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July 1974

P-5262

The Rand Paper Series

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Santa Monica, California 90406

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From its beginnings in the early 1950s, the Atlantic Alliance has shown a sound core and a persistent malaise. The U.S.-West European defense relationship reflects this duality of essential soundness and troublesome relations.

SOUND CORE

The sound core consists of the common need, which has been felt in the United States as much as in the other countries of the North Atlantic area through the years, to create a steady military counterweight to Soviet power, and thus to preserve the regional peace in accordance with the structure of power that had emerged from World War II. However much the various alliance partners desired to introduce elements of cooperation across the East-West divide into this structure of power, and succeeded in that to some degree and for a time, they continued to realize that the joint military counterweight was indispensable to their security. Like wars, *détentes* do end. Therefore none of them has denounced the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT), the West European governments have not seriously looked for, let alone found, a substitute in the form of a purely European mutual assistance system, and the United States has never seriously considered detaching its security concerns and the reach of its power from Europe. Such alternatives with their well-known catchwords of "Independent Power Europe," "Fortress America," "*renversement des alliances*" have remained playthings of the political imagination and debates that are natural to pluralistic societies. The Soviets have labored persistently against the establishment of this joint Western counterweight and have sought

* This paper was prepared for publication in the September/October issue of NATO Review.

to erode it, but they do not deny its efficacy. In the words of a Soviet observer, "The attitudes of the United States and her North Atlantic partners are very close on the central problem of war and peace in Europe. War in Europe would immediately bring about the participation of the United States. . . ."* The sound core of the Atlantic Alliance is that it is an accepted pillar of the power structure on which the peace rests. Remove it, and you must expect a new violent conflagration of World War dimension.

SOURCE OF PERSISTENT MALAISE

The persistent malaise of the alliance results from the unresolvable contradiction between the unity requirements of the security bond and the political separateness (different interest configurations) of the states that it is supposed to hold together. To be effective as a peace preserver (deterrent) in the face of the display of Soviet military might in Central Europe and on Europe's flanks, and in order to tie the two anchor states of the alliance, the United States and West Germany, firmly into this joint pursuit, the alliance was given "peacetime presence" (NATO) in the form of an integrated military command structure and coordinated combat-ready forces of different nationalities, notably in the area of Germany, something which historical alliances used to accomplish only in times of war. The great importance of this peacetime structure for the security and internal balance of Western Europe and the Atlantic group as a whole established a powerful presumption that the group should behave as a unit not only in dealings with the Soviet Union but in world politics, international finance, etc., virtually the whole range of government responsibilities. To be sure this presumption was not codified in the NAT, but its force showed time and again as individual countries laid claim to the alliance solidarity of others when faced with difficult military (overseas war), political and financial problems that transcended the regional military

* N. N. Inozemtsev, "International Relations in Europe in the 1970s," in Europe 1980: The Future of Intra-European Relations (papers of the 1972 Varna Conference), Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales, Geneva, 1972, pp. 123-124.

tasks of NATO, and as the other countries responded with counterclaims on the "demandeur," again in the name of a broadly perceived alliance solidarity. In effect, the peacetime presence of NATO tended to make peacetime policy solidarity, a kind of functionally unlimited unity, a measuring rod of alliance performance.

But as sovereign states, the partners are not organized to live up to this standard. Not only do they pursue separate and not necessarily harmonious interests outside the area, even vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, or in commerce and finance, but within the area itself, and even in matters closely linked to the "alliance with peacetime presence" such as defense budgets, arms procurement, logistics, foreign troop stationing on allied soil, military assistance to third parties, each government follows its own nose and is lastly its own judge. However much this pattern of individuality and "going it alone" is overlaid with bureaucratic and consultation processes in NATO or various sub or fringe groupings and "communities," bilateral and multilateral, and however much the sovereignty of the national states is put in question by the impotence of these states in resolving the problems facing them, this national pattern of policy responsibility remains a basic political fact. After all, the national electorate, or whatever other domestic force it is that puts men into and out of government, determines who makes policy in each of the fifteen capitals.

Unity requirements and presumptions have lain in conflict with political separateness since the birth of the alliance, and that conflict has seen to it that the value of the alliance to the partners and to European and wider political stability, i.e., the sound core, has often been lost from sight. The conflict has run along several fissure lines, some in a geographic others in a functional dimension, therefore overlapping but each marked by particular issues. The U.S.-West European defense relationship, which is vital to the core of the alliance, has been the focus of much of this conflict, but it would be a gross oversimplification to attribute the contradictions to a single fissure line that runs through the Atlantic. The contradictions between unity and separateness appear in the purely European as well as in the Atlantic dimension. Organic political union, the relegation of states to provinces

of a superstate, has escaped the Atlantic group as well as the European subgroup, and in my opinion will continue to do so. For better or for worse, the allies in either frame will not benefit (suffer) from the political homogenization which the communist countries of Eastern Europe have achieved, thanks to Moscow's hold on the ruling communist parties. The Western Alliance is pluralistic, therefore more quarrelsome -- and perhaps in the end more vital than the Moscovite one. But that remains to be proven.

FISSURE LINES

The first fissure line, the most strictly U.S.-European, divides the great power of the Western hemisphere from the middle and small powers of Western Europe.* Co-located in the traditional crossroads of the world, as the metropolitan centers of former national empires, and as foci of worldwide economic activity, the European states have of course worldwide interests; but their security interests and political-military ambitions and capabilities are essentially European-regional. Those of the United States are not similarly confined, neither to North America nor to Europe. This matters in relations with Asia, the Middle East, etc. and in relations with the Soviet Union which from the American point of view is no more "European" than the United States itself. The Atlantic Alliance is not structured to reflect this important hierarchical difference -- the United States is a "member," like Luxembourg -- and the governments recoil from accepting its implications. Everyone understands, of course, that the great power USA is protecting Western Europe, center and flanks, but Europeans wish to see this protection exercised as if it were European self-protection, no more and no less, while Americans wish to see it exercised as a frame, or a reinsurance system, within which Europeans themselves create an efficacious military protection of their national territories, which are after all not American. On

*This discussion will not deal with the U.S.-Canadian and Canadian-European alliance relationships.

the other hand, Americans expect from Europeans a measure of alliance discipline in geopolitical conflicts, notably in the vicinity of Europe, "in Europe's own interest," while Europeans tend to distinguish sharply between American and European security which they expect the United States to underwrite simply because it is "in America's own interest."

Finally, some West Europeans talk about expanding the efforts of European unification, or inter-state concertation, so as to develop a European defense community. Is this to even out the hierarchical differences (and if so, is it compatible with continued U.S. protection), or is it merely to establish a "buy European" principle for purposes of arms procurement (and if so, will it help or hinder the efforts to standardize armaments in NATO)?

These conflicting assumptions flow from the unrecognized, and in the absence of Atlantic union unavoidable, power hierarchy in the Atlantic defense relationship. They have produced, and continue to produce, disagreements and malaise about American nuclear strategy and commitments, the size of American ground force contingents in Europe, European conventional defense capabilities, defense in depth and military manpower, European assistance (diplomatic and military-logistic) to American pursuits outside Europe, conduct of relations with the Soviet Union ("peace structure" vs. "collusion"), and many other matters. Quarrels heat up or simmer, occasionally fueled by shows of arrogance from one side and impertinence from the other. They will probably not go away, because the unequal partners want neither marriage nor divorce, and because each likes to posture in different roles.

It should be noted in passing that this power-hierarchical fissure extends into Western Europe itself. Europe's nuclear powers, notably France, and its larger military powers, find their attitudes (protection, "leadership") questioned by nonnuclear or smaller European allies, and the sufficiency of the military dispositions of the latter is questioned by the first. Excessive hiding-behind-the-protective-screen-of-allies is not only an American reproach addressed to Europeans, but also a European reproach addressed to other Europeans; and when made

in the latter context, e.g. by Germany to France, the reproach may be accompanied by praise for the more genuine "forward" commitment of the Americans.

Another characteristic fissure line in this alliance-with-peacetime-presence runs even less exclusively between the U.S. and Europe. It concerns the characteristics of partners' defense efforts. If the alliance had no such "presence," this would be strictly a matter within each ally's jurisdiction and the others could simply decide whether they want to bear security commitments for an allied state that does not choose to defend itself as well as, say, a neutral country next door. But in this alliance, partners function as each others' judges. This is healthy but would be even healthier if they subscribed to a reasonable common standard of appropriate contribution to the alliance's counterweight role. Such a standard should allow for a division of functions among the allies in relation to their geographic location and special capabilities, as well as for indivisibilities, and it should be oriented at the military capabilities of the opponent against whom the joint counterweight is supposed to be made effective.

In fact, however much the strength of the opponent and the need for jointness of the counterweight are articulated by alliance officials, national governments tend to compare their defense efforts with those of their allies, and that largely in fiscal terms (percentage of a defense budget in GNP), which might be appropriate to, say, a federal state. If that percentage resembles, does not fall too much short of, or can be "fattened" to exceed that of others, the defense effort is judged to be adequate -- at least at home. Others may disagree and there is debate, but it is more of a debate about fiscality than adequacy; and the debate is apt to be constrained further by the metaphysics of "agreed strategy"; for that body of doctrine -- with its characteristic features of "forward defense," "graduated response" and variable notions of what is "shield" and what "sword" -- is more oriented to interallied relations than to the contest with the adversary. This fissure then runs between the alliance and its job. The malaise which it provokes is not so much acrimony among the allies as a feeling on everyone's part that the alliance plays up to the wrong audience.

In the U.S.-European dimension, this malaise about sufficiency and equity comes under the head of "burden sharing" and hovers over balance of payments besides fiscal matters. The Europeans should alleviate the burdens of the Americans; the Americans should not ask for money, arms purchases, etc. to do their proper share. What are these burdens, what is this share, and what can be done about them? These matters are terribly confused and unavoidably so. Controversy over them boils up periodically, straining the relations, and even causing talk of disengagement; it is fudged over periodically in bilateral and multilateral agreements, which involve a good deal of juggling of accounts; and it is bound to boil up again. Negotiators may wish that the matter be simply dropped, but the indivisibilities of "peacetime presence," and the interacting domestic politics of the parties that are tied together by it, do not permit this kind of relief. Again, this problem extends into Europe proper. Just as it is impossible to settle on criteria for the cost which the United States incurs with its military commitments to Western Europe and for the sharing of those costs, so it is impossible to agree on how NATO partners should be compensated for the protective moat they create for France through their deployment in Germany, or how Germany should be compensated for its "offset" payments to Britain and USA which benefit other Europeans.

We cannot examine here in detail other foci of alliance malaise. What kind of European separateness from the United States (or "identity") supports or saps the alliance? How should "détente" with the Soviet Union, in recent years a major preoccupation of alliance members, be managed? Does the head count of the U.S. troops stationed in Germany measure the U.S. share, or is it the worldwide display of U.S. power that does? Is that number critical for the alliance's counterweight, or is not European military manpower so much larger? Is one member's promise to consult with the Soviet government before going to war a breach of alliance? Is another member's exchange of renunciation-of-force pledges with the Soviets a step toward "neutralization"? What indeed is admissible conduct for partners whose demand for ever-present

alliance solidarity is overmatched by their preference or need for sovereign, independent undertakings?

All these irritating issues are not limited to the relationship between the United States and the European partners. They appear within Europe itself. Perhaps they would be even more evident there if occasional "confrontation" with the transatlantic protector did not deflect attention from them. They have been kept by what we called the sound core from exploding the alliance; but they have undeniably also eroded the core, made it vulnerable.

WHAT WILL PREVAIL?

Reaffirmation of the sound core or progressive erosion of the alliance? This question has been asked many times and answered variably by optimistic and pessimistic prognosticators. There is no purpose in trying to strike another balance of hopes and fears. We would rather point to what appears to be a necessary condition for the alliance's survival as a counterweight, and one that is easily overlooked.

Often enough, the allied governments affirm and reaffirm their togetherness in common declarations, consultations, and compromises on policies. These efforts are not to be gainsaid. They come natural to the governmental bureaucracies which have accustomed themselves to handling alliance problems in this way.* But for this play of diplomatic smoothing and mending to contribute to the alliance's health it is necessary that the several governments manage to keep their own houses in order, their powers legitimate, and their defense efforts sensible. All too often, they make demands on the alliance (i.e., their allies) as they despair in and flee from the exercise of these national responsibilities. This does not result as much from the cussedness of politicians as from the fact that so many of their problems do indeed require international measures, in other words, that larger political frameworks, "unions" of some kind, appear prerequisite to orderly government within the nations. But such political unions are not really available. The evident interdependence of 20th Century national societies is not matched by a capacity of national political systems to merge and amalgamate. Thus national governments remain condemned to having to keep

*The reader is referred to the fine observations on consultation experience in Manlio Brosio, "Consultation and the Atlantic Alliance," Survival, May-June 1974, pp. 115 ff.

their houses in order although they cannot really control what goes on in them. The security of their countries depends more on their actions at home than on the travels and conferences of officials and the volume of their consultations.

It may well be said that what ails the Atlantic Alliance are not so much international malfunctions as domestic malfunctions of government, on both the European and the American side. From this point of view one should reckon among the most hopeful of recent European political developments the tendency in at least two of the principal governments to concentrate attention on the reining in of inflation and other domestic disorders, and to turn away from posturing on the theater of international politics. International concertation is important in this connection, too, but domestic action is critical.

How does domestic disorder, whether expressed in inflation, anarchy, caesarism, or other things, affect the defense relationship? In many more ways than by financial frictions in NATO, erosion of national defense budgets, animosity among member nations. Domestic disorder is turning people's concern with security away from protection against foreign adversaries and toward protection against expropriation, terrorism, and oppression at home. A protective alliance against a foreign adversary, particularly as intensive an alliance as NATO, cannot for long survive this replacement of awareness of an external threat to the national body by preoccupation with economic, social, "environmental" insecurity, and other internal threats to the nation. Governments may try to refocus attention on the former, spend money on military hardware, conscript citizens, etc. But their endeavors will be undercut by the domestic disorders, and appeasement of the foreign adversary may come to appear more promising than creating a counterweight to his power.

In 25 years, the sound core of the Atlantic defense relationship has prevailed over a lot of alliance malaise. But it may become irrelevant if the partner governments cannot, by their performance, convince their own people that there is something worth defending. Failure of the liberal order in the Western countries today threatens their security more fundamentally than do their differences over diplomacy, alliance strategy, and national defense efforts.