

**NATO AND EXTENDED DETERRENCE:
OLD CONSTANTS – NEW VARIABLES**

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INTRODUCTION

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On December 8, 1987, President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev met in Washington, D.C., to sign the INF Treaty stipulating the elimination of all ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers from the respective arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union. On that same date, the U.S. Foreign Service Institute's Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs held a day-long conference to examine the origins and evolution of the concept of extended deterrence, whereby U.S. nuclear capability provides the ultimate military guarantee of the security of America's allies. Although the two events by coincidence occurred simultaneously, inevitably the INF Treaty, and in particular its implications for the future of U.S. relations with NATO partners, was the focal point for much of the proceedings at the conference. The conference benefited from the views and expertise of six prominent security analysts, three American and three European, who acted as the principal discussants. Their presentations, subsequently updated and expanded, constitute the bulk of this volume.

Extended deterrence has been central to the transatlantic security partnership rooted in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for much of that body's nearly forty-year history. The idea that the other NATO members can rely on a U.S. "nuclear umbrella" to protect against a Warsaw Pact attack aimed at any one of them, even at the risk of nuclear retaliation against the United States itself, and even should it be necessary for the United States to threaten to use, or actually to use, nuclear weapons first, has long been a major premise of NATO military doctrine. Despite its lengthy pedigree, and notwithstanding the strong case that one could make for the notable success of extended deterrence, the concept has always suffered from inherent problems of credibility. The advent of rough U.S.-Soviet strategic nuclear parity followed now by the INF agreement to scrap a whole class of sub-strategic systems has again helped to cast these problems in high profile and has sparked sharp debate. Although ratification of the INF Treaty has removed the media spotlight from that debate, the underlying issues remain active topics in defense and foreign policy circles on both sides of the Atlantic. The material that follows in this book will, we hope, make a positive contribution to this continuing discussion.

For many, at the heart of extended deterrence's credibility shortcomings is the problem of believing that any nation would actually contemplate, much less commit, nuclear suicide for the sake of another. Yet, for numerous others, the perceived willingness of the United States to, as the late Herman Kahn put it, "think the unthinkable" largely explains the historically unprecedented past four decades of relative peace and stability in Europe. One must hope that the world will never discover with certainty where the real truth lies. Perhaps both sides are right; that is, the notion of extended deterrence may be logically incredible but sufficiently unpredictable in actual practice to have the desired effect of preventing aggression.

Charles de Gaulle stands out as one of extended deterrence's most notable skeptics. His decision twenty years ago to remove France from NATO's integrated military structure and to proceed apace with the development of an independent French nuclear strike force was, in part, indicative of his increasing difficulty in accepting that, faced with the growing nuclear power of the Soviet Union, the United States

really would jeopardize New York to save Paris. In the wake of the French withdrawal from NATO's common command arrangements and in the midst of intense doctrinal ferment reminiscent of that which the INF Treaty has once more provoked, NATO adopted in 1967 a strategy of flexible response intended to make extended deterrence more credible. The elements of that strategy, as set forth in NATO document MC14/3, posit meeting and defeating an enemy assault with a continuum of escalating measures, beginning with conventional forces and proceeding, as need be, through a graduated sequence of nuclear responses up to and including the strategic level. Thus, to ease doubts about the credibility of a policy that could quickly leapfrog to unleash the ultimate nuclear deterrent in its full fury, the framers of MC14/3 substituted a planned series of incremental moves in that same direction.

The new doctrine bought the Atlantic Alliance a decade or so in which it was more or less free from nagging concerns over the reliability of NATO's U.S. nuclear shield. By the late 1970's, however, the transition from the era of overwhelming U.S. superiority to one of essential superpower nuclear equivalence was complete and had been codified in two U.S.-Soviet agreements to limit their strategic arms. European worries about how much they could truly count on American nuclear protection were rearoused. Specifically, the Europeans worried that strategic superpower stalemate increased the likelihood of a conventional Warsaw Pact attack in Europe and, worse yet from their perspective, that the consequence of such an attack would be confined to European soil. Once more, the Alliance found itself compelled to act to shore up extended deterrence.

To strengthen its potential to deter conventional aggression, NATO began in 1977 to plan for the modernization of its European-based nuclear weapons. After reviewing a variety of options, the Allies finally settled on the installation of improved and longer-range ground-launched missile systems. It was judged that such systems were the most credible alternative to threaten a NATO nuclear response as early as necessary to prevent Allied forces from being overwhelmed by a Warsaw Pact conventional assault. Moreover, their range and ability to penetrate defenses guaranteed the delivery of American nuclear warheads to targets in the Soviet homeland.

Moscow's evident discomfort, in particular over the Pershing II's short flying time, extreme accuracy, and consequent effectiveness against high-value objectives in the Soviet Union, acted to validate NATO's choice. Thus, NATO Europeans could again be reassured that the Soviet Union, and the United States for that matter, could not prudently presume immunity from the spread of a NATO - Warsaw Pact conflict in Europe and that, therefore, NATO Europe's safety remained coupled to that of its American ally. Where the INF Treaty leaves that reassurance is one of the questions addressed in the following pages. This issue has led some in the West to wonder about the wisdom of the 1979 NATO decision to link U.S. Pershing and cruise missile deployments to arms control efforts to curb Soviet SS-20 systems.

Just as the notion of extended deterrence has always been fraught with doubt, so also has the overarching doctrine of flexible response been the subject of underlying differences of opinion between Europeans and Americans. The Germans, in particular, have tended traditionally to envision flexible response as allowing for rapid (that is to say before Western Europe had been exposed to conventional devastation) escalation to strategic nuclear war. American strategists have preferred to concentrate on first exhausting conventional and more limited nuclear options at the lower end of the escalatory ladder. On balance, NATO's INF deployments seemed to favor the European view.

Several other events in recent years have highlighted U.S.-European differences over the practical operation of flexible response and European anxiety about the reliability of its strategic nuclear underpinnings. The 1983 proclamation of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) jolted the Europeans by demonstrating an American willingness to go to enormous lengths and expense to safeguard the United States from the ravages of nuclear war. Arguments that SDI would actually make the U.S. strategic deterrent more credible and initiatives to persuade the Europeans that they, too, stood to gain from the program helped to dampen, but could not erase entirely the initial shock. Another jolt came three and a half years later at the Reykjavik Summit when, without prior consultation, the United States appeared prepared to move boldly with the Soviet Union toward drastic curtailment and the eventual abolition of their entire nuclear inventories. The subsequent, far less ambitious double-zero INF accord was seen by many in Europe, including some who once claimed to advocate strongly such an outcome, as additional evidence of a declining U.S. appetite for the national perils implicit in using American nuclear potential to underwrite European security.

Earlier in 1988, numerous European analysts had read precisely that same message into the Ikle-Wohlstetter Commission's report entitled Discriminate Deterrence, with its stress on the imperative to husband American military resources to address current and future threats worldwide, its questioning of a policy built on the premise of possible self-annihilation, and its emphasis on the need for realistic warfighting plans for using nuclear weapons in Europe to defeat the enemy in place. Such developments have fed European perceptions of an America eager to escape from the shadow of nuclear catastrophe at any cost, even if it means making the world "safe" for a conventional, or nuclear, war wholly limited to European territory. European thinking along these lines has helped to propagate in the United States the image of a Europe ever more timid in facing up to changing global realities, endemically reluctant to provide adequately for its own defense, and decreasingly worthy of American sacrifices to make up the difference.

For those in Europe and the United States who believe that the Atlantic Alliance remains deeply pertinent to the security of all member states, and the polls suggest that they continue to represent large majorities, the challenge today is to find ways to reassert that belief convincingly and to reestablish confidence in flexible response and extended deterrence. Some have called for a wholesale review of NATO's ends and means patterned after the Harmel Report undertaken in 1967 when NATO confronted a like challenge. Others maintain that existing Alliance mechanisms, provided they are properly and creatively used, should suffice to do the job. In so doing, they point to the March 1988 NATO Summit as marking a good beginning in the reconfirmation of the essential soundness of NATO as an institution and of its policies. Although one former Secretary General is alleged to have frequently cited NATO as the supreme example of the triumph of form over substance, clearly the method chosen to address the Alliance's latest bout with uncertainty is much less important than the will to identify its underlying causes and to explore the limits of the practical in alleviating them.

NATO, in fact, has either already started actively to engage or has clearly in its sights the most immediate issues which will shape the future health of its deterrent posture. For example, the search is on across a broad front for ways to adjust the Alliance's nuclear capabilities to the loss of systems banned by the INF Treaty. Possibilities under examination include the deployment of additional F-111 aircraft to the United Kingdom and the dedication to NATO commanders of sea-launched cruise missiles. The objective is to keep the Soviet Union under a post-INF nuclear gun that is essentially American, but would be fired from Europe, and thus to preserve the fabric

of extended deterrence. The trick will be to find means to do so that are militarily persuasive and politically palatable.

A related issue involves U.S. intentions to modernize the Lance, which will become its sole remaining surface-to-surface nuclear missile based in Europe. That plan, however, has aggravated sensitivities aroused in the Federal Republic by the contention that the INF Treaty leaves German soil, whether West or East, as the primary target area for most of the residual U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe. Many Germans across virtually the entire political spectrum have concluded, therefore, that their country will in the future be exposed to a heavily disproportionate share of the total nuclear menace to the Alliance. Chancellor Kohl has asked NATO to develop a comprehensive defense and arms control concept within which Bonn can place a final decision on Lance. For some observers, that request is a temporizing measure unlikely to prove sufficient to secure German acceptance of a successor to the Lance and is itself a further sign of a gradual European slide toward denuclearization.

The nuclear component of NATO strategy also stands to be significantly affected should the U.S.-Soviet Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) result in an accord involving the deep cuts both parties have agreed to in principle. Should it incorporate as well a limitation on air-launched cruise missiles, it would further constrict the Alliance's flexibility to compensate for losses imposed by the INF Treaty. The upshot would, at a minimum, complicate NATO's ability to meet its nuclear targeting requirements and could substantially add to the aforementioned credibility problems of extended deterrence.

Just as in the past, NATO's nuclear quandaries derive much of their urgency from deficiencies in its conventional defenses. While experts may hotly contend their precise magnitude and real significance, few would dispute that Warsaw Pact conventional forces continue to enjoy tangible and troubling advantages over those of NATO. Redressing the disparities via arms control will be, at best, a long-term undertaking. Prospects for doing so through a greater Allied defense effort are, perhaps, even more remote. Better bets would appear to reside in two other areas: more efficient use of existing resources and greater exploitation of NATO's technological superiorities. Here, the Alliance has been registering some promising advances, but decisive breakthroughs seem as yet elusive.

Meanwhile, budgetary pressures and dissatisfaction with the performance of the Europeans in the defense field are again on the march in the U.S. Congress, reviving the specter of possible unilateral U.S. troop withdrawals from Europe. The large presence of the U.S. military and their dependent families in Europe has long been widely interpreted as the most visible and convincing symbol of the extraordinary depth of America's commitment to its NATO responsibilities. It is regularly invoked these days to assist in rebutting criticism and allaying fears that the INF Treaty will do serious damage to the credibility of extended deterrence. In current circumstances, a precipitous U.S. drawdown in that presence, even on a relatively modest scale, would strike a severe blow to transatlantic trust and cohesion just when NATO may be in more need than ever of all the solidarity it can muster.

The foregoing are illustrative of the issues treated in detail in the chapters that follow. Drawing on a unique wealth of first-hand knowledge and experience, William Kaufmann leads off with an essay that places the evolution of extended deterrence in clear historical context. Plainly, the concept was surrounded by question marks and

If Donnelly is correct, NATO will in the years to come face a more, not less, formidable adversary than heretofore in the form of a militarily more sophisticated, capable, and adaptable Soviet Union. We would add that that prospect is all the more daunting given that Soviet military improvements are now cloaked by an equally more sophisticated, capable, and adaptable political advance guard dedicated to disarming the Atlantic Alliance psychologically. The latter has always been Moscow's preferred form for achieving its objectives against the West. The Alliance's skill in dealing with the Kremlin's appealing new political look might, in the end, have more to do with NATO's actual destiny than all the theoretical musings over how extended deterrence worked in the past, how to make it work now and in the future, and whether it makes a meaningful difference.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge here with great gratitude a number of people who made major contributions to the success of the conference which inspired this book and to the book itself. We begin with colleagues from the Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs: John Miller, who masterminded conference logistics and who supplied the original notes for the conference summary circulated previously in the Center's Fresh Look series of publications; and Allison Lazenby and Michael Friend, who subsequently collaborated on the English translation of M. Lellouche's French text. Our deep appreciation further extends to General Bernard Rogers, the conference's keynote speaker, and to the commentators on the conference's principal presentations, General Andrew Goodpaster, Notra Trulock, Edward Luttwak, and Dieter Dettke.