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US ARMY WAR COLLEGE  
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**THROUGH EUROPEAN EYES:  
NEED NATO STRATEGY BE CHANGED?**

by

**Henry G. Gole**

**1 November 1981**

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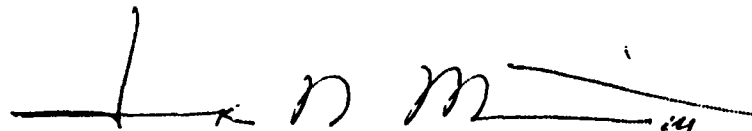
Composition of this memorandum was accomplished by Mrs. Janet C. Smith

## FOREWORD

The author of this memorandum recognizes that differences between the United States and European NATO have characterized the relationship since the founding of the Alliance. He then contends that a long list of recent US initiatives, particularly military initiatives, are so frightening to Europeans that the foundations of the Alliance—cohesion and the appearance of determination—may be undermined. Geopolitical factors influencing their histories and very different current moods cause Europe and America to see NATO differently. He concludes that the Alliance is worth preserving and can be preserved if domestic considerations on both sides of the Atlantic are taken into consideration as NATO looks beyond immediate irritants to longer range mutual advantage.

The Strategic Issues Research Memoranda program of the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, provides a means for timely dissemination of analytical papers which are not constrained by format or conformity with institutional policy. These memoranda are prepared on subjects of current importance in strategic areas related to the authors' professional work.

This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. N. Merritt', with a horizontal line underneath.

JACK N. MERRITT  
Major General, USA  
Commandant

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR**

LIEUTENANT COLONEL HENRY G. GOLE is a Strategic Research Analyst with the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. He is a graduate of Hofstra University and holds master's degrees in education from Hofstra; in history and politics from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University; and in German history from Stanford University. Colonel Gole was the Assistant Army Attache in Bonn from 1973 to 1977, and he subsequently taught European history for three years at the US Military Academy. Colonel Gole's career has also included three previous tours in Germany, two tours in Vietnam, and enlisted service in Korea during the Korean War. He has published numerous articles in *Military Review*, *Army*, *The Marine Corps Gazette* and *The Army Times*.

## SUMMARY

Europeans and Americans have different expectations of NATO. Europe is a small, crowded and diverse continent whose inhabitants have grown accustomed to various bids for hegemony: Spain, France, Germany, and now the Soviet Union have enjoyed periods of dominance. The other states of Europe have attempted to stay out of harm's way, to join together in coalition, or to accommodate temporarily to the conditions dictated by Realpolitik. The smaller states realize that they are corks in a high sea.

The United States starts from a position of relative security simply unattainable for Europe. Weak neighbors, broad oceans, vast space, abundant resources, and a large population produce a unique point of view: the notion that we can fix any problem. If others fail to recognize that, we can walk away from the problem and pout in the security provided by nature.

Differences in geography have influenced the histories of Europe and America and conspire with differences in current moods on the two continents to endanger the Alliance. America has rediscovered defense and leadership; Europe fears another arms race that could lead to conflagration; the moods are on a collision course as America emphasizes military strength while Europe prefers East-West conciliation combined with NATO cohesion and the appearance of determination. The result is American disappointment that Europe isn't doing more for defense and European fear that America will replace detente with a renewal of confrontation politics with the Soviet Union.

The Alliance has served the interests of its member nations long and well. It is in the interest of the West that NATO be preserved, but that requires some adjustments on both sides of the Atlantic. Europe sees NATO strategy as a glass half full and concludes that in this less than perfect world it is acceptable. America sees the glass half empty and is concerned. Europe prefers to see security not as an object to be grabbed, but rather the byproduct of many nonmartial activities. America is more inclined to press for increased military measures, and this frightens Europeans who are increasingly inclined to see the United States and the Soviet Union as two very large bulls in Europe's small china shop.

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The European approach to security may be more a convenient rationale for doing less than an accurate appraisal of the East-West power relationship, but it seems to be the way Europeans understand NATO and deterrence. If NATO is to be preserved, appreciation of the other fellow's domestic pressures is essential.

America does not welcome this report from Europe, but we are not discussing a failed strategy. The United States craves improved military capability while Europe places its emphasis on the appearance of Alliance cohesion and determination. It would be most useful to the Alliance to shift the discussion from doubts about the strategy to modest means of improving capability at acceptable costs. America should not reject the acceptable good in search of an unreachable perfect.

**THROUGH EUROPEAN EYES:  
NEED NATO STRATEGY BE CHANGED?**

Squabbles between the Western European members of NATO and the United States are not a recent development. What is alarming in 1981 is the frequency with which one hears that this time it is different.<sup>1</sup> The more sanguine view, that trans-Atlantic differences are the normal state of affairs, is being drowned out by concern for a new divergence in the way that NATO Europe and the United States see their respective interests. Perhaps, according to the more pessimistic interpretation, differences are so great that they will spell the end of NATO. Whether alarmist or accurate, concern for the demise of NATO—an institution that has served so long, so well—suggests that responsible Americans might attempt to see things through European eyes and take steps to insure the survival of NATO and prove the events of the early 1980's just another rough spot in the road to NATO cooperation.

Strategy, indeed security itself, may not be the most important issue dividing the United States and Europe, though the military is a frequent target of the dissatisfied because uniforms and weapons systems are so visible. Bread and butter economic issues may be the chief stumbling block to a close and continued relationship between

us; economic issues so directly affect our peoples while security concerns are rather abstractions left to high officials hired to worry about such things. Wars and near-war crises attract public attention from time to time, but inflation and unemployment, prices and career opportunities are a part of daily life.

Students of European and American security are asking if the current NATO strategy dating from 1967 is out of step with new realities, and American strategic thinkers seem to be most concerned.<sup>2</sup> The "realities" since 1967 can be reduced to two: increased Soviet military capability has probably altered the "correlation of forces" to Soviet advantage; Western Europe no longer marches to American commands. These two developments influence the way we look at strategy and tell us much about essential differences between Americans and Europeans as they study the same facts and come to different conclusions.

The European challenge is to keep the Americans in Western Europe in order to keep the Russians out, to do enough to placate the Americans but not enough to enrage the Russians. The American strategic task is to maintain peace and stability in Europe while being prepared for contingencies around the world. Clearly the more the Europeans do, the more likely the success of the American strategy. Differences derive from estimates of what is enough and the utility of military and nonmilitary means.

NATO Europe emphasizes the nonmilitary elements of strategy and seems to be generally satisfied that the current strategy is successful in its main purpose. America stresses the military aspect of strategy and is clearly dissatisfied at what it chooses to see as European apathy.<sup>3</sup> It would be too simple and incorrect to attribute differences exclusively to transient moods. An effort needs to be made to understand why Europeans behave the way they do and how the United States might serve its best interests by meeting Europeans halfway. Too often differences on various issues are addressed without taking into account fundamental differences in world view.

## EUROPEANS ARE DIFFERENT

The United States, by its very location, starts from a position of relative security simply unattainable for Europe. Broad oceans and weak neighbors, vast space and abundant resources, a large

population and—perhaps the key to the European-American difference—a unique point of view distinguishes the American world view: the notion that we can disengage from an ungrateful world and its problems at will. We can fix any problem; if others fail to recognize that, we can simply withdraw to our continent and pout in the security provided by nature.

The European experience has produced a very different point of view. Despite the profound influence of Europe in shaping the world we find around us in the 1980's, Europe is a small, crowded, diverse continent dependent upon raw materials not indigenous to it, a collection, in fact, of second-rate powers which, since the devolution of colonial empires, have not yet decided upon a role in the world outside of Europe. Europeans have been bumping into one another for centuries. From time to time various states have made a bid for hegemony: Spain, France, Germany, and since World War II, Russia. The Habsburgs, Bourbons, Napoleon and Hitler are gone, but Switzerland, Italy, and the others are still there, alive and well. Denmark was conquered in 4 hours on a day in April 1940 during the last German bid. Danes lived as well as their conquerors and better than most Europeans during World War II. Copenhagen was hardly damaged.<sup>4</sup> In 1945 the conquerors went away, not as a result of Danish actions but because the Great Powers made it happen. Rotterdam, on the other hand, was the target of terror bombing because the Dutch resisted. There is a lesson in this: the smaller states of Europe are like corks in a heavy sea subject to winds and tides beyond their control.

Over the centuries the options available to the lesser powers of Europe have been three. The most attractive is to stay out of harm's way, a Swiss solution since Napoleon's time and a solution for Sweden during the world wars in this century. Albania has accomplished a miracle: it is invisible. Geography and immediate circumstances dictate the terms of this arrangement. Those states astride the Great North European Plain, which stretches from the Urals to the French Atlantic Coast, have been unable to hide. The unhappy history of Poland can be understood by noting the absence of natural frontiers in the East and West and the presence of powerful neighbors in those directions. The militaristic history of Prussia can be explained by the determination of that kingdom to survive as a great power despite modest means and a geographical reality that continues to locate the two Germanies of

the 1980's between East and West. The lowlands have represented a convenient doorway used by stronger powers with some frequency. Some nations can avoid confrontation, some cannot.

If it is impossible to stay out of harm's way, it is sometimes possible to band together with others to neutralize the strength of a great power bent on extending its influence or frontiers. Coalitions, alliances, and defensive treaties fill the pages of European history. The weak have had to join forces to bring down the powerful France of Napoleon or the powerful Germany of Hitler. Strength external to the continent was often required to restore what came to be known as the balance of power. Britain intervened often over the centuries, generally throwing its weight on the side of a coalition resisting the state attempting to rise above the others. The United States played and is playing a similar role in our century, first against the Germans and now against the Russians.

When unable to avoid danger or to constitute a coalition powerful enough to resist the most recent troublemaker, another alternative is available to the relatively weak: accommodation. The very thought of bowing to another state is odious to Americans, but to Europeans there is often no alternative. On the crowded continent there is a sense of *deja vu* as the personalities change, but the game continues to be played by rules made permanent due to unchanging geopolitical realities. This appreciation of the need to take the world as it is has settled in the bones of Europeans who, since the dissolution of colonial empires, have few illusions about altering the human condition or remaking the world. Their inclination is to adjust rather than to remake. If Americans wish to ignore this lesson Europeans take from their history with a derogatory slogan, accusing Europe of a better red than dead defeatism, so be it, but it seems unwise to set aside the centuries-long evolution of a culture with a shrug of the shoulders—if we truly want to understand Europe.

Sometimes a vignette out of one's personal experience makes a point more effectively than reading a number of books. In the summer of 1973 a young German of modest circumstances showed his new house built in a small Bavarian village to his American friend for whom the house plan had been scratched in dust on the actual building site four years earlier. It is a marvelous house: as solid as a bunker, spacious and up-to-date. The house tour ended in the cellar. The oil tank is twice the size of what one would expect in

an American home; the furnace has a mysterious second compartment. When asked about the second compartment, the unsophisticated German explained in a most matter-of-fact manner without change of expression, "That's a wood furnace for when the bad times come."

Not *if* but ". . . *when* the bad times come." It is difficult to formulate a clearer expression to characterize the essentially different points of view of Europeans and Americans. This scene took place before the energy crisis was visible to any but insiders and specialists. There are simply good times and bad times. One muddles through. One has no control over certain forces; one endures.

Perhaps the difference suggested partially explains an anomaly: how Europe, so close to "the threat," manages to be more dispassionate about it than America, so far from it. Those who live next to the railroad tracks become accustomed to the sound of passing trains; visitors are distracted by the noise. Indignant, even incredulous, American voices have been asking why the United States should be more concerned with European security than Europeans seem to be.<sup>5</sup> The question misses the point on two counts: first, we aren't: we're concerned with US security; second, Europeans are concerned but can't do much more about their security position without risking the transformation of the very natures of their societies. An unkind European might mention that he sleeps about as well in the Soviet shadow as Mexicans and Canadians sleep in the shadow of American power. One accommodates to things that cannot be changed.

All of this bears on how Americans and Europeans think about NATO strategy. Looking at the same words in the NATO documents agreed to by all members, it seems that we draw different conclusions just as one fellow sees the glass half empty and the other sees it half full. Europe sees the glass half full and concludes that the strategy, in this less than perfect world, is not all bad.

With the exceptions of France and the United Kingdom, due to their still-fresh memories of Empire, Western Europe foresees the use of its military force as being limited to the continent and then only when survival itself is threatened. This general appreciation of military power and its use promises to dominate European thought to the end of this century. It is a purely defensive feeling, an

approach suitable to a gentleman in ripe middle age more concerned with the pleasures of life in retirement than with making a great career. It spurns adventure and prefers low risk-taking. It buys locks and pays policemen; it does not take karate lessons or keep loaded pistols near the bed.

This essentially conservative approach to the role of the military in security policy takes into account that there are rascals out there in the world, but it prefers to deal with them primarily by means other than military. It recognizes that a good business deal is not a quick buck realized by establishing one party as a winner and the other a loser; two winners is the object of a truly good business deal. Two winners insure continued business to mutual benefit and congenial long-range relationships. The establishment of ties that profit both parties diminish the attractiveness of any sharp departure from profitable business as usual. Mutual profit does not require affection or even agreement among the parties involved. It tends to relegate to the background anything that might disturb the reason for the relationship: mutual advantage. Further, Europe has also become accustomed to "security on the cheap" by being protected from the outside.<sup>6</sup>

Europe may prefer the United States, but Western Europe wants and needs the USSR and Eastern Europe—as well as other world regions, including North America—for reasons of economics, politics, and security.<sup>7</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn from these observations is that Europe is disinterested in high drama and much prefers a predictable world based upon diverse ties with both those it likes and those it dislikes. Security is not an object to be grabbed, but rather the byproduct of decidedly nonmartial activities, activities so attractive to all concerned that only an actual threat to self-preservation—not a generalized threat based upon "capabilities"—would put business as usual at risk.

It would be in the American interest to recognize this European attitude toward security and to consider it when military policy initiatives are contemplated. Men have been known to leave nagging wives, even beautiful nagging wives. NATO—or something like it—will survive the year 2000 unless its utility is put in question. Only three developments are likely to put into serious question the utility of NATO: the end of a feeling of threat from the East; the general feeling that unreasonable burdens are being

placed upon European NATO by a nagging United States; a US determination that Europe must be left to its own devices as America realigns its strategic interests. All are possible, but the former is less in our control than the latter two. As we deal with Western Europe we must understand that Europe has regularly faced various bids at hegemony resulting in bloody wars over the centuries. The desire in Europe at the end of the 20th century is to avoid bloody war, to attain security by the establishment of various binding ties, even with political adversaries, to blur differences rather than to highlight them, and to negotiate disarmament. A continual state of heightened tension should not be forced upon NATO Europe by the United States if the Alliance is to survive. The European notion that security is based upon something other than the accumulation of guns and tanks needs to be taken into account by US policymakers if Western Europe and the United States are to share in the preservation of a security arrangement.

There are two general appreciations of the current state of the North American connection with Western Europe. One says that we've been there before, that crises have come and gone, that the Alliance remains healthy despite a transient low grade fever. The other says that current problems are different, more serious, deeper rooted and threatening to a relationship that has served European and American interests well for a long time. Regardless of which appreciation proves to be correct, the Alliance doesn't need strains on it that could be avoided. This should mean to America that the attainable good should be preferred to the unattainable perfect, that a less-than-perfect NATO is better than no NATO.

## NATO STRATEGY

A reading of the North Atlantic Treaty reveals that the signatories wanted to keep the Russians out of the NATO area. They still want that. The strategy since 1967 has been to preserve peace and to provide for the security of the area *primarily* by a credible deterrence. Should deterrence fail, NATO will attempt to preserve or restore the integrity and security of the area.

Instead of leaping to military capabilities and counting tanks, guns, and soldiers, let us take a look at some of the nonmilitary considerations in the agreed strategy, those which Europeans stress.

The NATO strategic concept assumes that Soviet policy will continue to be based on:

- Economic means
- Political means
- Propaganda
- Subversion
- Military power

in the order listed.

Warsaw Pact capabilities range from major aggression possibly supported by tactical nuclear and chemical weapons to limited aggression, harassment or blockade of Berlin, covert actions, incursions or infiltrations and actions in peripheral areas outside the NATO area. The more probable actions appear to be those at the lower end of the spectrum, such as creating tension by harassment, or blockading Berlin, or other political bullying on the flanks of Europe. This is clearly an appreciation of Soviet intentions, for Soviet capabilities do not limit options to the lower end of the spectrum. Such an appreciation by Europeans is in part self-serving since it produces a threat at a level commensurate with European willingness to address it. On the other hand, it also attempts to see NATO through Russian eyes.

If the only Soviet concern were NATO, NATO would have cause for even more anxiety than one finds in Europe today. A case could be made that given the choice of Soviet or American problems, a reasonable person would prefer the American problems. Despite overwhelming Soviet military superiority on its Eastern frontier, Soviet leadership is deeply concerned with China. The fragility of the Warsaw Pact in peace must gnaw at the Soviet military planner as he considers his landlines of communication to the West in time of war. Afghanistan provides yet another illustration of a great power finding it very difficult to accomplish a relatively modest political purpose through the use of military force while earning disapproval in world opinion. Ukrainians, Estonians, Muslims, and a host of others are unenthusiastic about central direction from Moscow. Economic problems abound in the very system that regards economics as the first cause in understanding the nature and destiny of man. It must be discouraging to Soviet officials to recognize that despite achievements in space, military preparedness, and great power status, their system faces an array of problems begging for solution.

According to this general estimate of Soviet concerns, NATO appears far less feeble and fractious to Moscow than it might appear in Western capitals. It is one thing to see a project fail or to suffer a setback and quite another to lose one's religion. Communist theology promises true believers that abundant internal contradictions will bring about the collapse of the West. Cracks in the capitalist system have been studied in Moscow dating from the German revolution in 1918 through the Great Depression to contemporary Western European antinuclear movements. They are scrutinized by Communists for signs of the beginning of the end, but we muddle through; the resilience of the West and its ability to manage without central direction probably causes some dismay in the Soviet Union. Despite highly publicized squabbles that are literally routine in the Alliance, the Alliance holds together and a new member waits in the wings.<sup>8</sup> These may be viewed as minor achievements in the West, but it is quite likely that concerned Russians attach more importance to them than we do. This interpretation suggests that NATO strategy is adequate in its first purpose: to deter.

The Soviets see five power centers in the world—the USSR, the USA, Western Europe, China and Japan—and conclude that four of them are anti-Soviet. Such a conviction—and the need for numerous internal security forces, a need foreign to the American mind—might explain the Soviet sense of being surrounded by enemies and a defensive requirement for large armed forces. We see those armed forces as an offensive threat directed at Western Europe.

NATO's current strategic concept and the measures to implement it emphasize the need to demonstrate the cohesion and determination of the Alliance. Certainly in a strategy designed to defend Europe against possible Russian aggression, military means and instruments are important, but Europeans prefer to stress the nonmilitary thrust of the strategy. This is a reflection of the broader European concept of deterrence which contrasts sharply with the American inclination to spring immediately to a discussion of military means, means which are, after all, just one instrument in the statesman's bag of tricks.

Michael Howard, hardly an innocent, says it another way, a way which speaks for many Europeans.

We may accept therefore that there is at present [1979] little in the nature of Soviet society or Soviet political intentions to justify the ringing of alarm bells in the West, the evocation of the militaristic elements in our society, and the conversion of the nations of Western Europe into garrison states. Indeed, to do anything of the kind could easily make the situation more dangerous, rather than less. The Soviet leadership is no more prone than we are ourselves to accept that the military preparations of its neighbors are purely defensive, and to refrain from responding in kind.<sup>9</sup>

But it isn't purely a matter of refusal to transform Western societies into garrison states that affects European strategic thinking. They also see the threat to their well-being differently.

Howard goes on to say:

We [West Europe] are not a prey to be devoured. We are a potential threat which might have to be neutralized, reluctantly and *in extremis*, in full consciousness of all the social, political, as well as military costs involved, and only if all else fails . . . . The attack would be improbable unless the Soviet military could promise rapid success without nuclear escalation, and the alternative appeared to be the disintegration of the Soviet empire.<sup>10</sup>

If Howard is right and if this interpretation of Europe's reading of the NATO documents is correct, the 1967 strategy applies quite well to NATO's situation today and into the 1980's.<sup>11</sup> We seek to deter war. Failing that, our flexible response promises direct defense, deliberate escalation, and general nuclear response.

These were and are appropriate measures designed to make it impossible for the Soviet military to promise Soviet political authorities rapid success without a risk of nuclear escalation. A mistaken estimate of Western intentions could have such frightening consequences that responsible and inherently conservative Soviet officials can be expected to err on the side of caution. Recollections of US willingness to fight in Korea and Vietnam might give pause to Russians considering the use of force in Europe, particularly since their own military couldn't deliver even on the small problem of Afghanistan.

This way of devising means to address a threat is essentially European, an approach that can be called a "minimalist strategy."<sup>12</sup> It emphasizes the appearance of Alliance coherence and determination. The United States certainly takes the appearance of Alliance coherence and determination into account but prefers to emphasize military capability. It underlines the American inclination to leap to military means to solve what

American leaders see as a military problem, an engineering solution to a clouded political problem, a craving for a quick fix.

Few soldiers could be happy with NATO's current strategy, and few American soldiers are happy with the minimalist solution. But military strategy is what soldiers do or plan to do with the means provided by the societies they serve. NATO strategy is specifically designed to handle an admittedly more powerful adversary; it implies risk. Military means are but one element of the total strategy. With the tools provided by our politicians, current NATO strategy recognizes what Bismarck called the art of the possible. While we might prefer the strategy suitable to the sledgehammer we don't have, NATO strategy suits the more modest military tools we have. It says to the Russians: you can't expect a cheap victory; you must go all out; you must expect very serious consequences; you cannot be sure of the outcome. We sometimes forget that current strategy was, after all, an American design as we moved from massive retaliation to flexible response.

Further, for the Russians even a quick victory in Europe isn't winning the war. It only alienates and mobilizes their most dreaded foe, who presumably has just lost a quarter of a million men, has a million American citizens stranded in Europe, and all of its nuclear weapons stationed in Europe in Russian hands—unless they've been fired, an even less attractive prospect considering the likely target. It's not the end of the Russian security problem but only the middle and offers no obvious or inevitable settlement in their long run advantage. An angry and unpredictable America is still out there. An even more suspicious China, if that is possible, is still there. Japan might decide that its honeymoon is over. A drive to the Channel starts a process, the outcome of which is no more certain than it would be before the attack. Marginal Soviet military advantages are unlikely to induce the Warsaw Pact to charge West. Their problem at the Channel is more or less what it was at the Elbe.

This is not to suggest that conventional force levels are unimportant. In time of war the size and effectiveness of NATO's conventional force would certainly influence the timing of decisions that could bear on early defeat or early nuclear escalation. More effective conventional forces provide a degree of flexibility allowing political leaders time to face the possible course to mass destruction. In this connection force levels and force

development bear directly on the efficacy of the strategy, but strategy remains, above all, a political question.

Our current strategy works in its primary purpose, to deter. Its ability to preserve and restore the integrity and security of the NATO area would obviously be improved if its physical military components—conventional, theater nuclear and strategic forces—were stronger. The much-lamented demise of American ascendancy in the strategic balance, the admitted tactical nuclear edge now enjoyed by the Soviet Union, and the longstanding advantage of the Warsaw Pact over NATO in conventional forces are clearly matters of serious concern to the West, but we have strengths. America and Europe do virtually everything better than the USSR—with the exception of maintaining in-being military power. The central question is whether the recognized deficiencies in all three legs of the military strategy cause the total strategy to unravel. That is what must be thought through in connection with the instruments of military strategy, the *what* of that strategy. Related, but something different, is the *how* of the strategy: the concept of flexible response based upon forward defense, reinforcement of the thinly manned forward defense, and the believability of graduated escalation. Simply posed the question is: do we need a new NATO strategy or should we keep the one we have and implement it better—if only in marginal ways? Need we replace the tool or sharpen it?

What is it in NATO strategy that should be changed? To suggest that one rejects deterrence is to express a preference for war. Certainly deterrence has no enemies within the Alliance. Should deterrence fail, NATO declares its intention to defend itself. It would be defeatist to say otherwise. Flexible response forces the aggressor to anticipate resistance at all levels of combat, and graduated escalation means that the aggressor cannot know where it will all end. Perhaps the most frequent target of NATO strategy is forward defense—for good reason. Professional soldiers shudder at the thought of an enemy breakthrough piercing the thin forward shell, rolling up the flanks, and putting the forward defenders in a sack before external reinforcement arrives on the battlefield. Defense in depth and more mobile reserves would be the prudent military means to prevent such a catastrophe, but both depth for maneuver and mobile reserves are denied NATO field commanders whose forces are deployed in the Federal Republic of Germany.

German insistence upon forward defense is understandable. The prospect of attack from the East, withdrawal from the homeland leaving families to Soviet mercy, and counterattack from the Rhine, English Channel or Pyrenees is singularly unattractive to German statesmen and soldiers whose nation provides the very backbone of NATO's ground forces. Is there an alternative to forward defense?<sup>13</sup>

At times it appears that we are analyzing two strategies: the one the Europeans emphasize is the strategy in place before a shot is fired in anger; the other, the one Americans emphasize, plays its role after that shot. Neither denies the other, but emphasis does matter. It matters in a way very unhelpful to the Alliance. Phony distinctions are made and debated: posing the issue as one of deterrence *or* defense (warfighting capability). Somehow a soldier with a rifle becomes a warfighter, and a strategic weapon system, a Polaris for example, becomes a deterrent. Both can fight wars; both deter. Perhaps at root it is the European minimalist approach to NATO strategy that exasperates American leaders and causes them to charge Europe with attempting to get a free ride. Perhaps it is that we wonder why a prosperous Europe cannot provide for its own security 36 years after WW II. Perhaps it is the idea that we are in Europe to protect Europeans from Russians. In any event, these nagging doubts distract us from what is more basic: the European emphasis on the nonmilitary elements of the strategy has never been fully accepted by Americans, and the American emphasis on military means is suspect in a Europe which increasingly regards both Russians and Americans as reckless.

Those most disappointed with NATO are those who expect too much of it, those who feel uncomfortable with anything less than total assurance.<sup>14</sup> They are typically American. Those generally satisfied with NATO are the Europeans, to whom the notion of total assurance is foreign, even laughable given the history of Europe. Here is precisely where the difference in point of view matters. Europeans as well as Americans could sleep better if we had, for example, 12 to 15 more NATO divisions in the Central Region, but Europe realizes that such an increase in allied strength is not going to happen and accepts it. The renewed American interest in defense, and a willingness to pay for it, is not matched in Europe where the preference is for a more relaxed international scene. The mainstream of European public opinion at the

beginning of the 1980's can be summarized as follows: we need the United States; we need NATO; the Soviets represent a threat; we prefer not to station nuclear weapons in our homeland; we choose not to pay more for defense. One might add: we are not interested in adventures around the world, and we are interested in living well now and in our old age.<sup>15</sup>

America does not welcome this report from Europe and doesn't want to live with it, but we are not discussing a failed strategy.<sup>16</sup> We want an improved military capability while Europe is telling us that the appearance of Alliance cohesion and determination makes the current balance acceptable. It would be most useful to the Alliance to shift the discussion from doubts about strategy to means of improving capability at acceptable costs. The strategy serves the Alliance well.

## CONCLUSION

The European minimalist theory of deterrence may be wishful thinking, more a convenient rationale for doing less than an accurate appraisal of the East-West power relationship as seen from Washington, but it seems to be the way Europeans understand NATO and deterrence. If we see things differently, several courses of action are open to us.

- Continue to press Europe to do more for its security in Europe and for "defense of the West" in selected regions around the globe. This seems to be what the Reagan administration will do while beefing up both our military means and our tough guy vocabulary. It will produce an incessant series of nagging debates between the United States and Western Europe on a case-by-case basis within the context of a generally deteriorating NATO. That is, raising contentious issues will insure the continuance of acrimonious debate. Differences will fill the pages of newspapers and periodicals, enjoy coverage on the nightly TV news and generally undermine the appearance of cohesion and determination in the Alliance, all of this at a time when the US prodefense mood promises to collide with European anxieties and fear.

- Withdraw to Fortress America seething with resentment directed at those Europeans who refused to be educated by us and rejected US leadership.

- Reduce our presence in Europe allowing us to address problems outside the NATO area as European NATO takes up the military slack created by a reduced US presence in Europe. This is an exceedingly dangerous option for it could have the appearance of withdrawal under pressure, seeming evidence that the Soviets are prepared to stay the course while we are not. Unfortunately this option is attractive to those who see areas outside of Europe as deserving the main US effort in the 1980's. The psychological reaction almost certain to accompany any drawdown in American forces in Europe could cause irreparable damage there and around the world. It could cause Europe to cross that nebulous line that separates minimalist deterrence from accommodation. One fears that the Soviet Union is well-equipped to exploit such a course of action by calling desertion that which US planners would call a rational reallocation of assets.<sup>17</sup>

- Take into account the European minimalist theory as we proceed in a low-keyed way to improve the West's security stance. Differences should not become subjects of open public policy debates. Improvements in the NATO area will be marginal, but physical improvements on the military side are less important than influencing the mind of the Soviet planner who must be convinced that NATO is a coherent and determined force.

It is likely that we will continue to press Europe to do more while entertaining plans to reduce US forces in Europe. The preferred course of action is to take Europe's minimalist approach into account while working toward modest increases in readiness and sustainability and to avoid public haggling with our allies which undermines the appearance of cohesion and determination in the Alliance. We should follow a strict policy of no surprises by insuring that US initiatives are thoroughly discussed with allies in private, stressing fundamental shared interests served by the initiatives. Differences will certainly arise, but tradeoffs are possible at the highest levels before interest groups on both sides of the Atlantic become involved and complicate already sensitive issues. Planning for the midterm future removes issues from the passion of today. Finally, thorough appreciation of the other fellow's domestic pressures is essential.

## ENDNOTES

1. *Western Security: What Has Changed? What Should Be Done?*, Karl Kaiser, Winston Lord, Thierry de Montbrial, and David Watt, simultaneously published in French by the Institut Francais Des Relations Internationales under the title, *La Securite De L'Occident: Bilan Et Orientations* and in German by the Forschungsinstitut Der Deutschen Gessellschaft Fur Auswartige Politik under the title *Die Sicherheit Des Westens: Neue Dimensionen Und Aufgaben*. The English title is published by the Council on Foreign Relations, Inc., 58 East 68 Street, New York, NY 10021 and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 10 St. James's Square, London SW1Y 4Le, England, pp. 8-9. "To be sure, tensions or even disagreements are scarcely new in the Western Alliance . . . . Nonetheless, the current transatlantic crisis cannot be considered as just one of a series of short-term episodes. It is more far-reaching . . . ." The authors go on to point out that current differences between Europeans and Americans involve all the Europeans and not only the French as was the case in the 1960's, that divergencies bear not on a single issue but on a whole spectrum of issues, and that the amount of public disagreement has contributed to increasing mutual suspicions and misunderstandings. This crisis, they conclude, is worse than others. Indeed, the authors call the current differences in the alliance "formidable" because ". . . a key characteristic of the current international situation is precisely that the West is undergoing a phase of strain and dissension at the very time when it also has to deal with a crisis in the East, crisis in the Third World, and a prolonged economic and energy crisis on a global scale," p. 8. See also *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1981, European-American Relations: "The Enduring Crisis," Josef Joffe, pp. 835-851. Joffe contends that the situation in 1981 ". . . turns the many disputes of the past into minor family squabbles," p. 835.

2. Alexander Haig, while Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, addressed NATO's strategic doctrine in a speech made on October 13, 1976 to the Association of the United States Army. (See *Survival*, January/February 1977, pp. 33-35 for excerpts from text.) He welcomed the concern for a review of NATO strategy, but generally cautioned against precipitous change in NATO's strategy. He stressed deterrence and seemed to be generally sympathetic to European sensitivities and the European view of our common strategy. Part of the misunderstanding might be the word strategy itself. It might be that Americans generally infer "military" strategy from the word while Europeans normally mean "national" or "total" strategy. In any event, Haig seemed to sense the mood of American impatience with Europe in 1976.

3. Concern for European apathy, pacifism, and neutralism and the general state of the Alliance is reflected in a recent outpouring of articles in the popular press and in scholarly journals. A small sample includes: Leslie H. Gelb, "NATO Is Facing Paralysis of Will, Experts Contend," *New York Times*, July 12, 1981, pp. 1 and 14; David S. Broder, "Fading Memories Threaten the West," *The Washington Post*, July 12, 1981, pp. C1 and C5; Irving Kristol, "NATO At a Dead End," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 15, 1981; William Greider, "Let's Tell Our Allies Uncle Sucker Is Dead," *The Washington Post*, July 12, 1981, pp. C1 and C5; Simon Serfaty, "The United States and Europe," *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 1981, pp. 70-86; John Vinocur, "Anti-Americanism in West Germany Appears in Many Guises," *New York Times*, July 12, 1981; Uwe Nerlich, "Change in Europe: A Secular Trend," *Daedalus*, Winter 1981, pp. 71-103; Theodore Draper, "The Western Misalliance," *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 1981, pp. 13-69.

4. Richard Petrow, *The Bitter Years*, New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc., 1974. Petrow reports that the Danish Army lost thirteen dead and twenty-three wounded; twenty Germans were killed or wounded, p. 49.

5. George Ott, "The Case Against NATO," *The Washington Monthly*, December 1980, pp. 34-36. Other voices could be cited, but this one is so shrill that it makes the point in very clear terms.

6. *Western Security*, p. 13.

7. The interruption of normal relations among the states of Central Europe since World War II is often considered a rather permanent fact of political life by Americans. Not so in Europe. Trade patterns, travel, and cultural bonds characterized relations in the center of Europe from time immemorial, and a yearning to resume them exists on both sides of the political dividing line which evolved out of the last European war. These considerations, as well as political expediency, are the foundation of Ostpolitik and detente. See Helmut Schmidt, "A Policy of Reliable Partnership," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1981, pp. 746 and 753-755, for a recent utterance about East-West relations within the context of the Western partnership. See also *Western Security*, p. 23.

Detente policy in general is seen in Europe as having had positive results; while it literally affected millions of Europeans—Germans in particular—detente did not affect the average American and has therefore been generally perceived as a failure.

8. As of the writing of this article, Spain was still in the wings.

9. Michael Howard, "Social Change and the Defense of the West," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Autumn 1979, p. 28.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

11. Bernard P. Kiernan, "The Myth of Peace Through Strength," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 57, No. 2, Spring 1981, pp. 193-209. An impassioned plea for restraint from a different place on the philosophical spectrum, one suspects, is cited below. The general thrust of the new administration's security policies would seem to be the cause of this response.

Faith in peace through strength requires a kind of magical thinking, a tunnel perspective in which our own power deters everyone else, but no one tries to use *their* power to deter *us*.

Our willingness to accept for so long the risks of nuclear escalation, in the search for military superiority, is now bearing the bitter fruit of greatly increased danger of mutual nuclear annihilation, a precarious impasse created by the illusion that we could achieve absolute security only through absolute military power.

12. Ken Booth, "Security Makes Strange Bedfellows: NATO's Problems From a Minimalist Perspective," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies*, December 1975, pp. 3-14. Mr. Booth's essay is perhaps the most lucid statement of the minimalist position. In his conclusion he warns: ". . . there is no doubt that the integrity of the alliance as we have known it has more to fear from the political puritanism and maximalist expectations of some of its supporters than

from any Warsaw Pact blitzkrieg . . . . Despite its problems, NATO can be regarded as not falling far short of an optimum Alliance posture after a long period during which the conditions in which it was created have markedly evolved."

13. *White Paper 1979: The Security of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Development of the Federal Armed Forces*, published by the Federal Minister of Defence on behalf of the Federal Government. The German position is clear and firm: "For the Federal Republic of Germany there can be no alternative to forward defence: in view of her geostrategic situation, her population density near the border to the Warsaw Pact, and the structure of her economy, any conceptual model of defence involving the surrender of territory is unacceptable," p. 126.

14. Booth, p. 3.

15. Any number of polls and public opinion surveys would bear out the conclusion arrived at in the text, but see the following "Briefing Papers" produced by the Office of Research, US International Communications Agency, Washington, DC 20547: "West European Public Opinion Deems NATO Essential But Gives Limited Support to Increased Defense Spending," December 3, 1980; "Many West Europeans Oppose Stationing New Nuclear Missiles on Their Soil," November 6, 1980; "West German Views on Security Issues," November 13, 1980; "Norwegians Inclined Against TNF Modernization, But Strongly Supportive of NATO, in Late 1979 Polls," February 13, 1980; "Italians Predominantly Support NATO . . .," February 5, 1981; "Alliances Study: Widespread Support for NATO Continues Among West European Publics, But Few Favor Greater Defense Spending," May 11, 1981.

16. For a sample of American petulance regarding the European "minimalist" perspective, see: Ott, pp. 34-36 and William Safire, *New York Times*, December 11, 1980, p. A35. For a more understanding appreciation of the European security dilemma, see: Walter Laqueur, *New York Times*, January 27, 1981, p. A19; Walter F. Hahn, "Does NATO Have a Future?," *International Security Review*, Summer 1980, pp. 151-172; Laqueur, "Euro-Neutrality," *Commentary*, June 1980, pp. 21-27; Jeffrey Record, "The Western Alliance, Japan and International Security Threats," in *Rethinking US Security Policy for the 1980s*, National Defense University Press, Fort McNair, Washington, DC, 1980; and Edward A. Kolodziej, "European Perspectives on Europe's Roles in the World: The Partial Partner," also in *Rethinking US Security Policy for the 1980s*.

17. Henry G. Gole, "Siren Call to Disaster: The Emerging Campaign for US Troop Reductions in Europe," *Parameters*, Vol. XI, No. 3, September 1981, pp. 22-30. This article develops the point made in the text.

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considerations on both sides of the Atlantic are taken into consideration as NATO looks beyond immediate irritants to longer range mutual advantage.

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