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THE THREAT, THE CONVENTIONAL BALANCE AND ARMS CONTROL:
THE EMERGING "ALTERNATIVE VIEW" IN EUROPE

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JAN 19 1990
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September 1988

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A
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Distribution Unlimited

P-7488

90 01 16 037

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**THE THREAT, THE CONVENTIONAL BALANCE
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Richard A. Bitzinger

The 1980s has witnessed the emergence of a rather impressive "peace faction" in Western Europe. Although disparate, it has not been without its impact on the European debate over security policy. It has also not been without its own intellectuals, security experts and peace researchers, who in turn have had a growing influence on European politics, significantly in the mainstream social democratic and labor parties. This includes shaping opinions on the Soviet threat, on the conventional balance in Europe and on goals and proposals for conventional arms control, especially now in the wake of an agreement banning all intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF).

This paper will attempt to synthesize the broad spectrum of thought revolving around the conventional balance and conventional arms control in Europe on the part of European peace advocates. It will ask, and attempt to answer, particular questions in this area, according to the selected writings of European peace researchers, activists and political partisans. These include: Whence is the threat to Europe? Is there a "Soviet threat"? What is their assessment of the balance in conventional forces in Europe between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and is it relevant to the issue of the threat to Europe, or does something larger loom? What are their proposals for conventional arms control, and what are the underlying aims? In addition, particular attention will be paid to how peace researchers and "international security analysts" (such as those found in great abundance in places like RAND) differ greatly in their basic perceptions of the international order and in their basic goals and how this, in turn, colors their respective analyses and proposals.

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

A sincere attempt was made to assemble a representative sample of European peace intellectuals, peace activists, alternative security experts, politicians, etc., in order to construct an overall "alternative view" on the conventional balance and conventional arms control. This was not as easy as it was hoped, unfortunately, as most peace researchers have historically tended to pay more attention to the issue of nuclear weapons, particularly



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in the light of the INF uproar. However, it does appear that peace research is increasingly focusing in on conventional arms, and enough information could be gleaned in regards to the nonnuclear forces debate to support a broad analysis, while at the same time certain arguments and policy recommendations made by this faction (such as those concerning the overall threat and arms control proposals) were common enough to both nuclear and conventional issues as to be relevant to this paper.

This paper draws on the work of several European peace research institutes, including the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH) and the International Peace Research Institute at Oslo (PRIO). All of these institutes, which are publicly funded, have undertaken or supported research on nonprovocative or defensive defense and common security. In addition, the *Journal of Peace Research* and the *Journal of Peace Proposals*, both edited at PRIO, are also excellent sources of European peace research and opinion. Finally, this paper also made use of a report by the education fund of the Council for a Livable World, *Defending Europe without Nuclear Weapons*, which summarizes and utilizes the writings of many West Europeans.

The European peace movement contributed Professor E.P. Thompson, a noted British historian and founder of European Nuclear Disarmament (END), a loosely organized, trans-European coordinating group for peace and disarmament groups. He is a nonaligned Marxist, freely critical of both the United States and the Soviet Union. His arguments found in this paper come from his book, *Beyond the Cold War*.

Another source was the book, *Common Security: A Blueprint for Survival*, the findings of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, also called the Palme Commission, after its chairman, the late Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme. Although the commission, like most groups in its category, tended to concentrate on nuclear weapons, it did devote some attention to the issue of conventional forces.

Finally, work done under the auspices of the West German Social Democratic Party (SPD) turned out to be an important source of analysis and policy recommendations. In recent years, the SPD has sprouted several security experts with at least a partially "alternative" point of view--in particular, Egon Bahr, Andreas von Bülow and Karsten Voigt. In addition, the party's think-tank, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, runs its own "Study Group on Security and Disarmament"; an important product of this study group was research on the Soviet threat and the conventional force balance done by Christian Krause, a former brigadier general in the Bundeswehr. Finally, the SPD has embodied some of these alternative views on security and disarmament in two resolutions adopted at

its most recent party congresses: *Preventing War in the Atomic Age: Towards a New Strategy for NATO* (adopted at the 1984 congress in Essen) and *Peace and Security* (adopted at the 1986 congress in Nuremberg). It is important to pay particular attention to developments within the SPD, as other mainstream European leftist parties (for example, the Dutch Labor Party and the Danish Social Democrats) have often taken their doctrinal cue from the SPD--its potential impact on other countries' domestic security policy debates, therefore, should not be underemphasized.

THE THREAT

The Soviet Threat

Much of the "alternative view's" arguments turn on the issue of *threat perception*. Basically, this approach argues that before one can talk about Soviet capacities to attack the West, one must first address the question of whether there exists a genuine Soviet threat. It is essential to make a distinction between capabilities and intentions, as this is fundamental to all further analysis and discussion concerning the conventional balance and conventional arms control.

Therefore, to put it bluntly, is there a Soviet threat? To the average Western defense or international security analyst, this is usually taken as a given; yet this is where the alternative view begins its criticism. It accuses the former of focusing "almost exclusively on military capabilities and rarely bring Soviet intentions into their discussions."¹ Furthermore, when any such discussions do arise, they are almost invariably biased against the Soviets and favor "worst-case" analyses of Soviet intentions that support their assumptions about the balance; as one analyst has put it, "We [the West] impute to the Soviet Union highly coherent and direct hostile purposes that logically justify and politically mobilize stark U.S. reactions."² Soviet intent is defined simply as "expansionism," yet ultimately this "unsophisticated" approach to analyzing Soviet actions and objectives impairs the West's ability to objectively assess the Soviet military threat.³

In terms of an openly aggressive, expansionist Soviet threat with regard to the West, here is where the alternative view immediately and fundamentally parts company with the mainstream international security expert. This school of thought interprets any possible threat as incorporating not only the capability and the capacity to make war but also the resolve to assume the risks of war and the undertaking of concrete measures to prepare for

¹ Perkovich, p. 17.

² Steinbruner, p. 89.

³ Steinbruner, pp. 89-90.

war.⁴ In light of these requirements, therefore, does the Soviet Union even have the intention to threaten? Aside from the capacity to wage war (which will be dealt with in the next section regarding the balance), peace researchers belittle the idea of aggressive intent on the part of the Soviet Union toward the West. They regard alleged Soviet ambitions to either conquer or annex parts of Western Europe as making "little headway either in common sense or history."⁵ For the Soviets to harbor such intentions would mean that they would be willing to risk the unravelling of a postwar environment that they have spent the past 40 years trying to protect and legitimize. Some even go so far as to argue that there is "no historical evidence that the Soviet Union is anything other than a status quo power."⁶

If anything, the Soviets are seen as politically and militarily conservative, defensive and cautious. They are particularly unwilling to risk open, direct confrontation with the United States and the West. During the postwar period, for example, they have generally been reluctant to commit their forces to combat operations, in contrast to the United States, which has in the past 40 years dispatched its troops to Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Lebanon, Grenada, Libya, etc. In addition, while the United States has at several times raised the alert level of its nuclear forces, the Soviets have apparently never done so at any time in their history.⁷ What security interests the Soviets do have is historically focused on their frontier. Ironically, this has meant that the Soviets have mostly directed its military threat or armed forces against its own kind, i.e., other communist countries (e.g., the Peoples Republic of China, in 1969) or its own client states (e.g., Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Afghanistan in 1979, etc.), and the need to use Soviet military leverage in this regard is seen as one of the main reasons why the USSR needs to maintain such large numbers of forces in Eastern Europe.⁸

In particular, this reluctance arises out of the fear that any possible resulting hostilities would have obvious and horrible consequences for Mother Russia and would greatly endanger the survival and perpetuation of the Soviet system, to the obvious detriment of its Communist Party elite. Furthermore, the Russians' historical experience with armed conflict (and here the legacy of World War II looms large in this argument) has made them "twice shy" about war. Therefore, the claim that the Soviets want to forcibly take over the

⁴ Krause, 1983, p 8.

⁵ Clarke, p. 56.

⁶ Clarke, p. 56.

⁷ Perkovich, p. 19.

⁸ Even then, the Soviets have proven to be very cautious in their use of force, with a heavy emphasis on planning, control and a requirement for an overwhelming probability of success before they will commit their forces for aggressive purposes.

world is "without foundation"; in fact, that faction of the communist movement that advocated "world revolution" was effectively stilled by Stalin.⁹

Some have even argued that the Warsaw Pact wants to abandon altogether its current "offensive" strategy of fighting the next European war on Western (as opposed to Eastern) territory, which requires a strong territory-taking capacity. Von Bülow, for example, based on discussions he had with East bloc officials, claims that the Soviets wish to dismantle this capability in favor of "sufficient defensive defense" and that they await only a signal from the West that it is willing to mutually enter into such a defensive arrangement.¹⁰

Any talk of a military threat coming from the Soviet Union, therefore, is generally dispensed with in one of two ways. At best, it is based on perceptions (or, more to the point, *misperceptions*) of a threat, that is, of one side misperceiving the defensive measures being taken by the other side as offensive and reacting in turn by taking actions that are then also misperceived by the other as offensive. As each side feels itself provoked by the supposedly aggressive actions of the other, a cyclical, destabilizing arms race ensues.¹¹ A key point of this argument is that blame for the present situation rests equally on both East and West: the United States and NATO are just as much the villains in this game as are the Soviets and the Warsaw Pact. At worst, the idea of a threat is nothing less than a ploy. In the West, for example, the threat is used to justify high defense budgets and the permanent presence of U.S. troops in Western Europe.¹² Others see an even more sinister purpose: the "threat" is used by the military-industrial complex (the military, the weapons-builders, the government, the politicians, the bureaucrats and the "establishment" media) in both East and West to legitimize and defend their positions; the elites on both sides need to perpetuate the two-camps, black-and-white perceptions of the Cold War in order to preserve their control over large chunks of the economy and the state.¹³ The Cold War, therefore, was the product of "two rival entrepreneurs," and, as Thompson has put it, "the military and the security services and their political servants *need* the Cold War. They have a direct interest in its continuance."¹⁴ The image of an enemy, therefore, serves domestic, rather than foreign, policy.

⁹ Krause, 1983, pp. 12-13.

¹⁰ "SPD Deputies," pp. 1-2.

¹¹ Saperstein, p. 47.

¹² Krause, 1983, pp. 6-7.

¹³ Thompson, pp. 29-30, 114-115, 169-170.

¹⁴ Thompson, p. 169.

The "Real" Threat

If not a Soviet threat, then what *is* threatened? To answer that question, one must first distinguish what is the ultimate end of a particular tendency's security policy. International security analysts generally view the goal of security policy as safeguarding "freedom"--that is, the preservation of Western sovereignty and of the right to practice pluralistic, liberal democracy; it is this, then, that they most often see threatened by the Soviet Union and its system. For peace research analysts, however, while they may certainly have nothing against preserving Western-style freedoms, freedom is not the issue; and, invariably, it is *peace* itself that they hold as sacrosanct. Peace, therefore, is the ultimate aim of security and also what is most vulnerable. The greatest threat to peace, of course, is war: war in general, nuclear war in particular.

Therefore, to paraphrase from the Soviets, if it is peace that is threatened, then whence comes the threat to peace? Not surprisingly, the peace lobby sees both sides--both military alliances, led by their respective superpowers--as the root cause. The threat is basically *systemic*: it is the postwar situation of a bipolar world, dominated by two mutually distrusting and hostile adversaries, who in turn base their security on the logic of nuclear deterrence. The Cold War and the arms race--especially the nuclear arms race but not excluding the conventional balance--are the twin evils of this "deterrence system." Whether based on an internal, reciprocal dynamic of mutual misperceptions and distrust or on a purposeful exploitation of the postwar division into two hostile camps to underpin the power elites of both superpowers, the system is ultimately unstable, because, in their opinion, of the ultimate *illogic* of nuclear deterrence and "mutual assured destruction."¹⁵ They cannot conceive of the idea that mutual survival--let alone the survival of the freedom of the West--depends upon the continuous threat of mutual suicide. In fact, they argue, the more one depends on nuclear weapons, the more likely war, and nuclear war in particular, becomes, with naturally disastrous consequences for peace.¹⁶ It is against the systemic threat, therefore, that the peace faction sets its hat.¹⁷

THE CONVENTIONAL BALANCE IN EUROPE

On the basis of such a foundation as to threat perception, arguments and analysis concerning the conventional force balance make little difference. The state of the balance is

¹⁵ Bahr, p. 33.

¹⁶ Mutz, pp. 3-4.

¹⁷ Herf, p 184.

important only to those who perceive a "genuine" Soviet threat, who then, in turn, analyze the force structure of the Soviet Union through that prism. Holders of the alternative view do not so much see the balance or ratio of forces in Europe as critical as they do the combined overall NATO-Warsaw Pact numbers set against the background of the systemic threat to peace. Hence, this faction spends little time on arguments concerning the balance, except to argue that forces on *both* sides are "much larger than would be necessitated by realistic appraisals of basic security needs."¹⁸

When peace research analysts or alternative security advocates *do* attempt an analysis of the balance in Europe, they are almost invariably at odds with the usual arguments made by international security analysts. They are, for example, extremely critical of any quantitative or static approach to assessing the balance ("bean-counting"). For one thing, bean-counting is regarded as both inaccurate and often contradictory. "[Q]uantitative comparisons of military forces," argues Krause, is full of "methodological flaws," being usually based on worst-case scenarios, downplaying NATO capabilities (e.g., leaving out French forces or West German reserves) and exaggerating Eastern strengths (e.g., ignoring the fact that while the Warsaw Pact may have more divisions, they are generally weaker individually than NATO divisions).¹⁹ In addition, it has been pointed out that estimates made in regards to the NATO-Warsaw Pact conventional balance by NATO and various Western defense agencies and research institutes--such as the NATO *Force Comparisons*, the International Institute for Strategic Studies' *Military Balance*, the Defense Department's *Soviet Military Power* and the U.K. Defense *White Paper*--are often at odds with each other, providing conflicting quantitative data.²⁰ In one study of these four documents, the assessment of the Warsaw Pact advantage over NATO in just one area of weaponry--main battle tanks--was found to range from 1.6:1 to 3.3:1. In addition, estimates of East bloc manpower under arms ranged from 2.7 million to over 4 million, while calculations of Warsaw Pact division equivalents (EDs) varied from 113 EDs to 133 EDs.²¹ The estimates of the combat aircraft balance in Europe and of the NATO-Warsaw Pact naval balance reflect similiarly wide disparities. Some even belittle the Western notion of a Warsaw Pact "tank superiority." According to Krause, a former West German army general, the overwhelming number of Soviet tanks is simply a reflection of a wholly different approach to the mix in military forces--to the Soviets' detriment; the heavy dependence on tanks and

¹⁸ Palme, p. 145.

¹⁹ Krause, 1983, p. 7.

²⁰ Clarke, pp. 20-22; Krause, 1982, pp. 7-11; Voigt, pp. 3-10.

²¹ Voigt, pp. 3-10.

the corresponding lack of support and service troops makes for little flexibility (and hence a good deal of vulnerability) on the part of these "one-way" forces.²² In contrast, "[i]t's not the [West's] inability to produce more tanks, or to increase the number of tanks in the units, it's just a different tactical concept. It seems misleading, therefore, if reference is made to a great 'superiority' in tanks on the part of the East."²³

Finally, peace researchers tend to make the same argument about static assessments of the balance that many international security analysts do: that bean-counting does not take into account qualitative or "operational" factors. This includes the particular force structure needs of each front (central, northern and southern) as geared to their specific missions; the *quality of forces, their training and their weaponry; preparedness; troop morale and individual initiative*; and geography, terrain, weather, environment, etc.²⁴ In sum, therefore, even if one can determine a simple Warsaw Pact superiority in a static assessment of the conventional balance, this cannot necessarily be translated into an overall operational superiority. Indeed, some even see a slight NATO edge.²⁵ Interestingly, some peace research analysis refused to assess the static balance at all and instead simply reiterated the force evaluations that each side puts out for its particular alliance.²⁶

Moving on to a qualitative/operational evaluation of the conventional balance, the alternative approach still sees no Soviet superiority. In fact, its adherents argue that there is either a "rough parity" in NATO-Warsaw Pact forces or else a distinct Western qualitative edge. If anything, the West is seen as more than capable of defending against a Soviet attack, even without nuclear weapons.²⁷ According to Erwin Horn, another SPD security expert, the Warsaw Pact would need anywhere from 14 to 90 days to prepare for an invasion, requiring extensive, highly visible mobilization efforts and military preparations, which would make a surprise attack "impossible."²⁸ In addition, the Soviets would also require greatly superior forces (both numerically and qualitatively) and reliable allies, neither of which, it is felt, is by any means guaranteed. At the same time, NATO is seen to have enough conventional arms "to form a solid defensive front from the Baltic to the Alps"

²² Krause, 1982, pp. 11-13.

²³ Krause, 1982, p. 13.

²⁴ Voigt, pp. 14-16; Palme, pp. 25, 27, 108-109.

²⁵ Krause, 1982, p. 16.

²⁶ For example, the Palme Commission report specifically avoided endorsing data on the East-West conventional balance it reprinted from both Western and Soviet sources. (See chart published in Palme, p. 26; *note disclaimer at the bottom.*)

²⁷ See Perkovich; Krause, 1982.

²⁸ "SPD Deputies," pp. 1-2; see also Krause, 1983, pp. 13-14.

and "to hold sufficient operational reserves in combat readiness."²⁹ Both Von Bülow and Horn regard NATO air, sea and even land forces as currently superior to those of the Warsaw Pact, and Horn goes so far as to argue that NATO possesses an antitank capability effective enough to stop not only the Soviets' first strategic echelon but also its second.³⁰ Furthermore, the West is seen to possess the ability to "paralyze" Eastern transportation, thus limiting Pact reinforcement of the front, and to control the high seas. Finally, the United States and the West encircle the USSR with a network of alliances, controlling sea-lanes, global trade and a large proportion of the world's raw materials.

The upshot of this analysis is that, all in all, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact do not possess the capacity, either quantitatively or qualitatively judged, to launch an offensive against the West. Besides deflating the threat in Soviet foreign and military policy, peace research analysts argue that an overwhelming invasion capability is simply not present in Pact military forces, and the Soviets cannot be totally assured that a victory is possible. Therefore, in the eyes of the alternative view, the concept of a Soviet threat, in regards to both intent and capacity, is irrelevant to security policy.

CONVENTIONAL ARMS CONTROL AND "COMMON SECURITY"

It should be evident by now that the peace faction in Europe clearly embraces views on security policy far removed from those held by most international security analysts. Obviously, the perceptions of the former as to any possible threat arising out of the Soviet Union and as to the conventional balance in Europe are greatly at odds with those of the latter. It should come as no surprise, then, that their objectives for arms control, and for conventional arms control in particular, should also differ quite widely. If the highest goal of this faction is not so much to secure freedom and the continued sovereignty of the Western democracies and to lessen the "Soviet threat" but to protect and strengthen international peace and stability, then its proposals for arms control are going to be put forth with this in mind. Concerns about the Soviet threat or the Warsaw Pact advantage in conventional forces are regarded as either irrelevant to the overriding concern for peace or else are seen as only symptoms of a greater, i.e., systemic, disease--the disease of the "deterrence system." The answer, according to adherents of the alternative view, lies in something they call "common security."

²⁹ Krause, 1983. pp. 10-11.

³⁰ "SPD Deputies," pp. 1-2.

Common security (often also called a "security partnership") basically constitutes a broad program of mutual interdependence and institutionalized cooperation on the part of the two military alliances in order to safeguard peace and stability in Europe.³¹ Essentially, it consists first of a mutual recognition of "common responsibilities" for ensuring the harmony and security of Europe; both sides must realize that they have a shared perception of the fragility of peace and a common goal in preserving that peace that transcends any distrust they may have of each other. The threat of war and its potentially catastrophic results demands common security; and peace and security, therefore, have become a global problem. Next, it entails a willingness, arising out of this recognition of common interest, to work together to find solutions that meet this aim of strengthening peace and stability. According to Bahr, both East and West must strive for "security *together with*, and not *against*, a potential enemy."³² The two alliances must initiate a "second phase of detente," committed to closer relations between the superpowers and a desire to cooperate for their mutual security. Finally, the process, without necessarily dismantling the blocs, must "demilitarize the rivalry" between the United States and the USSR and between NATO and the Warsaw Pact:

Without cancelling other prevailing differences, ideological concepts and contrary political and social systems, common security allows security to be organized jointly with the opposite party. To that extent, the doctrine of common security is the *military component of detente*.³³

This entails, for one, the recognition of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states in Europe, as well as a mutual respect for the security interests of each side.³⁴ This means, again according to Bahr, that "ideological differences and the enforcement of one's own values--including human rights and the claim to self-determination of people--all have to take a back seat."³⁵ It also requires a number of concrete, cooperative measures that would both safeguard and strengthen international peace and stability and reduce mutual misperceptions, including:

- Continued and expanded negotiations on arms control and disarmament, resulting in a dramatic decrease in nuclear weapons stockpiles

³¹ Bahr, pp. 31-35; Palme, pp. 138-176, 1982-183; SPD, 1984, p. 2; SPD, 1986, pp. 4-6, 9; SPD, 1986: Annex, "Policy for peace," p. 1.

³² Bahr, p. 31.

³³ Bahr, p. 34, emphasis added.

³⁴ SPD, 1986: Annex, "Policy for peace," p. 1.

³⁵ Bahr, p. 32.

- The undertaking of confidence-building measures
- The establishment of "zones of peace"
- The strengthening of the power of the United Nations in mediating international relations
- Increased East-West trade
- Cooperative efforts to stem nuclear proliferation
- The adoption of "nonprovocative defense" strategies

Of all of these measures, nonprovocative defense (also called "defensive," "nonoffensive" or "alternative" defense) is perhaps the most relevant to conventional arms control. The initiation of such a defense policy is largely two-pronged. First, it necessitates substantial reductions in the numbers of both troops and weapons. The Palme Commission, for example, recommended that "[p]arity in conventional forces in Europe should be established at lower levels," a call later echoed by the SPD.³⁶ The recommendations made at the time generally followed along the lines of the MBFR consensus of common collective ceilings of 900,000 troops and a subceiling of 700,000 ground forces, with a prohibition on any single nation having at its disposal more than 50 percent of total force strength--all of which, incidentally, has largely been passed by with the new "Atlantic-to-the-Urals" mandate.

More important, nonprovocative defense calls for a radical restructuring of forces so as to make them incapable of mounting "offensive" operations.³⁷ The emphasis would still be on border-area defense against surprise attack but based on "true" forward defense; naturally, such a defense strategy would have to provide a clearly *effective* and *sufficient* conventional defense capability, both to deter and to defeat any aggressor. This would include:

- A shift in priorities away from heavy armor-based, e.g., tank, defenses in favor of antitank and antiair defenses (such as precision-guided munitions, passive barriers, mines, surface-to-air missiles, air defense guns, etc.) that do not have a "territory-taking" capability.
- A corresponding reduction in or elimination of heavy armored divisions, tanks and other "offensive" weapons.

³⁶ Palme, p. 144; SPD, 1984, p. 4; SPD, 1986, p. 14.

³⁷ Saperstein, p. 48; Møller, pp. 61-62; Voigt, pp. 28-29; Palme, pp. 147-151; SPD, 1984, p. 3; SPD, 1986, pp. 8, 14.

- A tactical emphasis on containment capability--the restraining, as opposed to the repelling, of invading forces; this implies a shift to a defense-in-depth as opposed to current "forward defense" strategy.
- An outright rejection of any capabilities that may be construed as offensive, especially "deep-strike," AirLand Battle and Follow-On Forces-Attack (FOFA) strategies.
- The "skeletonizing" of active forces in exchange for a greater reliance on mobilizable reserves.
- A shift to a *nonnuclear* defense of Europe, most likely coupled with a no-first-use policy or even a nuclear- and chemical-weapons-free corridor in Central Europe (as recommended by the Palme Commission).³⁸

The upshot of this new defense posture would be to free both sides of any aggressive or provocative misperceptions on the part of the other and to demonstrate the "truly defensive" nature of each alliance's security policy.³⁹ In addition, such a posture, it is argued, would enhance military and political stability and "aid crisis management by political means" (presumably by reducing fears of possible military action during times of East-West tensions).⁴⁰

Interestingly, while advocates of nonprovocative defense naturally call for bilateral East-West arms control efforts to arrive at this new force structure, many are not averse to unilateral initiatives (presumably on the part of the West), so long as they do not undermine the maintenance of a credible conventional defense of Western Europe and if they may enhance the nonprovocative nature of defense, thus enhancing stability and prodding the other side to take similar measures.⁴¹ Even "partial asymmetries" are acceptable, so long as an "overall parity" still exists and overall defensive capacities are not hindered.⁴²

Ultimately, common security is both a program and a notion. On the one hand, it constitutes a set of policies, initiatives and measures designed to reduce the chances of war, by making offensive military operations all but impossible. On the other hand, it also embraces the desire to fundamentally change the way in which international relations are

³⁸ Although it is never made clear how this defensive structure would tie in with the U.S. strategic nuclear arsenal, providing NATO remains intact. It can be inferred by the peace lobby's general nuclear allergy that it would desire a totally nonnuclear defense, but there are some who seem to desire the continued extension of the U.S. nuclear umbrella as the final guarantor of Western Europe's defense (see Egon Bahr's comments in Palme, pp. 182-3).

³⁹ Saperstein, pp. 47-48; SPD, 1986, pp. 6, 16-19.

⁴⁰ Voigt, pp. 18, 20; SPD, 1986, p. 16.

⁴¹ Saperstein, p. 47; Voigt, pp. 22-23.

⁴² See reference to Bahr, in Herf, pp. 198-199; SPD, 1984, p. 4.

currently conducted. In place of the Cold War and deterrence strategy, they want eventually to erect a new global value system, and in the final analysis, common security seeks nothing less than the creation of a new world order in international affairs, based on commonly held goals of peace and stability, on the recognition of global interdependence and on a new regime of military detente coupled with a reinvigorated process of political detente.

CONCLUSIONS

With regards to the differences between peace intellectuals/researchers and international security analysts, it is apparent that where one stands on the conventional balance and conventional arms control depends on where one sits in relations to threat perception. The former see no great threat to the West arising from the East because they see no clearly proven Soviet intent. With regards to evaluating the conventional balance, they either see no Soviet military superiority or (more likely) dismiss the entire argument as irrelevant. Rather, the threat lies in the system of Cold War politics and the arms race that has developed out of the postwar separation of the world into two hostile camps and that endangers the global priority of international peace and stability. Therefore, it is not the ratio of forces arrayed in Europe across the inner-German border, or any possible Warsaw Pact superiority in certain categories of weapons, but the total, overwhelming quantity and structure of these combined forces--deemed to be much more than is necessarily for sufficient defense--set against the systemic background of nuclear deterrence, that is destabilizing to security. And it is against this "threat," against the possible outbreak of war on the part of mutually distrustful, overly armed competitors, that would only have disastrous consequences for the "innocents" of Europe, therefore, that their process for arms control, based on common security and nonprovocative defense, is directed.

This paper has attempted to lay out, as completely and as objectively as possible, the broad range of thought on the part of this "alternative view" concerning "the threat," the conventional balance and conventional arms control in Western Europe. It certainly does not intend to be an endorsement of these views. For one thing, there is a grave risk attendant with the kind of "threat deflation" practiced here. Even most international security analysts, for instance, would agree that the Soviets will probably not invade the West anytime in the near future. At the same time, however, it could be foolhardy to totally discount any aggressive intent on the part of the Soviets. The USSR has not hesitated in the past to use or threaten to use its military power, and intentions can (and often do)

change. Furthermore, to argue that nuclear weapons have somehow caused the Cold War, rather than recognizing that nuclear weapons are mainly a symptom of East-West distrust, is to turn history on its head. Yet these points are fundamental to all subsequent alternative arguments regarding the conventional balance and to their initiatives for conventional arms control.

It is difficult to predict how much of an impact these ideas may eventually have on European and Western security policy. Certainly they are out of step with current NATO defense strategy. At the same time, however, they are embraced by a sizable constituency in Western Europe, especially within much of the West European (and even American) intelligentsia. Many mainstream social democratic and labor parties have articulated security policies revolving around nonprovocative defense and common security concepts. Here, the SPD can play a particularly pivotal role, as it wields a good deal of influence not only inside Germany but also within the European social democratic movement. Finally, such concepts as no-first-use policy, nuclear-weapons-free zones and alternatives to flexible response and forward defense have begun to be picked up and explored by more "mainstream" security analysts and advocates. However shaken by the collapse of the peace movement and electoral setbacks for European socialist parties, therefore, these are ideas that do not promise to go away anytime soon.

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