated a new debate about very sensitive issues, such as survival, which cannot be easily resolved to the common satisfaction of the global superpower and the smaller allies in Europe. We are now going through another phase of the long debate about how to protect Western Europe in face of changing Soviet capabilities and Western perceptions of them. At present, the debates within the Alliance concerning the deployment of intermediate range nuclear forces (INF) seem more serious than the concerns stirred in Western Europe by the Soviet actions to which this is meant to be the Allied response.

As we should have learned from earlier phases of this permanent debate, any such discussion among the allies is bound to highlight the asymmetry of their relationship. The United States has most of the nuclear weapons and provides most of the detailed thinking and planning about strategy and deployment. But the West European allies believe that the United States, the one global superpower in the alliance, sees Europe as only one theater of a broader conflict that also includes the Middle East, Latin America and the Far East. They fear at times that the United States may abandon them because of involvements elsewhere. At other times they fear that the United States will drag them into tension or even conflict because of its own preoccupations with crises outside Europe that interests Europeans less, if at all (hence their coolness to talk of "global strategy"). This was what lay behind the debate in 1980 about whether detente was divisible. What was really at issue was whether tension had to be indivisible, with Washington seeming to say "yes," and the Europeans "no." In times of less tension, on the other hand, some Europeans have feared that the U.S. would sacrifice them or their interests in some kind of global deal with the Soviet Union. Tension gives the Europeans one set of worries, relaxation gives them another.

For the Europeans, it need not be said, Europe is not just one theater of a global conflict between the superpowers but is their homeland. In their view it must be insulated from war by deterrence, from the ravages of war, both nuclear and conventional, should deterrence fail, and even

from the possible ill effects for themselves of good relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. The fact that Western Europe has been so sheltered and protected since World War II, while most other parts of the world have been the scene of upheaval and conflict, confirms for Europeans the specialness of their position and their needs. They expect the U.S. to share their view of this but are often unsure that the message is getting through.

The current phase of this chronic intra-alliance debate is particularly intense in Europe because it coincides with a period of sharply increasing U.S.-Soviet tension worldwide, not least on the rhetorical level, and a slackening of the long arms control effort, which has been popular in Europe because, among other things, it seemed to have the potential of stabilizing the East-West military balance and thus quieting the intra-alliance differences about strategy and security policy which the arms race heats up. For this reason, the death of SALT II has had high costs in Europe for allied solidarity.

Even so, a majority of West Europeans, and particularly of Germans, is not ready to abandon the alliance with the United States. Their residual, long-established fear of the proximity and power of the Soviet Union (quite independent of any particular Soviet actions) and the lack of realistic policy options for dealing with that concern preclude substantial weakening of alliance ties. They do not want the United States to withdraw its troops, or its NATO commander-in-chief, from Europe. Experience has shown, after all, that existing arrangements have deterred whatever the Soviets might have done in their absence. Rather few Europeans want to experiment with finding out whether the structure of peace and stability would still stand if this long-established foundation were to be removed. Curiously, there is more talk of that sort on this side of the Atlantic than on the other, no doubt because the stakes for Americans in the European "theater alliance" are, or seem to be, slighter than they are for Europeans.

Most Europeans, I believe, understand and accept the fact that they are living on a "hot tin roof" from which there is no exit that is not more dangerous than the existing situation, uncomfortable as it may be. The peace debate in Germany illustrates this. If the United States should actually take nuclear weapons out of the Federal Republic, or even announce that it would in no case use them first in battle, the Germans would soon notice that they were faced with either the unwelcome costs of a build-up of conventional arms — not impossible but difficult — or a diminution of deterrence against the kind of Soviet threats which gave rise to existing alliance strategy in the first place: threats to Western access to Berlin, for example. U.S. nuclear decoupling from European security, in the form of deemphasizing nuclear options or otherwise, implies an increased emphasis

on planning for conventional war as a preferred policy option. But that, we would soon learn, is also undesired in Western Europe.

The Germans and other Europeans could quiet their conflicting fears if they could persuade themselves that there would be no threat of Soviet attack or pressure whatever they and the Alliance do about weapons, provided the Alliance itself was maintained. But there is no exit for them here either, because reason raises doubts about such a proposition which wishfulness probably cannot overcome, even if, as is most unlikely, the United States would be willing to maintain large forces in Europe in the absence of any plausible plan for their use if necessary in conflict. This leaves the Europeans in a most painful position psychologically, one which is exacerbated by the fact that it is the United States which forces the pace of the debate. They do not like us the better for that, nor for the fact that they habitually acquiesce in our diagnosis of the problem and in our proposed solution even if they are not entirely convinced. Nor do we like them the better for their refusal to accept the obvious as soon as we discern it.

In effect the allies are forced to assign priorities to their multiple fears and to do so not once and for all but over and over again. They have never yet failed to put fear of the Soviet Union ahead of their fear of the proposed American response to it. But the process, repeated at intervals, is not conducive to alliance harmony.

At the bottom of all this is the fact that there can be no perfectly satisfying formula for European security, any more than for American security. As long as nuclear weapons exist, all countries, and certainly all important and centrally located countries, will be exposed to that threat. But if all nuclear weapons should disappear all political tensions would not disappear with them, nor would the prospect of "old-style" wars. World War II was an old-style war which Europeans do not want to see repeated on their soil.

For them, the upshot of these conflicting concerns, all inherent in their situation, is to go along with successive American plans for deterring war by planning and arming for it; to try to mute discussion of such matters, which frightens their own people, even while the United States chooses (at times) to sharpen the tone of a discussion which is supposed to frighten the Soviets; and to resent both U.S. tactics, with which they must go along, and the fact of their own dependence on the United States for guarantees which they cannot live without but find it periodically most uncomfortable to live with.

This is not precisely the picture of a happy marriage or the meeting of true minds. It is, however, the facts of life of the U.S.-West European relationship in face of the Soviet fact of life as widely understood not only

in this country but in Europe too. The best hope we can find in this situation is to remember that each phase of intense debate about strategy and weapons has gone by and that a period of relative calm has followed until the next. But there is little reason to hope that the process itself will be stopped for as long as the allies all have a sense of a Soviet threat and, at the same time, military technology continues relentlessly to reshuffle the cards of the strategic game.

Because a majority of Europeans remains attached to the Alliance — from continued necessity and lack of feasible alternatives as well as from the long habit of its continued effectiveness through very diverse times — and because earlier debates of the present kind have usually reached at least a *modus vivendi* among the allies if not always full agreement, I believe that the current divisions are less life-threatening to the Alliance than might appear. Neither the European majority, including particularly the Germans, nor the United States is likely to let this debate rupture a relationship that nearly all still consider essential to their well-being. However this episode is eventually resolved or gotten by we can expect that it will not be the last of its kind. But neither the issue of deploying intermediate-range nuclear forces, nor similar problems yet to come, nor all the Third World and economic issues I have discussed are quite central to the equation that defines why the Alliance exists and what would be necessary to put an end to it.

The Alliance would cease to exist if the principal allies became convinced that the Soviet threat to their interests had disappeared in Europe. It would disappear also if the leading allies, particularly the United States and the Federal Republic, discovered some better way to deal with that threat: better from the point of view of improved security, smaller costs and/or a net reduction of the psychic tensions the present European system entails (West-West as well as East-West). But nothing now indicates that the allies are ready to dismiss the implications for their well-being of the Soviet presence in central Europe. Had Dubcek or Walesa been successful that might have changed. But they were not. Soviet difficulties in the East are permanent but they do not end the Soviet threat to the West.

Nor does anything suggest that the allies believe they can find arrangements to counter the Soviet threat more satisfactory than the Alliance, with all its costs and strains. There is talk from time to time of a united and heavily armed Western Europe, or some form of German neutralization, or the coming together politically of the countries of Western and Eastern Europe in face of the superpowers, and so forth. It is predictable that people will dream such dreams when they find themselves frustrated or frightened by the exigencies of the status quo. But no way out has been found in many decades of intermittent searching. Little is happening.

anywhere now that is likely to make such dreams real in the foreseeable future.

If this is the case, and if there are no other options, what can we expect the allies to do, including the United States, but put up with and even sustain the system as it is, along with its familiar costs and benefits?

This, of course, presupposes continued rationality on the part of peoples and governments. That cannot be taken for granted. But a breakdown of more or less sensible policy-making in an area in which it has been strongly evident for more than thirty years need not be taken for granted either.

It is precisely in order to make a flight from good sense less attractive that we should learn not to overload the Atlantic agenda with disparate and emotion-laden problems, however important they are in themselves, whose intractability might eventually raise tempers to a point at which governments would no longer find it possible to maintain the irreplaceable core of Alliance cooperation in Europe in face of their people's attitudes and their own exasperated disappointments with each others' behavior.

I do not expect, of course, that the next NATO communique will proclaim that the Alliance had it wrong all these years and the allies will no longer seek to cooperate on matters beyond the core of Alliance solidarity in Europe. They will, of course, continue to cooperate, to the extent that their interests and outlooks make possible, on every problem facing them. But they should also gradually make clear to each other and their peoples, in advance of and during given episodes of policy divergence, that the ability of the Atlantic allies to take care of their essential interests in Europe will *of course* not be impaired by those instances where they are not able to agree in other spheres and places.

The allies have acted as if they believed this for decades even while they denied it in words. It is past time to end this confusion, among policy makers as well as the public. The very gravity of the problems the allies will face in this decade and the depth of their differences with respect to many of these issues make it imperative for them to understand and proclaim that the alliance by which they protect their vital interests in Europe can and must be sheltered from the storms to come.