

# Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe

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The famous “gang of four” article in *Foreign Affairs* and voices in the American antinuclear movement have forcefully opened an important strategic debate by recommending that NATO adopt a “no first use” (NFU) policy for nuclear weapons in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Advocates of NFU maintain that NATO should declare that it will not initiate the use of nuclear weapons. Specifically, if NATO’s conventional forces fail to contain a Warsaw Pact offensive, NATO should accept defeat rather than turn to nuclear weapons. As NFU advocates recognize, an NFU declaration would also require changes in NATO’s force posture to give it practical meaning and effect. Some advocates of NFU would create a limited nuclear free zone in Central Europe, although a meaningful NFU policy would seem to require larger changes, probably including the removal of nuclear weapons from continental Europe. Proponents of NFU also recognize that to compensate for the removal of the threat of nuclear escalation, NATO must improve markedly its conventional defenses before an NFU policy can be adopted.<sup>2</sup> Thus, NFU incorporates both doctrinal and force posture adjustments.

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1. See McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara, and Gerard Smith, “Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (Spring 1982), pp. 753–768. Also see: McGeorge Bundy, “‘No First Use’ Needs Careful Study,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 38, No. 6 (June 1982), pp. 6–8; “The Debate Over No First Use,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 5 (Summer 1982), pp. 1171–1180; Kurt Gottfried, Henry W. Kendall, and John M. Lee, “‘No First Use’ of Nuclear Weapons,” *Scientific American*, Vol. 250, No. 3 (March 1984), pp. 33–41; Robert S. McNamara, “The Military Role of Nuclear Weapons: Perceptions and Misperceptions,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Fall 1983), pp. 59–80; and *No First Use*, A Report Prepared by the Union of Concerned Scientists (Cambridge, Mass.: Union of Concerned Scientists, February 1, 1983). There have been surprisingly few articles written on the other side of this debate. Two exceptions are Karl Kaiser, Georg Leber, Alois Mertes, and Franz-Josef Schulze, “Nuclear Weapons and the Preservation of Peace,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 5 (Summer 1982), pp. 1157–1170; and Colin S. Gray, “NATO’s Nuclear Dilemma,” *Policy Review*, No. 22 (Fall 1982), pp. 97–116. For essays on various aspects of the NFU question, see John D. Steinbruner and Leon V. Sigal, eds., *Alliance Security: NATO and the No-First-Use Question* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1983).

2. The principal American advocates of NFU subscribe to the notion that NATO will have to improve the conventional balance before it is possible to adopt an NFU policy. See, for example, George Kennan, Letter, *The New York Times*, May 23, 1982, Sec. 4, p. 22. Despite this rhetorical

Although there is a certain intuitive attraction to NFU, the argument of this essay is that NFU is a flawed idea. First, the threat of nuclear escalation is a key element in the NATO deterrent equation which cannot be fully replaced by a significant improvement in NATO's conventional forces. Nuclear weapons, because of the horror associated with their use, really are the ultimate deterrent. Formidable conventional forces simply do not have and can never have the deterrent value of nuclear weapons. Therefore, the possibility of war breaking out in Europe would increase if NATO were to adopt an NFU policy which actually persuaded the Soviet Union that NATO would not use nuclear weapons first. Second, if the full burden of deterrence were shifted to the conventional forces, they would then have to be judged against a higher standard than obtains with nuclear weapons in the deterrence equation. Although NATO's conventional forces are certainly stronger than most commentators suggest and would stand a good chance of defeating a Pact offensive, they do not measure up to such a standard today. An NFU policy would require a more formidable conventional deterrent; however, there is no reason to believe that NATO is going to improve significantly its conventional forces. Indeed, NATO's conventional forces will probably grow weaker relative to those of the Pact, *not* stronger, making an NFU policy even less appropriate in the future than it is today.

### *The Deterrent Value of Nuclear Weapons*

Deterrence, at its root, is a function of both political and military considerations.<sup>3</sup> Decision-makers must weigh the perceived political consequences of military action against the military risks and costs of going to war. In a crisis, political considerations are likely to place significant pressures on decision-makers to go to war. Generally, deterrence is most likely to hold when the

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support for increasing NATO's conventional forces, it is not very likely that support for increased defense spending (which certainly would be necessary to improve the conventional balance) will be generated among those elements of American society who advocate NFU. In the German case, NFU proponents are opposed in principle to increasing conventional forces to compensate for NFU. See Gert Krell, Thomas Risse-Kappen, and Hans-Joachim Schmidt, "The No-First-Use Question in West Germany," in Steinbruner and Sigal, eds., *Alliance Security*, p. 169; and James M. Markham, "Bonn Opposition Affirms NATO Tie," *The New York Times*, May 20, 1984, p. 7.

3. For a more detailed discussion of how political and military factors interact to affect deterrence, see John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 60-66, 208-212. Also see Richard K. Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1982), chapter 5; Michael E. Brown, *Deterrence Failures and Deterrence Strategies*, Rand Paper P-5842 (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, March 1977); and Richard N.

risks and costs of military action are very high. In certain cases, however, decision-makers might still opt for war even when the risks of military action are very high—simply because the political pressures for war are so great that pursuing a risk-laden military policy may be preferable to the status quo. The risks of doing nothing in those situations may seem greater than the risks of military action. The two classic cases of deterrence failure that follow this logic are the Japanese decision to strike against the United States in 1941 and the Egyptian decision to strike against Israel in 1973.<sup>4</sup> In both cases, the attacker recognized that he would be undertaking a high-risk military operation. Nevertheless, given the unacceptability of the political status quo and the fact that there was some hope of a favorable military outcome, offensives were launched.

Not all crises fit this description, but policymakers must prepare for these worst case scenarios. A prudent planner will ultimately gauge the worth of his deterrent posture by considering the prospects for deterrence in those cases where the political pressures for war are great. The best way to maximize those prospects is to ensure that the military risks are extremely high—so that the opponent's decision-makers see virtually no chance of achieving success by going to war. In short, deterrence is best served when decision-makers think that a war will be a ghastly and destructive experience. If, for example, policymakers in Europe before World War I could have foreseen the carnage that lay ahead, it is likely that the Great War could have been averted. That war did start, however, because it was widely believed that the war would be relatively short and not too costly. We see here that disturbing paradox of deterrence theory: the best way to prevent war is to ensure that it would have devastating consequences for all the participants.

The threat to use nuclear weapons is an excellent deterrent because it so greatly increases the risks and costs associated with war. The potential consequences of using nuclear weapons are so grave that it is very difficult to conceive of achieving a meaningful victory in a nuclear war. It is the fear of these consequences, of course, that motivates the NFU movement; it is, however, the utter horror we associate with these weapons that makes them so dissuasive. There is little doubt that the presence of thousands of nuclear

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Rosecrance, "Deterrence and Vulnerability in the Pre-Nuclear Era," in *The Future of Strategic Deterrence, Part I*, Adelphi Paper No. 160 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1980), pp. 24–30.

4. For a discussion of the Japanese case, see Robert J.C. Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961); and for a discussion of the Egyptian case, see Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, pp. 155–162, 210–211.

weapons in Europe coupled with a declaratory policy of first use significantly enhances deterrence.

Nuclear weapons not only work to shore up deterrence in specific crises, but they also condition the way the superpowers think about dealing with each other. In a nuclear world, the danger associated with *any* war between the superpowers is so great that it becomes difficult for them to think in terms of achieving political objectives by going to war against each other. Napoleon or Hitler could use their military forces to attempt to win control of the European continent. Neither the Soviets nor NATO can afford to think in those terms because of the catastrophic risks of nuclear war.

It is not uncommon to hear the argument that nuclear weapons no longer have much deterrent value because the threat to use them is not credible.<sup>5</sup> Although the probability that NATO would employ nuclear weapons has lessened over the past twenty-five years, claims that NATO has what amounts to a de facto NFU policy are greatly exaggerated.<sup>6</sup> The deterrent value of a weapon is a function of the costs and risks of using that weapon as well as the probability that it will be used. Given the consequences of using these horrible weapons, it is not necessary for the likelihood of use to be very high. It is only necessary for there to be some reasonable chance that they will be used. Earl Ravenal has captured the essence of this point with his assertion that "even the whiff of American nuclear retaliation is probably enough to keep the Soviet Union from invading Western Europe."<sup>7</sup>

There are many reasons why the Soviets should expect more than a whiff of possible use. First, there is considerable evidence that many key officials in the Reagan Administration believe that nuclear weapons have at least some military utility.<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that they would be anxious to use them in a crisis, but only to point out that it would not be unthinkable for

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5. This belief is subscribed to by many individuals who are not advocates of NFU. See, for example: Samuel P. Huntington, "Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation in Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Winter 1983–1984), pp. 32–34; Fred Charles Iklé, "NATO's 'First Nuclear Use': A Deepening Trap?," *Strategic Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter 1980), pp. 18–23; Henry A. Kissinger, "The Future of NATO," in Kenneth A. Myers, ed., *NATO: The Next Thirty Years* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 3–19; and Irving Kristol, "What's Wrong With NATO?," *The New York Times Magazine*, September 25, 1983, pp. 64–71.

6. Among NFU advocates, this claim is most clearly articulated by Robert McNamara in "The Military Role of Nuclear Weapons."

7. Earl C. Ravenal, "Counterforce and Alliance: The Ultimate Connection," *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Spring 1982), p. 36.

8. See, for example, Richard Halloran, "Pentagon Draws Up First Strategy for Fighting a Long Nuclear War," *The New York Times*, May 30, 1982, pp. 1, 12.

them to turn to nuclear weapons if NATO's conventional forces failed to contain a Soviet offensive.<sup>9</sup> Second, the United States has devoted considerable resources to develop the capability to use its strategic nuclear forces for defending Europe. Each American administration since the beginning of the Cold War has paid serious attention to the concept of extended deterrence.<sup>10</sup> Third, NATO has contingency plans for using its theater nuclear weapons, and these plans enjoy support among NATO military planners, who do not regard them as mere pro forma preparations.<sup>11</sup> Some analysts dismiss the importance of such plans by arguing that NATO would not in fact resort to its nuclear weapons because doing so would not give NATO any tactical advantage on the battlefield, and would be tantamount to suicide. These analysts usually assume that NATO plans to seek a victory on the battlefield by using nuclear weapons to destroy enemy front-line units, much as artillery and tactical aircraft were employed in World War II. NATO

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9. General Bernard Rogers, the present NATO commander, has publicly stated, for example, that he would use nuclear weapons to defend Europe. See David Mason, "If Worse Comes to Worse: How NATO Would Pull the Nuclear Trigger," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 24, 1983, p. 14.

10. For a good discussion of how the NATO commitment has affected American strategic nuclear posture, see Ravenal, "Counterforce and Alliance," pp. 26-43; and Earl C. Ravenal, "No First Use: A View from the United States," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (April 1983), pp. 11-16. It is important to note that the McNamara "no cities" doctrine enunciated in Athens and Ann Arbor (1962), the Schlesinger doctrine (1974), and the Carter Administration's PD-59 (1980) were all heavily influenced by the need to reassure the Europeans and convince the Soviets that the American strategic nuclear deterrent is coupled with NATO. See Anthony H. Cordesman, *Deterrence in the 1980s: Part I*, Adelphi Paper No. 175 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1982); David N. Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1983), pp. 156-165; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *U.S.-U.S.S.R. Strategic Policies*, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 4, 1974); U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Briefing on Counterforce Attacks*, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 11, 1974); and Walter Slocombe, "The Countervailing Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Spring 1981), pp. 18-27. This effort to maintain a credible extended deterrent is often obscured in the public debate about nuclear strategy because of the popular myth that the United States eschewed counterforce capabilities in the late 1960s and adopted a simple strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). In fact, the United States has maintained very significant counterforce capabilities for the past thirty years. For a debunking of the MAD myth, see Desmond Ball, *Déjà Vu: The Return to Counterforce in the Nixon Administration* (Santa Monica, Calif.: California Seminar on Arms Control and Foreign Policy, December 1974); Aaron L. Friedberg, "A History of U.S. Strategic 'Doctrine'—1945 to 1980," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (December 1980), pp. 37-71; and Henry S. Rowen, "The Evolution of Strategic Nuclear Doctrine," in Laurence Martin, ed., *Strategic Thought in the Nuclear Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), pp. 131-156.

11. For an excellent discussion of NATO thinking about the actual employment of nuclear weapons, see J. Michael Legge, *Theater Nuclear Weapons and the NATO Strategy of Flexible Response*, Rand Report R-2964-FF (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, April 1983), chapter 2.

planners, however, do not envision using nuclear weapons to achieve victory on the battlefield. Instead, they would use nuclear weapons to signal NATO's seriousness, and to introduce greater risk of an all-out nuclear exchange should the Soviets continue to exploit their conventional successes. Recognition of this possibility should be enough, so proponents argue, to stop the Soviet offensive. In short, the objective is not to use nuclear weapons to reverse NATO's fortunes on the battlefield but, instead, to end the war as quickly as possible on politically acceptable terms.

This discussion about signalling NATO's seriousness leads to a fourth point: the loss of Western Europe would have devastating consequences for the United States.<sup>12</sup> Soviet control of the Eurasian heartland would result in a decisive shift in the distribution of world power against the United States.<sup>13</sup> Is it not possible that NATO would use nuclear weapons to try to prevent the Soviets from conquering Western Europe? The United States' traditional commitment to Europe as an interest vital to its own security would certainly support that possibility in the minds of Soviet leaders. Finally, nuclear weapons might be used by accident or as the unintended consequence of conventional moves. For example, Barry Posen has shown how conventional operations on NATO's northern flank could threaten Soviet strategic nuclear

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12. Of course, the consequences of losing Western Europe would not be as devastating to the United States as would a general thermonuclear exchange. These are not, however, the only two alternatives that U.S. decision-makers would face in a crisis. The initial use of nuclear weapons, although fraught with the possibility of escalation, would be very selective and designed to avoid escalation. The aim, as emphasized earlier, would be to send a signal to the Soviets about the danger of continuing their attack.

13. For the classic statement of this view, see Nicholas J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (1942; reprint ed., Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1970). There has been considerable talk in the United States recently about pulling American forces out of Europe. A key assumption in this debate, sometimes explicit but more often implicit, is that Europe is really not of great importance for American security. In other words, the United States can afford to withdraw from Europe without too much concern for what impact this would have on the global balance of power. This line of thinking complements the widespread belief that the United States would not use nuclear weapons to defend Europe. (It should be stressed, however, that the authors of the 1982 *Foreign Affairs* piece do *not* advocate any lessening of U.S. commitment to Europe.) After all, if maintaining American interests in Europe is really not that important for American security, why use nuclear weapons to protect those interests? This view is wrongheaded, not to mention dangerous. The loss of Western Europe to the Soviet Union would be a blow of staggering proportions to the United States. Europe's important geographical position, not to mention those raw power assets like manpower and GNP that it controls, makes it hard to see how one can separate European security from American security. Although some Americans have lost sight of this reality, one can be quite confident that in a crisis, where the loss of Europe is a possibility, the dimensions of the disaster that could lie ahead will become abundantly clear. Undoubtedly, those individuals will then, at the very least, give some consideration to using nuclear weapons to stabilize the situation.

assets, thus pushing the Soviets to use their nuclear weapons.<sup>14</sup> The important point here is that neither side can ever be sure that nuclear weapons will not be used accidentally or that a conventional war will not, at some point, impinge on the strategic nuclear balance.<sup>15</sup>

These considerations substantiate the fact that there *is* a reasonable chance that NATO will use nuclear weapons in the event its conventional forces crumble. As long as that remains the case, NATO's nuclear forces will continue to have great deterrent value.

Excising nuclear weapons from the European deterrence equation, therefore, would significantly reduce the costs and risks of a NATO–Pact conflict and weaken deterrence. Conventional war, deadly as it may be, cannot duplicate the horror associated with nuclear weapons. More specifically, without the threat of nuclear escalation, the superpowers would be able to contemplate fighting a war in Central Europe with little risk of their own homelands being destroyed. It is vastly more alarming to contemplate the destruction of one's society than to envision the failure to gain a victory on a conventional battlefield. If the Soviets believed that NATO really would not use nuclear weapons first, an NFU policy would drop the downside risk to the Soviets from the former to the latter—from total catastrophe to mere frustration. This would represent a major change in the Soviet calculus, a shift from unthinkable to thinkable consequences. In short, NATO would lose an important deterrent capability, thus making war more likely in some future crisis. NATO can obviate this problem to a considerable extent by maintaining very formidable conventional forces; after all, there are significant risks associated with conventional war. A pure conventional deterrent, nevertheless, would not be as formidable a deterrent as one based on powerful conventional forces plus nuclear weapons.

Indeed, it seems at least questionable as to whether peace could have been

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14. Barry R. Posen, "Inadvertent Nuclear War? Escalation and NATO's Northern Flank," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall 1982), pp. 28–54. Also see Paul Bracken, *The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), chapter 5.

15. McGeorge Bundy, writing before he became an advocate of NFU, stated this point nicely: "Now, of course, no one *knows* that a major engagement in Europe would escalate to the strategic nuclear level. But the essential point is the opposite; no one can possibly know it would not." Bundy, "Strategic Deterrence Thirty Years Later: What Has Changed?," in *The Future of Strategic Deterrence, Part I*, p. 11. It is also worth quoting Bundy's views on extended deterrence: "I believe the effectiveness of this American [strategic nuclear] guarantee is likely to be just as great in the future as in the past. It has worked, after all, through 30 years, and as we have seen, 20 of those years have been a time of underlying parity in mutual destructive power." *Ibid.*

maintained in Europe for the past forty years without the threat of nuclear escalation. Two large and powerfully armed militaries have stood face to face in Central Europe since the early days of the Cold War. There has been much bitter hostility between the two sides during this period—especially between the superpowers. There have been, however, very few crises in Europe that directly involved both superpowers, and only the Berlin crisis came even close to escalating into a major war.<sup>16</sup> Given the hostility between the two blocs and the level of armaments on each side, it is quite remarkable that there has been no war and that there seems to be so little chance of war in the future. Leslie Gelb was undoubtedly correct when he recently noted, “Were it not for the fear of nuclear war, chances are that Moscow and Washington would have clashed many times.”<sup>17</sup> If it were possible to remove that threat of escalation, as proponents of NFU would like to do, it would be more likely that war would return to Europe.

#### *The Prospects for Improving the Conventional Balance*

It has been the accepted wisdom since the early days of the Cold War that the Warsaw Pact enjoys great superiority over NATO in conventional forces. As I have argued elsewhere, this is not the case.<sup>18</sup> NATO has strong conventional forces that stand a good chance of thwarting a Soviet blitzkrieg. This optimistic assessment is actually not as iconoclastic a view as it was three or more years ago. Numerous studies of the conventional balance in Europe have appeared over the past two years, and a significant number describe a somewhat hopeful situation.<sup>19</sup> Certainly, the level of optimism varies from study to study. Nevertheless, if NATO were to excise nuclear

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16. See Jack M. Schick, *The Berlin Crisis, 1958–1962* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971); and Robert M. Slusser, “The Berlin Crises of 1958–59 and 1961,” in Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, eds., *Force Without War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1978), chapter 9.

17. Leslie H. Gelb, “Is the Nuclear Threat Manageable?,” *The New York Times Magazine*, March 4, 1984, p. 28.

18. See John J. Mearsheimer, “Why the Soviets Can’t Win Quickly in Central Europe,” *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Summer 1982), pp. 3–39.

19. See, for example: Paul Bracken, “The NATO Defense Problem,” *Orbis*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Spring 1983), pp. 83–105; Otto P. Chaney, Jr., “The Soviet Threat to Europe: Prospects for the 1980’s,” *Parameters*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (September 1983), pp. 2–22; William W. Kaufmann, “Nonnuclear Deterrence,” in Steinbruner and Sigal, eds., *Alliance Security*, pp. 43–90; Christian Krause, *The Balance Between Conventional Forces in Europe* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1982); William P. Mako, *U.S. Ground Forces and the Defense of Central Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1983); F.W. von Mellenthin and R.H.S. Stolfi with E. Sobik, *NATO Under Attack* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1984); Barry R. Posen, “Measuring the European Conventional Balance: Coping



weapons from the deterrence equation and rely on a pure conventional deterrent, its conventional forces would have to measure up to a significantly higher standard. Prudence would dictate that NATO then have an *extremely high* probability of battlefield success. It is for this reason that no serious analyst argues that NATO's present conventional forces are robust enough to allow nuclear weapons to be removed from the deterrent posture. Thus, NATO would have to improve markedly the balance in Europe before it could move to an NFU policy.

There is actually much talk today about the encouraging prospects for developing a robust conventional deterrent. This rhetoric notwithstanding, it is *very* unlikely that the balance will shift in NATO's favor in the decade ahead. In fact, it is going to be difficult for NATO to prevent the present balance from deteriorating.

Four ways of strengthening NATO's conventional defense are now being seriously discussed in Western defense circles.<sup>20</sup> First, NATO can alter its strategy for meeting a Pact offensive, the key assumption being that a better strategy will serve as a force multiplier. Second, NATO can attempt to change the balance through arms control. Neither of these options requires increased NATO spending and, in fact, it is reasonable to assume that the arms control option might mean slight reductions in spending. The third approach requires NATO to increase significantly defense outlays for the purpose of expanding the size and strength of its ground and air forces. In other words, NATO would attempt to beef up its existing force structure. The final option—the technological solution—calls for NATO to increase spending to procure highly sophisticated weaponry that represents a quantum leap in capabilities over existing systems. Let us consider each option.

#### STRATEGY

NATO presently employs a forward defense strategy: the majority of its forces on the Central Front are to be deployed in a crisis in linear fashion

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with Complexity in Threat Assessment," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Winter 1984–85), pp. 47–88; and Union of Concerned Scientists, *No First Use*, part 2. There are also some key policymakers whose assessments of NATO's capabilities are somewhat optimistic. In March 1983, for example, the Commander of the U.S. Army in Europe told an interviewer, "It disappoints me to hear people talk about the overwhelming Soviet conventional military strength. We can defend the borders of Western Europe with what we have. I've never asked for a larger force. I do not think that conventional defense is anywhere near hopeless." Charles W. Corddry, "General Says NATO Is Able to Defend Europe," *The Baltimore Sun*, March 6, 1983, p. 7.

20. Many of the individuals linked to the proposals for improving the conventional balance discussed in this section do *not* advocate an NFU policy.

along the intra-German and Czech-German borders; the remaining forces are held as reserves. The aim is to defeat a Pact offensive before a significant amount of West German territory is lost. Some defense analysts are dissatisfied with forward defense and have proposed alternate strategies that they believe will significantly improve NATO's chances of thwarting a Pact attack. These proposed strategies can be divided into two categories: offensive and defensive.

Among the defensive strategies, two are most prominent. The first is commonly referred to as "area defense," and it is especially popular with the political Left in Germany.<sup>21</sup> Instead of placing the majority of NATO's forces in large armored units along the intra-German border, the forces would be deployed in relatively small units throughout the depth of Germany. The key assumption is that the defender would be able to wear down attacking forces as they move westward—thus preventing the attacker from delivering the decisive blow. In effect, the defense would act as a large "attrition sponge." Great emphasis is placed on using infantrymen with precision-guided munitions (PGMs) to thwart a Soviet armored attack. Proponents of area defense believe that the introduction of "high tech" weaponry like PGMs has, to quote a prominent advocate of area defense, "altered the character of warfare and the whole basis of strategy."<sup>22</sup> Specifically, they believe that a defender can now rely almost exclusively on small groups of PGM-armed infantrymen to defeat an armored offensive; tanks are no longer necessary to stop attacking tanks. This strategy is particularly attractive to many on the political Left, where there is strong opposition to maintaining forces with any offensive potential, since it is difficult, if not impossible, to launch an offensive with dispersed bands of infantrymen. There are, of course, somewhat different variations of this strategy. Some proponents, for example, believe that it is necessary to have some mobile armored units that can be moved about the battlefield to aid those defensive positions that are engaging the attacker's main forces.<sup>23</sup>

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21. See Frank Barnaby and Egbert Boeker, "Non-provocative, Non-nuclear Defense of Western Europe," *ADIU Report*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January-February 1983), pp. 5-10; Lt. Col. Norbert Hanning, "The Defense of Western Europe with Conventional Weapons," *International Defense Review*, Vol. 14 (1981), pp. 1439-1443; Maj. Gen. Jochen Löser, "The Security Policy Options for Non-Communist Europe," *Armada International*, March-April 1982, pp. 66-70, 72, 74-75; and R. Levine et al., *A Survey of NATO Defense Concepts*, Rand Note N-1871-AF (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, June 1982), pp. 45-47, 68-69.

22. Löser, "Security Policy Options," p. 67.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-70.

The second proposed defensive strategy, which emanates from the self-styled "military reform movement," calls for NATO to place greater reliance on maneuver instead of emphasizing firepower, which it now does with its forward defense.<sup>24</sup> The maneuver advocates have not clearly defined how a maneuver strategy would work. It appears, however, that they are calling for NATO to adopt a classical mobile defense. Here, the majority of NATO's forces, instead of being placed along the intra-German border, would be located in powerful operational reserves, while a small "screening force" would be placed along the intra-German border to detect and slow the Pact's main forces. No attempt would be made to prevent the Pact from striking into the depths of Germany; in fact, such a development would be welcomed. The key assumption is that the attacking forces will have an Achilles' heel—vulnerable flanks, which, when struck by the defender's powerful operational reserves, will lead to the collapse of the attack. In essence, the defender is betting that he can find and strike the attacker's flanks before the attacker can deliver the decisive blow against the defender.

In addition to these defensive strategies, calls for NATO to adopt an offensive capability are being heard. Few have gone so far as to call for an all-out offensive strategy, although one can find hints about developing such a capability in the writings of the maneuver advocates as well as in the U.S. Army's new AirLand Battle doctrine.<sup>25</sup> The most articulate and forthright case for developing an offensive strategy has been made by Samuel Huntington.<sup>26</sup> He calls for launching a "retaliatory offensive" into Eastern Europe

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24. For a detailed discussion of the proposed maneuver strategy, see John J. Mearsheimer, "Maneuver, Mobile Defense, and the NATO Central Front," *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Winter 1981–82), pp. 104–122.

25. For information on AirLand Battle, see Lt. Col. Huba Wass de Czege and Lt. Col. L.D. Holder, "The New FM 100-5," *Military Review*, Vol. 62, No. 7 (July 1982), pp. 53–70; U.S. Army, *Operations: FM 100-5* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, August 20, 1982); *The AirLand Battle and Corps 86*, TRADOC Pamphlet No. 525-5 (Fort Monroe, Va.: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, March 25, 1981); and Michael R. Gordon, "The Army's 'Air-Land Battle' Doctrine Worries Allies, Upsets the Air Force," *National Journal*, June 18, 1983, pp. 1274–1277.

26. See Samuel P. Huntington, "The Renewal of Strategy," in Samuel P. Huntington, ed., *The Strategic Imperative: New Policies for American Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1982), pp. 1–52; Samuel P. Huntington, "Broadening the Strategic Focus," in *Defence and Consensus: The Domestic Aspects of Western Security, Part III*, Adelphi Paper No. 184 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1983), pp. 27–32; Samuel P. Huntington, "Correspondence," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer 1984), pp. 210–217; and especially Huntington, "Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation." Also see Kristol, "What's Wrong with NATO?," p. 67.

almost immediately after the Pact begins its attack.<sup>27</sup> There is no explicit discussion in any of the writings of these offensive-minded strategists of launching a preemptive strike into Eastern Europe, although there are hints of this; and certainly the capability would exist if NATO had a counteroffensive strategy. One could argue, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that an offensive strategy is a real "forward defense" and thus should be very attractive to the West Germans, whose territory would then be spared in a conventional war.

A thorough examination of each of these alternative strategies would show them to be militarily unattractive. It is not necessary for our purposes here, however, to consider them so carefully, since two political factors make it extremely unlikely that they will be adopted in the foreseeable future. Regarding the two defensive strategies, successive West German governments have made it unequivocally clear that they will reject any strategy that requires NATO to surrender territory, however temporary it may be, and to fight major battles in the heart of West Germany. For this reason, the Germans have remained firmly committed to forward defense and have dismissed outright alternative defensive strategies like the two described here.<sup>28</sup> Concerning an offensive strategy, it is very clear that the Europeans, and especially the Germans, are adamantly opposed to any talk of NATO's purposely developing an offensive capability.<sup>29</sup> Since they believe that such a capability would be provocative, would further increase East-West tensions, and would increase the risk of war, Europeans go to great lengths to emphasize that NATO is a defensively oriented alliance with no offensive inclinations. In sum, the Germans are not going to tolerate abandonment of forward defense. Any attempt to force them to do so will only lead to a severe crisis in the Alliance.

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27. Huntington, "Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation," p. 44.

28. Regarding the German commitment to forward defense, see Commission on Long-term Planning for the Federal Armed Forces, *Final Report* (Bonn: Federal Minister of Defence, June 21, 1982), pp. 25, 106; and *White Paper 1983: The Security of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Development of the Federal Armed Forces* (Bonn: Federal Minister of Defence, 1983), pp. 83, 127, 142-145, 158-162.

29. See Joseph Joffe, "Can Europe Live With its Defense?," in Lawrence Freedman, ed., *The Troubled Alliance* (London: Heinemann, 1983), p. 133. Here, it is interesting to note that General Rogers (the NATO commander), well aware of the offensive overtones in the U.S. Army's new doctrine (AirLand Battle), has made it clear that NATO has not adopted that doctrine and that NATO forces will be employed in accordance with Alliance doctrine—"not under that of any individual nation." Elizabeth Pond, "NATO's Rogers Says Euromissiles Are Effective Deterrent," *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 27, 1984, p. 8.

#### ARMS CONTROL

NATO and the Pact have conducted arms control negotiations concerning the conventional balance since the early 1970s. No successes have been achieved at these Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks.<sup>30</sup> NATO's stated aim has been to reduce the number of troops on each side so as to achieve parity in manpower on the Central Front. The question is whether NATO can convince the Soviets to agree to shift the balance so that the Pact's present force advantage is eliminated. For a variety of reasons, this is very unlikely to happen.

It is difficult to imagine the Soviets' gratuitously giving up their force advantage. Experience in other arms control negotiations has shown them to be tough bargainers who exact a price for every concession they make. Second, the Soviets undoubtedly are concerned about a NATO attack, and they almost certainly believe that deterrence is best served by the present balance, rather than one that eliminates their present advantage.<sup>31</sup> Third, the Soviets must be concerned about the reliability of the East European armies. And there is reason for the Soviets to have serious doubts about their allies' loyalty.<sup>32</sup> The Pact's numerical advantage takes on a different light when one considers that slightly more than half of the Pact's standing divisions in Central Europe are non-Soviet. This is not to say with certainty that Soviet allies will not fight, but that the Soviets must seriously consider this possibility. This discussion leads to a fourth point. It is generally assumed in

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30. For a good discussion of this matter, see Jonathan Dean, "MBFR: From Apathy to Accord," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Spring 1983), pp. 116–139. Also see John G. Keliher, *The Negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions* (New York: Pergamon, 1980); Lothar Ruehl, "The Slippery Road of MBFR," *Strategic Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter 1980), pp. 24–35; Lothar Ruehl, *MBFR: Lessons and Problems*, Adelphi Paper No. 176 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1982); Jane M.O. Sharp, "Is European Security Negotiable?," in Derek Lee-baert, ed., *European Security: Prospects for the 1980s* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, D.C. Heath, 1979), pp. 261–296; and U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Report on East–West Troop Reductions in Europe: Is Agreement Possible?*, 98th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983).

31. The discussion of NATO's developing a counteroffensive capability certainly contributes to this fear.

32. See Robert W. Clawson and Lawrence S. Kaplan, eds., *The Warsaw Pact: Political Purpose and Military Means* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1982), passim; Dale R. Herspring and Ivan Volgyes, "Political Reliability in the Eastern European Warsaw Pact Armies," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Winter 1980), pp. 270–296; David Holloway and Jane M.O. Sharp, eds., *The Warsaw Pact: Alliance in Transition?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), passim; and A. Ross Johnson, Robert W. Dean, and Alexander Alexiev, "The Armies of the Warsaw Pact Northern Tier," *Survival*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (July–August 1981), pp. 174–182.

discussions of the military balance that Pact forces are concerned exclusively with the NATO threat. This is not the case. They must also maintain order in Eastern Europe.<sup>33</sup> In 1968, for example, the Soviets placed three new divisions in Czechoslovakia to deal with the severe turmoil in that country. This mission undoubtedly influences Soviet force requirements, since they almost surely consider the possibility that an uprising in Eastern Europe will divert Soviet divisions in a crisis with the West. Moreover, the Soviets must consider the political signal that a troop withdrawal would send to the East Europeans. After the recent unrest in Poland and given the likelihood that there will *not* be significant improvement in relations between the Soviets and the East Europeans, the Soviets probably do not want to take a step that might be interpreted as a loosening of their grip. A troop withdrawal is likely to be seen as sending just such a message.

Finally, efforts to achieve numerical parity do not account for qualitative differences between the two sides. Although Western analysts frequently describe the Soviet military as a finely tuned organization, the Soviet army is plagued with significant problems that reduce its fighting power.<sup>34</sup> This fact, which is recognized by Soviet military leaders, does *not* mean that the Soviet army is a "paper tiger," likely to collapse in the first days of combat. It does mean, however, that Soviet leaders will have cause to doubt the capabilities of their own soldiers, as well as the reliability of the numerous non-Soviet divisions. As for their opponents, it is not easy to determine what Soviet leaders think about the fighting power of NATO. One would think that they would have high regard for the German army, since there is much respect for that army in the West and the German army was a most formidable foe for the Soviets in two world wars. Given the tendency of military leaders to err on the side of prudence when judging an opponent's capabilities, the Soviets probably rate the non-German forces in NATO quite highly as well. In short, it seems reasonable to assume that Soviet leaders believe

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33. See Christopher D. Jones, *Soviet Influence in Eastern Europe* (New York: Praeger, 1981).

34. See Alexander Cockburn, *The Threat: Inside the Soviet Military Machine* (New York: Random House, 1983); Christopher Donnelly, "Tactical Problems Facing the Soviet Army: Recent Debates in the Soviet Military Press," *International Defense Review*, Vol. 11 (1978), pp. 1405-1412; Christopher Donnelly, "Soviet Tactics for Overcoming NATO Anti-Tank Defenses," *International Defense Review*, Vol. 12 (1979), pp. 1099-1106; Coit D. Blacker, "Military Forces," in Robert F. Byrnes, ed., *After Brezhnev* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 125-185; and Peter H. Vigor, "Doubts and Difficulties Confronting a Would-be Soviet Attacker," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, Vol. 125, No. 2 (June 1980), pp. 32-38.

that the Pact will always require numerical superiority to offset the West's qualitative advantages.

This may appear to belittle Soviet capabilities, but after all, the Soviets were only able to defeat the Germans in the Second World War by overwhelming them with superior numbers. Furthermore, the Russians have historically relied on superior numbers as a guarantor of battlefield success.<sup>35</sup> This consideration is thus likely to work against an agreement which aims to achieve a straightforward numerical balance.

In sum, there is little reason to be sanguine about the prospects for concluding an MBFR agreement that eliminates the existing asymmetry in force levels.

#### INCREASING NUMBERS

NATO could attempt to improve the balance by increasing its number of combat units. This would require raising additional manpower and spending more money, but would not guarantee that the balance would shift in NATO's favor, since the state of the balance is a function of Pact as well as of NATO measures. If NATO were to increase its numbers significantly, the Pact would probably attempt to offset that increase.<sup>36</sup> Here, however, I will examine the likelihood of NATO's increasing the size of its forces, while largely setting aside the matter of a Soviet response.<sup>37</sup>

NATO is not likely to increase the number of men under arms. In fact,

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35. See, for example, John Erickson, "The Soviet Military System: Doctrine, Technology and 'Style'," in John Erickson and E.J. Feuchtwanger, eds., *Soviet Military Power and Performance* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1979), pp. 18–43.

36. This discussion presupposes that, when discussing force levels, NATO's prospects for battlefield success are essentially a function of the *relative* balance of forces. This is not the case. NATO must also be concerned about the *absolute* number of forces that it needs to execute a strategy of forward defense. In other words, in addition to considering the overall balance of forces, it is essential to recognize that there is an optimum number of units that NATO needs to cover its front in the initial stages of a conflict. More specifically, NATO must be concerned with "force-to-space ratios." For a discussion of this matter, see Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, pp. 44, 47, 181–183. Therefore, although the Pact might offset NATO's efforts to change the relative balance of power, NATO would still benefit from increasing its force levels because, on the absolute dimension, it would have additional forces with which to execute its strategy of forward defense. Thus, an increase in the size of NATO's forces is to be welcomed—even if the Soviets move to prevent a change in the relative balance. Unfortunately, as I argue in this section, NATO is hardly likely to increase its force levels in the years ahead.

37. The previous discussion about why the Soviets are so unlikely to bargain away their quantitative force advantage points up why the Soviets are likely to attempt to offset an increase in the size of NATO's forces.

the Germans and the Americans, who form the nucleus of the Alliance, will be hard pressed to maintain their present force levels. The principal reason in the German case is demography.<sup>38</sup> Germany will begin experiencing serious manpower problems in 1987, which will become even more severe as time passes. Given the existing system of conscription, the strength of the German armed forces will drop to 290,000 in the mid-1990s from its present level of 495,000. This is a consequence of the drop in the German birth rate that began in the mid-1960s. There are a variety of measures that the Germans can take to maintain a standing force of 495,000 men. This would include: increasing the proportion of short-term volunteers, while lengthening their term of enlistment; extending the 15-month term of conscript service; reducing exemptions from military service; and expanding the roles of women and of non-German residents. It will be politically and economically difficult to implement many of these measures, although the Germans might succeed in doing enough to maintain present manpower levels. It is not easy to imagine circumstances, however, short of a war in Europe, in which the Germans would actually increase the present size of their armed forces.

The demographic situation is somewhat better in the United States. Here, however, the problem is exacerbated by a volunteer military. It is going to be difficult for the United States to maintain present force levels in the decade ahead, much less expand the military, without resorting to conscription.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, there is pressure in the United States to reduce the size of the American commitment to Europe. This pressure is the result of anti-European sentiment, as well as the fact that the United States has other commitments that compete with NATO for scarce resources.<sup>40</sup> It is thus difficult to imagine

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38. Gilbert Kutscher, "The Impact of Population Development on Military Manpower Problems: An International Comparison," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Winter 1983), pp. 265–273. For a detailed discussion of this matter, see Commission on Long-term Planning for the Federal Armed Forces, *Final Report*. Also see John Vinocur, "Study by Bonn Foresees Trouble for the Military," *The New York Times*, February 9, 1982, p. 12; and Wolfram von Raven, "A Grim Perspective for the Bundeswehr: Manpower Problems Created by the Pill," *German Comments: Review of Politics and Culture*, No. 1 (April 1983), pp. 25–31.

39. See Martin Binkin, *America's Volunteer Military: Progress and Prospects* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1984); and Michael R. Gordon, "If Reagan Wants to Expand the Military, He May Also Have to Revive the Draft," *National Journal*, August 22, 1981, pp. 1501–1505.

40. For an excellent discussion of how the mission of defending the Persian Gulf threatens the American commitment to defend Europe, see John D. Mayer, Jr., *Rapid Deployment Forces: Policy and Budgetary Implications* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, February 1983). Regarding anti-European sentiment in the United States, a sign of the depth of that sentiment can be found in the reaction to Senator Sam Nunn's June 1984 proposal to remove a portion of



the United States *increasing* the number of American units stationed in Europe.

There is little chance, either, that the other NATO members with forces in West Germany (Britain, Belgium, Canada, France, and the Netherlands) will increase the size of their contingents in any meaningful way.<sup>41</sup> In fact, there will be pressure in each case to decrease present force levels. In short, it is most unlikely that NATO manpower on the Central Front will increase significantly in the foreseeable future. In effect, this means that there will not be an increase in the number of active units assigned to NATO.<sup>42</sup>

One could argue, on the other hand, that although NATO is not likely to increase its number of combat units, it could do much to improve the balance by deploying greater numbers of existing weapons. NATO could seek, for example, to reduce the Soviets' advantage in such categories of weaponry as tanks and artillery. This argument is not very convincing: it is actually very unlikely that NATO will alter the balance of weapons in a significant way.

One reason is cost. NATO will certainly have to spend a great deal more money if it hopes to shift the balance of weapons. All available evidence points to no marked increase in defense spending among the Europeans. The United States, of course, has significantly increased defense spending over the past five years. It remains to be seen, however, whether American defense spending can be kept at present levels. Even if it can, it does not appear that NATO's conventional capabilities will be affected in any significant way since the emphasis in the Reagan Administration's defense program has been on strategic nuclear forces, the Navy, and the rapid deployment

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U.S. forces from Europe if America's allies do not do more to improve their conventional forces. Although the proposal was defeated in the Senate (by a vote of 55-41), the Reagan Administration had to go to considerable lengths to ensure that outcome.

41. The French are actually reducing the size of their conventional forces. See John Vinocur, "France Plans Cut in Armed Forces," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1982, p. 5; and John Vinocur, "More French Plans for Military Cuts Reported," *The New York Times*, December 8, 1982, p. 15. There are also danger signs in Britain. For a discussion of Britain's most recent Defense White Paper, which highlights these dangers, see "The Ships, but Not the Men," *The Economist*, May 19, 1984, pp. 65-66. In Britain, especially after the Falklands conflict, there is considerable sentiment for reducing the size of Britain's commitment to NATO and developing instead intervention forces for contingencies outside Europe. For an example of this thinking, see Lord Cameron et al., *Diminishing the Nuclear Threat: NATO's Defense and Technology*, Report prepared for the British Atlantic Committee (London, 1984), pp. 20-21, 44-45, 52-55.

42. NATO could, of course, reorganize its forces into smaller units, thus increasing the total number of units. There is no evidence, however, that this is likely to happen and it is not clear that such a move would improve NATO's overall position.

force.<sup>43</sup> Although the Administration has not been opposed to spending money for European security, no effort is being made or is likely to be made to improve the balance by unilateral American measures.<sup>44</sup>

It is very difficult at this point to envision NATO's spending significantly more money on defense. The NATO members committed themselves in 1978 to increase defense spending by 3 percent per year in real terms, and General Rogers, the NATO commander, has argued that NATO can develop a formidable conventional deterrent by increasing spending by 4 percent per year in real terms. These are unlikely but nevertheless not unrealizable goals, given some improvement in the international economy and in European attitudes towards defense spending.<sup>45</sup> Increased spending on the order of 3 to 4 percent, however, is not going to lead to a significant shift in the balance of weaponry.

Leaving aside the matter of a Soviet response, those increases in spending will undoubtedly be absorbed in part by the increasing cost of both manpower and technology. For example, the commission which the German government established to study the manpower problem makes it clear that in order to maintain the present force level (495,000), additional expenditures of money will be necessary.<sup>46</sup> The situation is equally grim in the United States, where an improved economy will undoubtedly dampen recruiting efforts and force the services to increase salaries and benefits so that they can compete in the labor market. The escalating cost of weaponry is a more familiar but no less acute problem. Jacques Gansler, for example, reports that "the generation-to-generation increase in the cost of weapons systems has

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43. See Richard Halloran, "Reagan Selling Navy Budget as Heart of Military Mission," *The New York Times*, April 11, 1982, p. 1; Caspar W. Weinberger, *Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1983* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982) and *Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1984* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983); Robert W. Komer, "Maritime Strategy vs. Coalition Defense," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 5 (Summer 1982), pp. 1124-1144; Drew Middleton, "Shortage of Arms, Troops and Funds Complicates Job Ahead for the Army," *The New York Times*, April 22, 1982, p. B-17; James Coates, "Training, Nuclear Arms Get Pentagon Priority in Face of Cuts," *Chicago Tribune*, August 1, 1983, p. 4; and Richard Halloran, "Planning Memos Stress U.S. Show of Armed Force," *The New York Times*, September 20, 1983, p. 1.

44. It is important to note that the U.S. Congress has not been sympathetic to increased spending for the NATO commitment. See Robert W. Komer, "Congress Lets NATO Down Hard," *The Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1982, p. 11.

45. For a sobering account of how NATO countries have performed since making that commitment, see Caspar W. Weinberger, *Report on Allied Contributions to the Common Defense*, A Report to the U.S. Congress from the Secretary of Defense, March 1984.

46. Commission on Long-term Planning, *Final Report*, pp. 40, 93-98.

been consistently rising by 5–6 per cent every year, after adjusting for inflation and annual variations in the number of weapons purchased.”<sup>47</sup> Such increases alone leave little hope that NATO can procure significant numbers of additional weapons with a 3 or 4 percent increase in spending.

There is a second major obstacle to improving the balance of weaponry. In each NATO unit, be it a brigade or a division, there is an optimum number of tanks, artillery pieces, infantry fighting vehicles, etc., that are needed for battlefield success. Once that unit has the necessary number of weapons, it is pointless, if not counterproductive, to add more weapons. No one would seriously argue that NATO should pursue such a policy merely to increase its total number of tanks or artillery pieces.<sup>48</sup> There is presently no shortage of major weapons systems in the German and American units on the Central Front. NATO’s two largest contingents are also its best-equipped forces. It is clear, however, that there is a need to increase somewhat the number of weapons, especially artillery, in the Belgian, British, and Dutch forces. Defense spending increases on the order of 3 to 4 percent per year in each of these nations should provide the wherewithal to procure the needed weaponry. These additions, however, would not shift the overall balance of weapons very much. If NATO wants to increase significantly its number of tanks and other major weapons, it will have to introduce new units to the Central Front. There simply is not much opportunity to increase numbers within the existing force structure. NATO is unlikely, however, to increase its number of units because of manpower constraints and American reluctance to commit more forces to Europe.<sup>49</sup>

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47. Jacques S. Gansler, “We Can Afford Security,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 51 (Summer 1983), p. 67. It should also be emphasized that there are fundamental deficiencies in the American weapons acquisition process that will undoubtedly work to complicate the Reagan Administration’s efforts to purchase increased numbers of weapons in an efficient manner. See Jacques S. Gansler, “Can the Defense Industry Respond to the Reagan Initiatives?,” *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Spring 1982), pp. 102–121; Michael R. Gordon, “Pentagon Cost Overruns, a Venerable Tradition, Survive Reagan’s ‘Reforms’,” *National Journal*, January 8, 1983, pp. 56–60; and the sources cited in note 53.

48. This discussion points up the very important fact that the Pact and NATO build and organize their divisions in quite different ways, with the Pact maintaining a higher ratio of weapons to manpower in its divisions. Thus, the Pact’s advantage in different categories of weaponry is greater than its advantage in manpower and division equivalents. See Krause, *The Balance Between Conventional Forces in Europe*, pp. 7–18; and Posen, “Measuring the European Conventional Balance,” pp. 51–54.

49. It is not surprising in light of this discussion that General Rogers, in his call for 4 percent spending increases, has not emphasized the need to shift the overall balance of the more traditional weapons, but instead has emphasized the need to develop sophisticated new weaponry (see the following discussion of “The Technological Solution”).

## THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTION

Other analysts recommend strengthening NATO's conventional forces by technological remedies. The most fashionable of these proposals, frequently labelled the "Deep Strike" solution, relies on sophisticated new weapons which allegedly could reach far behind the battle front to destroy Warsaw Pact "second echelon" forces.<sup>50</sup> Proponents of this solution assume that weapons with this capability can be successfully developed and deployed and that, by destroying the Pact's second echelon, NATO will destroy a critical element of the invasion force. Specifically, the key to success is to deny the Pact the reinforcements they will need to exploit their initial victories along the forward edge of the battle area. Thus, while other analysts emphasize improving the quantitative balance of existing weapons, the emphasis here is on introducing new weaponry. The key assumption is that while NATO *cannot* match the Pact in raw numbers, NATO *can* offset Pact numerical superiority with new technologies.

There is no doubt that NATO has benefitted in the past from the qualitative superiority of Western weaponry, and it should surely seek to maintain and exploit this technical edge. Also, NATO can indeed improve its position on the battlefield by destroying elements of the Pact's second echelon—something which NATO air forces have in fact long been structured to do. However, it seems unlikely that the proposed technological solution can shift the conventional balance markedly in NATO's favor.

There are a number of reasons for skepticism.<sup>51</sup> First, many of the weapons

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50. For examples of the enthusiasm this solution has generated, see, *inter alia*: *Strengthening Conventional Deterrence in Europe: Proposals for the 1980s*, Report of the European Security Study (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983); "How Pave Movers and WASPS Will Help to Hold the NATO Line," *The Economist*, December 11, 1982, pp. 41–42; "Defending NATO," Editorial, *The Wall Street Journal*, November 19, 1982, p. 29; Lord Cameron et al., *Diminishing the Nuclear Threat*; and Manfred Woerner and Peter-Kurt Wurzbach, "NATO's New 'Conventional Option'," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 19, 1982, p. 30. For a description of the weapons that are being developed to support this strategy, see Benjamin F. Schemmer, "NATO's New Strategy: Defend Forward, but Strike Deep," *Armed Forces Journal International*, November 1982, pp. 50–68; Benjamin F. Schemmer, "Defend Forward, but Strike Deep—Part II," *Armed Forces Journal International*, December 1982, pp. 68–73, 92; and Benjamin F. Schemmer, "Defend Forward, but Strike Deep—Part III," *Armed Forces Journal International*, January 1983, pp. 48–54.

51. There is a growing body of literature which is highly critical of this technological solution. See, for example: Steven L. Canby, "The Conventional Defense of Europe: The Operational Limits of Emerging Technology," Wilson Center Working Paper No. 55 (Washington, D.C.: The Wilson Center, April 1984); Matthew A. Evangelista, "Offense or Defense: A Tale of Two Commissions," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Fall 1983), pp. 45–69; Daniel Gouré and Jeffrey R. Cooper, "Conventional Deep Strike: A Critical Look," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1984), pp. 215–248; Fen Osler Hampson, "Groping for Technical Panaceas: The European

have not yet been developed and deployed. Moreover, some of the weapons have experienced significant problems in the development process.<sup>52</sup> Given American experiences with developing sophisticated weaponry over the past three decades, it seems reasonable to assume that a number of the proposed systems will not be deployed and that most, if not all of those that are deployed, will fall short of initial expectations.<sup>53</sup> Second, the cost of this solution is unclear. Given the escalating costs of sophisticated weaponry and the fact that some portion of that 3 to 4 percent increase will have to be spent on replacing and modernizing more traditional weapons, it remains to be seen whether NATO can afford such a solution. More specifically, it is not clear whether America's allies will be capable of or will be interested in procuring the weaponry to support this strategy. The United States has been the principal proponent up to this point. Unless the allies actively participate, this solution is flawed.

Third, it is not clear that the second echelon forces are the most important targets. In the classical blitzkrieg operations of the past, the breakthrough and the exploitation that produced the decisive victory were both conducted by the same first echelon forces.<sup>54</sup> The second echelon forces played a pe-

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Conventional Balance and Nuclear Stability," *International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Winter 1983–84), pp. 57–82; Jeffrey Record, "NATO's Forward Defense and Striking Deep," *Armed Forces Journal International*, November 1983, pp. 42–44, 46–48; Phil Williams and William Wallace, "Emerging Technologies and European Security," *Survival*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (March–April 1984), pp. 70–78; and Joel Wit, "Deep Strike: NATO's New Defense Concept and Its Implications for Arms Control," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 13, No. 10 (November 1983), pp. 1, 4–7, 9.

52. See, for example, Mark Hewish, "The Assault Breaker Program: U.S. Stand-off Weapon Technology of the Future," *International Defense Review*, Vol. 15 (1982), pp. 1207–1211; Fred Hiatt, "Conventional Weapon May Go Nuclear," *The Washington Post*, November 25, 1983, p. 1; Charles Mohr, "Antitank Testing Unrealistic, Some Officials Say," *The New York Times*, May 22, 1984, p. 21; "Pentagon Study Doubts Value of Antitank System," *The New York Times*, September 20, 1983, p. 13; and Wit, "Deep Strike," pp. 4–6. Regarding policymakers' doubts about this strategy, see Richard Halloran, "Pentagon Debating Commitment to Complex Computerized Arms," *The New York Times*, August 23, 1983, p. 1.

53. For three of the best studies on this subject, see: Merton J. Peck and Frederic M. Scherer, *The Weapons Acquisition Process* (Boston: Harvard University Business School, 1962); J.R. Fox, *Arming America: How the U.S. Buys Weapons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); and Robert L. Perry et al., *System Acquisition Strategies*, Rand Report R-733-PR/ARPA (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, June 1971). There is another reason to doubt the claim that we are about to witness a technological revolution that will markedly alter the balance in Europe. As Karl Lautenschläger makes clear in his excellent study of the evolution of naval technology, weapons developments tend to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Lautenschläger, "Technology and the Evolution of Naval Warfare," *International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Fall 1983), pp. 3–51. There is much evidence that developments in the realm of so-called Deep Strike technologies are following the path described by Lautenschläger.

54. For a discussion of how a classical blitzkrieg works (which draws heavily upon German and

ripheral role. If the Soviets are going to score a quick and decisive victory in Europe, which is certainly going to be their objective, it will have to be accomplished by those divisions that are massed at the breakthrough points. These are the first echelon forces, and NATO should be primarily concerned with thwarting them.

Fourth, the historical record on deep interdiction operations is not encouraging.<sup>55</sup> This is a difficult mission, even when one has overwhelming air superiority, and this is not likely to be the case in the critical first weeks of a European conflict. This brings us to the final point: the Soviets will undoubtedly make a concerted effort to develop the appropriate countermeasures. Although it is impossible to predict how successful they will be, it is safe to assume that there would be some degradation of those new NATO capabilities. In short, there is presently little reason to believe that NATO can markedly improve the balance with the proposed technological solution.

#### FUTURE PROSPECTS

This pessimistic prognosis notwithstanding, the balance could shift markedly in the decade ahead if there were to be a fundamental change in the general political and economic environment. For example, if the West were to undergo a sustained and robust economic recovery in the next few years and, concomitantly, the Soviet economy were to continue to deteriorate, this would make it much easier for NATO to increase defense spending and very difficult for the Pact to continue its spending pattern of the past decade. If, at the same time, the Soviets were forced to intervene directly in Poland or another Eastern European country, the NATO nations would undoubtedly

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Israeli experiences), see Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, pp. 35–43. Also see Trevor N. Dupuy, "The Soviet Second Echelon: Is This a Red Herring?," *Armed Forces Journal International*, August 1982, pp. 60–64.

55. One can gain an appreciation of the difficulties and complexities of the deep interdiction mission from, *inter alia*: Gregory A. Carter, *Some Historical Notes on Air Interdiction in Korea*, Rand Paper P-3452 (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, September 1966); Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), Vol. 3, parts 1–3; Edmund Dews and Felix Kozaczka, *Air Interdiction: Lessons from Past Campaigns*, Rand Note N-1743-PA&E (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, September 1981); Edmund Dews, *NATO Inland Transport As A Potential Rear-Area Target System: Lessons from Germany's Experience in World War II*, Rand Note N-1522-PA&E (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, June 1980); W.W. Rostow, *Pre-Invasion Bombing Strategy: General Eisenhower's Decision of March 25, 1944* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); F.M. Sallagar, *Operation "Strangle" (Italy, Spring 1944): A Case Study of Tactical Air Interdiction*, Rand Report R-851-PR (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, February 1972); *The Senator Gravel Edition, The Pentagon Papers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Vol. 4, pp. 1–276; John Slessor, *The Central Blue: Recollections and Reflections* (New York: Praeger, 1957), chapter 20.

be galvanized into spending more of their newly available resources on defense. No one would argue that this is a likely scenario. In fact, one can think of a number of more pessimistic scenarios, which appear more realistic than the one described above. The important point, however, is that the balance is only likely to shift significantly if there are marked changes in the economic and political environment. National security policymakers have little direct control over such developments.<sup>56</sup>

Although this discussion has focused on proposals to improve the present balance, it is evident that it is going to be very difficult just to maintain the present balance. There are numerous danger signs on the horizon: the continuing economic problems in Europe, especially Britain and France; the German demographic problem; the French decision to emphasize nuclear forces at the expense of conventional forces; the escalating costs of Britain's Trident and its need for a surface navy, both of which are likely to rob resources from the British Army of the Rhine; and growing sentiment in America to remove some forces from Europe. Surely the Soviets will have their share of problems.<sup>57</sup> Still, this does not detract from the fact that NATO is going to need skillful political leadership just to maintain the present balance.

#### *Further Reasons for Skepticism about NFU*

There are three other problems with an NFU policy that merit discussion. First, if NATO significantly improves its conventional forces, it will have an improved offensive capability.<sup>58</sup> This is not to say that NATO will automat-

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56. This point is reflected in the Reagan Administration's defense buildup. Despite the Administration's success at getting its way with Congress and despite the rhetoric about how much the overall U.S.-Soviet balance has improved since 1980, a close examination of the record shows very clearly that, although the balance is now somewhat more favorable in certain areas, there has been no marked shift in the overall balance.

57. The Soviets, for example, have significant demographic problems of their own. See Alexander Alexiev and S. Enders Wimbush, *The Ethnic Factor in the Soviet Armed Forces: Historical Experience, Current Practices, and Implications for the Future—An Executive Summary*, Rand Report R-2930/1 (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, August 1983); and Edmund Brunner, Jr., *Soviet Demographic Trends and the Ethnic Composition of Draft-Age Males, 1980-1995*, Rand Note N-1654-NA (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, February 1981).

58. This would certainly be the case if NATO were to improve the raw balance of forces. The technological solution, with its emphasis on weaponry that could be used for preemptive strikes, would also push NATO in the direction of an offensive capability. Regarding the proposed alternative strategies, this tendency towards offense is manifest in the maneuver-oriented strategy, not to mention the writings of those who call for NATO to develop an offensive or

ically develop an offensive strategy in such circumstances; nevertheless, those forces will undoubtedly have more offensive capability than do the present ones. Given that militaries traditionally tend to prefer offense over defense, it is likely that there will be much pressure to exploit that offensive potential.<sup>59</sup> Even if NATO resists that pressure and maintains its commitment to a defensive strategy, those force improvements may well seem offensive in nature to the Soviets. What is offensive and what is defensive are all in the eye of the beholder. Consider, for example, what might happen if NATO increased the size and quality of its forces but still retained its strategy of forward defense. That strategy, although a defensive one, requires NATO to move the majority of its forces right up to the intra-German border. NATO might claim that executing this strategy in a crisis is a defensive move. The Soviets, however, are likely to see the movement of those strengthened NATO forces to the intra-German border as the final preparatory step for launching an offensive into East Germany. Given Soviet thinking on the advantages of striking first in a war, there would undoubtedly be much pressure on the Soviets to launch a preemptive strike. Of course, there is good reason to expect that NATO leaders would be subjected to similar pressure.

In short, significant improvements in NATO's conventional force structure would undoubtedly produce a situation in which the Pact, whose doctrine and force structure are already oriented towards offense, directly faces a NATO with significant offensive capability. This situation would obtain in a world in which decision-makers believe that it is possible, thanks to NFU, to fight a conventional war in Europe. As we know from 1914, this is a prescription for disaster.<sup>60</sup>

Second, NFU is likely to create a false illusion that is considerably more dangerous than the current reality. One point to recognize is that it is impossible to guarantee, even with an NFU policy, that nuclear weapons will not be used in a European conflict. The difficulty is greatest as long as nuclear

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counteroffensive strategy. Only area defense, which is explicitly designed to prevent NATO from having any offensive capability, avoids this problem.

59. See, for example, Jack L. Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision-Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984). Also see Snyder's "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer 1984), pp. 108-146; and Stephen Van Evera, "Causes of War" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1984), chapter 7.

60. See Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer 1984), pp. 58-107.



weapons remain in Europe, although the problem does not disappear when they are removed—since they could be reintroduced in a crisis or the superpowers could turn to their strategic retaliatory forces. Another point to recognize is that there are two good reasons why NATO might use nuclear weapons first, despite the fact that NATO had in good faith adopted an NFU policy: 1) when American decision-makers are *actually* confronted with the prospect of the Soviets conquering Western Europe, they might reassess their NFU policy and decide to use nuclear weapons. Interests sometimes crystalize or change in the heat of conflict; moreover, nations are sometimes willing to take risks in crises that they would have otherwise considered unacceptable. How the United States might react to a cataclysmic event like the loss of Western Europe cannot be easily predicted and certainly cannot be guaranteed by an NFU policy. So, it is possible that NATO, even with an NFU policy, might purposely turn to nuclear weapons in a crisis. And, 2) as noted, a conventional war might inadvertently turn into a nuclear conflict.

This discussion points to the fact that, as long as the superpowers have nuclear weapons, one should never feel confident that they will not be used in a war. An NFU policy, however, is tantamount to saying that a purely conventional war could be fought in Europe. If policymakers believe that such is the case, war will become more likely in a crisis—simply because it will be less horrible than a nuclear war. In reality, though, not that much will have changed since it still remains possible that nuclear weapons will be used. In effect, one has the worst of both worlds: the possibility of war occurring is more likely because decision-makers believe that it will be less horrible; and the war may actually be just as deadly as before because nuclear weapons may still be used. Accordingly, unless nuclear weapons can be eliminated altogether or at least radically reduced in number and certainly eliminated from Europe, an NFU policy is positively dangerous.

If there is a great risk of nuclear escalation in any European conventional war, it is best to make this explicit in NATO's declaratory policy. Otherwise NATO's leaders risk deluding the Soviets into underestimating the risks of aggression, while moreover denying themselves the deterrent effect that comes from recognizing that risk of escalation.

A third additional problem with adopting an NFU policy is that it would cause severe political problems within the Alliance. It is not widely understood in the United States that within the different national security establishments in Western Europe there is a long-standing concern with maintaining a strong emphasis on the nuclear part of the NATO deterrent

equation. Throughout the early 1960s, for example, both the French and the Germans engaged in a bitter dispute with the United States over the latter's insistence on increasing reliance on conventional forces.<sup>61</sup> The Europeans did not want to abandon massive retaliation and adopt flexible response. The Europeans, and particularly the Germans, who have no nuclear weapons of their own, constantly worry that the United States will remove its nuclear umbrella from over their heads. Since an NFU policy does just that, it is not surprising that there is strong opposition in Europe to that policy proposal. This sentiment is reflected in the *Foreign Affairs* article that was written in response to the original "gang of four" piece.<sup>62</sup> That response, which categorically rejected NFU, was written by four Germans representing different positions on the political spectrum. One can point to numerous other examples of European opposition to NFU as well as strong opposition to any public questioning of American willingness to use nuclear weapons to defend Europe.<sup>63</sup>

There is little doubt that, as a consequence of the uproar surrounding the deployment of Pershing IIs and GLCMs, European, and especially German, elites have been reluctant to speak frankly in public about the need for maintaining a strong nuclear element in the NATO deterrence equation. It is also true that a small portion of the European elite has moved away from the above-described position. The fact remains, however, that within the different national security communities in Europe, there remains widespread, although somewhat muted, opposition to NFU. Consequently, any attempt by the United States to force an NFU policy on its reluctant Allies will meet great resistance and will do serious damage to the Alliance.

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61. See Catherine Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), chapters 6–11; Wilfrid Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), chapter 6; and Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas*, chapter 6.

62. Kaiser et al., "Nuclear Weapons and the Preservation of Peace." Moreover, there is evidence that former Secretary of State Alexander Haig's denunciation of the Bundy et al. piece days before its publication was prompted by European concern about the article. See Bundy, "'No First Use' Needs Careful Study," p. 6. For a copy of Haig's speech, see "Haig's Speech on American Nuclear Strategy and the Role of Arms Control," *The New York Times*, April 7, 1982, p. 8. Also see John Vinocur, "Bonn Aide Upholds Atom-Arms Policy," *The New York Times*, April 16, 1982, p. 7.

63. Consider, for example, the sharp rebukes that former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau recently received for publicly expressing doubts about the American nuclear guarantee. See Michael T. Kaufman, "Trudeau Assailed for Remarks on NATO," *The New York Times*, February 2, 1984, p. 3.

## *Conclusion*

NATO would lose a very important deterrent capability if it adopted an NFU policy. Policymakers then might *think* that Europe is safe for conventional war. Although NATO could build very formidable conventional forces, they simply would not have the deterrent value of nuclear weapons. Thus, an NFU policy would mean that the possibility of war breaking out in a future crisis would increase. Moreover, although NFU is likely to lead policymakers to think that there is little prospect that nuclear weapons would be used in a conventional conflict, a real risk of nuclear escalation would remain. Regardless, there is no reason to believe that NATO is going to improve significantly its conventional forces. In fact, it is going to be very difficult just to maintain the existing balance in the decades ahead.

The irony of the present controversy over NATO's deterrent posture is that, despite claims that it is fundamentally flawed, NATO has a formidable deterrent posture. The conventional balance is nowhere near as unfavorable as the popular wisdom has it. In fact, NATO's prospects for thwarting a Soviet blitzkrieg are quite good. NATO should be able to deny the Soviets a quick and decisive victory and then turn the conflict into a lengthy war of attrition—in which the Soviets could not be confident of ultimate victory. When one considers the risks that the Soviets would face in a conventional conflict against a formidable opponent like NATO, as well as the great risks associated with the presence of thousands of nuclear weapons, there is good reason to be very confident about NATO's deterrent posture.

All this is not to say that NATO cannot improve its posture or that any change in the present posture is necessarily bad. In fact, it has been widely recognized for years that NATO's nuclear forces suffer important deficiencies; for example, some are too vulnerable to surprise attack and the NATO nuclear arsenal overall is bigger than necessary. Not surprisingly, therefore, NATO is in the process of markedly altering the composition of its nuclear arsenal.<sup>64</sup> The real challenge in the decades ahead, however, will be to preserve the existing conventional balance. It is ironic that there is so much talk these days about improving the conventional balance when, in fact,

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64. Approximately 2400 out of a total of 7000 nuclear warheads have been or shortly will be removed from Europe. Also, more weapons will be removed to make way for the Pershings and ground-launched cruise missiles now being deployed.

there is little prospect of doing that. Although NATO should be encouraged to exploit technological developments and maintain its qualitative advantage over the Pact, it is chimerical to think that esoteric technology can compensate for a deterioration in the balance of fighting units. NATO must make every effort to prevent unilateral cutbacks in the size of its fighting forces.

Unfortunately, a concerted effort to foist NFU on the United States' European allies is very likely to stymie efforts to maintain the existing conventional balance. European policymakers have always been reluctant to improve the conventional balance because of their fear that it would lead to the decoupling of America's strategic nuclear forces. This, of course, is what NFU is specifically designed to do. European policymakers are hardly likely to accommodate NFU advocates on this count. Thus, if the case for NFU were to begin winning converts in the United States, it is almost certain that the Europeans would not make the sacrifices that will be necessary to maintain the present balance. There is only one way to gain European support for maintaining a formidable conventional deterrent and that is by convincing them that the United States remains committed to the principle that strong conventional forces *complement* the nuclear deterrent. Increased interest in NFU will make that a difficult task.