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IMPERATIVES FOR DEFENCE

General Sir David Fraser

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General Sir David Fraser

CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES

1990

The author

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The strategic assumptions

'End of the Cold War', or variations on that theme, has been a popular refrain accompanying each turn in east-west relations since Mr Gorbachev got into his stride. Sceptics have doubted and urged prudence, especially over measures of disarmament, in so volatile a situation as that obtaining today, with the Soviet Union itself somewhere between disarray and terminal decline and its 'allies' dissociating themselves from alliance with every gust of popular wind. But sceptics are unlikely to persuade exchequers -- or electorates -- either that the sea-change in the world balance is imaginary, or that the benefits of that sea-change should not be gathered as soon as possible in the form of reduced defence expenditures. In every nation, therefore, some sort of assessment is being attempted, some attempt made to answer what appear to be the questions. Has the former principal 'threat' altogether and for ever dissolved? What form, if any, will new threats take? For what, therefore, should a nation maintain armed forces? Temporary, albeit serious, crises like that provoked by Iraq may cause some transient reassessment, but the fundamental question is still bound to turn to some extent on east-west relations. In any case, where are today's strategic assumptions?

The honest and by no means unhelpful answer to these and similar questions may be, 'I don't know': admitted inability to perceive from what quarter, in what form, or when, danger to a nation's existence or vital interests may come is a familiar historical condition; and there are, I believe, certain ways to behave and certain pitfalls to avoid in such a condition. But does the condition really exist? Insofar as East-West relations are concerned, it is reasonable to ask -- 'Has the 'Cold War' really ended, or is all this simply the wishful thinking of governments and electorates -- self-induced, euphoric, above all premature?'

An impediment to clear thinking on this lies in the expression 'Cold War' itself. I contend that the Cold War has not ended because it never, in fact, started. What has been going on for the last forty-five years (and, indeed, earlier, albeit masked by the exigencies of 'Hot War') has been a perfectly normal condition of relations between states or combinations of states, which admitted -- and should continue to admit -- the possibility (no more) of warfare between them. These relations depended upon the relative strength -- political and economic as well as military -- of each party to the international equation. In Communist phraseology this is the 'correlation of forces'.

It has in the past suited very well the guardians of Communist ideology, (and thus of its phraseology), that these decades have been described as 'The Cold War'. They know perfectly well that the pacific populations of the democracies abominate the word as well as the fact of war; and thus rejoice if any sort of 'war' can be represented as over. But according to the world-view inherent in their official philosophy, there is not, in fact, any 'Cold War' to be concluded (despite their enthusiastic

adoption of the phrase). There is, simply, a more or a less favourable correlation of forces. Recently that correlation appears to have shifted -- adversely, from the Soviet leaders' point of view. Their political divisions, their economic failures and the loathing in which their regime is held by large sections of the Soviet population -- and near universally in the countries of central and eastern Europe -- may indicate an irreversible movement.

It must be in the Soviet interest so to represent it abroad. The objective of Gorbachev, presumably, is to consolidate the 'Socialist' system (in other words to avoid the sort of violent revolution which would abolish the 'leading role of the Communist Party' -- together, no doubt, with a good many Communists) by reforming the economy, supported by Western assistance. That assistance will not be forthcoming if the 'correlation of forces' appears in Western eyes still to be menacing. The 'Cold War', therefore, must be proclaimed over, and a new dawn arisen. This message has received and will continue to receive enthusiastic endorsement in the West, to whose populations, often over the heads of governments, Gorbachev has successfully appealed.

In fact a good deal less has changed than appears. True, the political and economic condition of the Soviet empire may be such as to enfeeble them, to limit their options, even (in optimistic but not, I fancy, proveable terms) to make incredible for a while forward military policies of the sort which have hitherto been represented as the prime tangible threat to the West. True, the pressing needs for material aid and for a sufficiency of international approval may produce a measure of Soviet cooperation with others, including the West, on the world stage. But if we consider the 'correlation of forces' we can observe that in all elements the Soviet Union still disposes of enormous military power, capable (unless successfully confronted) of attaining rapid victory or, at the least, of exerting sustained and perhaps unfaceable pressure. Arms reduction negotiations, as essential for the Soviet Union as for any, continue; and may -- it must be hoped will -- lead to reductions consistent with some sort of continuing balance. Meanwhile the Soviet submarine, tank and high-performance aircraft build is likely to continue, even if at a reduced rate, and the number of Soviet men under arms, of whatever reliability, remains formidable. Nor is this likely to change, whatever the developments in East-West relations. The Soviet Union, after all, has on her southern and south-eastern frontiers all the potential of a mistrustful China and all the unpredictable force of militant Islam -- each with its own ethnic and religious faction within the Soviet's own borders. So sprawling, diverse and vulnerable is and always has been the Russian Empire that large and effective armed forces are a necessary condition of political life; to be used for whatever changing purposes new developments may suggest.

Whatever the military balance within the correlation of forces, however, would the West be justified in assuming that the state of political, ethnic and economic disarray is such as to preclude any possibility of revival of an aggressive Soviet policy? Western leaders have certainly spoken -- and are poised to act -- as if that were so.

It depends upon the time frame. In the short term, say five even ten years, it may be that optimism is justified; and the Soviet leadership will certainly talk and even act in a way to encourage it. In the longer term it is quite impossible to say. If we are really witnessing the break-up of a super-power we have little to guide us. Czarist Russia was a great Power, with many of the Soviet Union's problems (albeit, because not Socialist, under way to something like economic success). It dissolved in revolution, civil war, chaos and the murder of huge numbers of the more intelligent members of society (and Armed Forces), yet Russia withstood, and triumphed over, invasion by the most efficient armed forces the world has ever seen about twenty years later. It must be unwise to assume as irreversible a strategic development favourable to ourselves. It would surely be wiser to remember how turbulence in Eastern Europe has, even within living memory, spilled into unforeseen international relationships and combinations, leading to conflict; how 'liberty' from an alien suzerain, whether Ottoman or Bolshevik, can lead to the resurrection of ancient passions and resentments. To remember, too, how frequently in the past internal revolution has been succeeded by an aggressive foreign policy; how the collapse of Europe's greatest nation-state in the bloody turbulence of Paris in 1792 was followed within thirteen years by a Napoleon standing upon the field of Austerlitz, master of Europe. Five years, ten years, thirteen years, twenty years -- none of the periods hazarded in this paragraph suffice today for a high-technology project to move from initial concept to service in the hands of troops.

Such memory may be prudent. The political reality, however, is probably that the best will be hoped for, and that action is likely to be taken as if the best were near-certain. This, moreover, is only to consider the East-West equation, and the developments of world history may, in time, shake new and dangerous patterns in the kaleidoscope of geopolitics. Almost certainly the best response we can make, to the sort of questions with which I opened, is to say 'we do not know. We do not know whether another threat or threats will arise, nor when, nor what form it will take'. The worst -- the by no means impossible worst -- we can do is to say 'there is no threat (beyond the sort of low-level terrorist-type outrages with which we are depressingly familiar). There is no threat. There will not be a threat. And we therefore have no duty to be ready to meet it.' Between these two extremes is a middle way, more defensible than the latter but with its own danger. It is to say 'there will probably be challenges, small-scale, manageable, unthreatening to our national existence, something to keep us on our toes but not unduly alarm us, something for which we will, within our means, construct commensurate forces to respond.' This is the 'small war' syndrome, and it is a fallacy in that it implicitly rejects the core requirement of defence: the need to face down, in the ultimate, a real threat to national existence.

If, however -- as I hope -- we can start from a position of admitted and near total ignorance of when, where and for what tasks our armed forces might be required in the future, however distant, we

nevertheless need to make assumptions. We must start somewhere.¹ Hitherto every Western nation has had the almost unprecedented intellectual luxury of starting within the framework of a formal Alliance (requiring contributions from nations to an Allied strategy rather than national strategies) and of planning, furthermore, to meet an identifiable, quantifiable military threat. If that can no longer constitute the acceptable datum line, what can?

1. In practice, of course, any nation starts from where it is, in so far as the size, shape, organization and equipment of armed forces is concerned; and then cuts, adjusts, expands, contracts according to the varying and successive political, economic and occasionally operational imperatives which the years produce. It is, however, worthwhile to attempt at a time like this to examine the matter from first principles.

The purpose of armed forces

The ultimate, some would argue the only, purpose of armed forces is to defend and protect the State against violent attempts to overthrow or destroy it. Others would argue that another purpose is to project the power of the State in support of foreign policy, even where the actual existence of the State is not directly threatened: to assist friends, support resistance to aggression by others, further economic intent, keep the peace. One can separate these categories of purpose to some extent although the armed forces necessary to meet them overlap or coincide.

If it is not possible to make definite assumptions about whence, when or how such attempts (under the first and manifestly prime purpose above) might be made, how should we act? We must first consider by what means a State² can be violently and successfully overthrown. There are four.

The State may be overthrown by subversion leading to revolution. The armed forces at the disposal of the State must always be sufficient to meet any calls made upon them in this regard -- a regard mercifully remote, in present circumstances, among the more or less prosperous and pacific democracies of Western Europe and North America, but nevertheless necessary to record. The State must have the possibility of using organized force under governmental control if it is to be really secure against armed thuggery.

The State may be overthrown by bombardment. Although aerial bombardment has never accomplished this by itself (the atom bomb upon Hiroshima was clearly near to it, but the effect was more exemplary than strategic) in the nuclear age there can be little doubt that a major nuclear attack would have such a destructive as well as demoralising effect that the victim State could be regarded as 'overthrown'.

Despite developments in anti-missile systems I continue to believe that the surest defence against overthrow by bombardment will remain, in Churchill's words, the 'certainty of devastating retaliation.' That has long been the philosophy of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and of the nuclear powers within it -- the United States, Britain and France. It is also likely to remain the philosophy of the Soviet Union. Furthermore this policy of 'deterrence' -- preemption of attack by effective retaliatory potential -- suffices to cover the contingency of blackmail -- of overthrow by threat of bombardment. 'Surrender or...' is countered by 'Nonsense, because you know that we can ...'

2. At this stage I deliberately use the word 'State' rather than 'nation' or, more particularly, 'Britain'. The argument has general applicability.

This 'bombardment' means of overthrow, therefore, demands a counter; and the counter, as heretofore, lies in retaliatory capacity, known to exist, known to have sufficient destructive and penetrative capacity, and so deployed as to be assured of survival against preemptive attack. And because of the inherent dangers and problems in this area of decision-making the control of this armed force must lie with the State rather than with any looser combination or Alliance. It must, it can only, lie with government: in the last resort, with the human being at its head.

The State may be overthrown by blockade. As a major contributory factor to the defeat of enemies, blockade has a long history. There have been frequent attempts at land blockade, generally small-scale and thus approximating to sieges³; but the most frequent and informative examples have been blockade by sea -- the interruption of vital sea-borne supplies by enemy maritime action. For this to be effective two conditions must clearly exist: the State blockaded must be dependent at least in part on seaborne traffic, and the blockading power must be capable of attaining a sufficient degree of maritime superiority, at least in selected sea areas, to make the blockade effective. Blockade is slow and attritional. On its own it has seldom been decisive; but it could be.

In the case of Western Europe in general, and Britain in particular, there is a considerable degree of dependence on sea-borne traffic, although this differs nation by nation. The first condition therefore exists. We -- however 'we' are defined -- are vulnerable to blockade. As to the second condition, the maritime potential of an enemy, there is little doubt about the entry of the Soviet Union into the ranks of first-class maritime powers, with a submarine build surpassing all others. Others may enter the lists. None can say. All we can say is that we cannot alter geography. We are where we are. Europe lies where it does. Essentially, supplies come from afar. The threat of blockade demands a counter. The counter must primarily lie at sea.

The State may be overthrown by invasion. This is the most direct, the most certain, and potentially (although not inevitably) the most rapid means. In most conflicts it has been the necessary concluding act -- whether after a decisive series of battles (as in 1918) or as part of that series (as in 1940 and 1945). Direct defence against invasion requires ground and air forces, whatever the geography; and if the invader has to cross water it may demand maritime forces as well.

Invasion, of all threats, is the most formidable. It is the final act if it succeeds. It exposes the population of the State to all the horrors of occupation. But 'invasion' as a threat compels us to think of geography, and therefore of who we are, and of what 'the State', kept general until now, should mean for Britain in the uncertain 'nineties' and in the next century.

3. But sometimes more ambitious -- the Berlin attempt by the Soviet Union, defeated by Anglo-American air power, being the most striking in recent times. In that instance 'the State' was Berlin.

Nations and combinations

It is not necessary to dive into all the arguments for and against a closer British part in the emerging concert of Europe. It is sufficient to remark that if 'The State' in all the foregoing is taken as co-terminous with the nation called 'the United Kingdom' we are inevitably going to have an expensive defence policy. We shall need, I contend, a continuing (and genuinely independent) nuclear capability, we shall need a maritime capability sufficient to defend our sea lanes of trade communication and we must -- for nobody else will do it -- be able in the last resort to defend Britain against invasion. Under our hypothesis it is unnecessary to spell out the who, the why or the wherefore of any of these threats. We have simply considered vulnerability and assumed national responsibility for coping with it.

All of this can be done. A 'national' defence policy is not inconceivable, nor by definition stupid, nor necessarily a road to bankruptcy. It would, however, have two, perhaps three major disadvantages, even were it to be sustainable in terms of political argument.

First, it would tax resources even further were we to extend our defined 'purpose of armed forces' to projection of the power of the State in support of foreign policy. I would always be in favour of such extension, but if we think in purely national terms the extension can be onerous, and its effectiveness questionable. It demands large scale material capacity -- probably amphibious, probably airborne, transport aircraft and so forth. It demands allocation of what can easily become an insufferable proportion of defence resources to the means of strategic mobility by sea and air, inevitably leaving much less for the means of combat. All this adds to the bill, yet must not be allowed to extrude those elements essential to the prime role: self-defence. And -- much more importantly -- such 'power of projection' for a nation of Britain's size will be limited in scope. It is unlikely, in fact, that Britain's authority deriving from its own national armed strength would ever be more than that of an adjunct to American policy -- possibly of some moral weight but in material terms insignificant. The consequent political dividend is always likely to be temporary and limited. Alone, we will remain comparatively puny.

Second, a purely national defence policy is likely to minimise our influence upon developments on the European mainland. It is a constant theme of history that such developments can lead to grave danger for Britain, and should be favourably influenced before they do. By a philosophy of alliance we have sought to preempt, prevent, deter war (or intolerable developments) with the united strength of the Western nations, Britain playing its part. We have deliberately turned from a policy of national defence to one of combination and deterrence. In earlier times, of course, we British often tried to stand aside from events on the mainland; we were invariably -- generally too late and very ill-prepared -- brought into the conflict, and brought into it on land, as a matter of necessity, while having, through standing aloof, contributed little to the policy or strategy under which we thereafter operated.

There are still, I believe, those who contend that such involvement has been a historic mistake; that it was, for instance, an error to take part in war on land in Europe in 1914 and an error again in 1939 (and, by implication, in 1944). This can, with consistency, be argued only from the standpoint of an exclusively national and insular defence policy, under which German domination of Europe in both the First and Second World Wars could be regarded as acceptable because posing no necessary threat to Britain. I do not accept this, but it may be a defensible line of argument. What is completely indefensible is to contend that in either war Germany could have been defeated without a major effort on land by Britain. In the First World War, indeed, France would have been conquered, probably by the end of 1914.

It has however, been the policy of most British governments in this century to go further, and I believe wisely; to recognize that threats are best preempted by early influence rather than met by belated counter-measures.

Placed where we are it is folly to aspire to defend ourselves, aloof from developments elsewhere and particularly on the European mainland. Such an attempt would be reactionary, expensive, ultimately unsuccessful and deprive us of all influence. To have a decisive voice in confronting threat in a quarrelsome world, to influence events before they become disasters, Britain needs to be part of a larger entity.

There is a third, practical argument against a purely national defence policy. Decisions in the defence field in peacetime are generally about resources, always about money, often about development, research, industrial capacity. Inevitably, therefore, they are about profits, employment and the commercial relations between nations. An alliance of sovereign nations may coordinate military planning without too much difficulty -- such planning covers contingencies which everyone hopes will never arise; it is professional, almost academic. When it comes to the development and procurement of military equipment, however, those same sovereign allied nations (whatever their protestations) will discuss and contend not as military allies but as commercial competitors; and the discussion will quickly escalate to a political level. It is, furthermore, impossible for any but the vastest nation-states to maintain high technology capacity across the whole defence field. Collaboration is essential; but collaboration must somehow co-exist with competition. The determination of this coexistence, and dealing with its effects, is a political matter.

This factor alone makes it essential that major defence decisions be taken in a large community of peoples, necessarily a community whose strategic interest is harmonised by geography, and whose political and cultural associations are close and give hope of becoming sufficiently strong to make of it, in the terms of this paper, a 'State': a sovereign State whose population and wealth and resources are capable, in sum, of providing counters to those threats by which a State may be overthrown, and providing them in an economic and effective way.

State or Alliance?

It may be said that the foregoing, or much of it, can be achieved by alliance of existing states rather than by any new approach to statehood. I doubt this, because any alliance (and NATO, which I briefly discuss hereafter, is a remarkably long-lived and successful alliance) needs a visible and continuing potential enemy. Simply as an association of nations, with what some people may think to have an increasingly far-fetched defence function, it is improbable that the ties which bind the members will strengthen; on the contrary. Coordination of action in emergency -- the sort of action taken as a matter of course by a national government -- will become less rather than more easy to envisage as the disciplines of the 'Cold War' fade. The nations of NATO do not and never could constitute a State, in the terms of this paper, and any attempt to give to the alliance the capacity of Statehood will fail. A military alliance is exactly that, and no more: constituted for one purpose, and defective if invoked beyond it.

I contend that there is only one association of ancient and less ancient nations to which Britain belongs which fulfils the criteria I have suggested in terms of size, geography and community of interest. It is Western Europe. Its political expression is the evolving European Community. Wherever 'the State' is written above, 'Europe' could be substituted; and then, whatever the difficulties, a path ahead can be charted. Such a Europe which, clearly, needs to be defined and drawn narrowly enough to be cohesive and effective, would be powerful and secure. Within its frontiers each nation, including Britain, including Germany, could nourish its own character, maximise its resources and, harnessed by unity, threaten no other. Europe could defend itself; and its united strength, too, would be capable of effective intervention overseas -- my second category of purpose. No single European state can project much power in support of interests without attempting, laboriously, to procure some ad-hoc European consensus. The greater the degree of organizational unity, the more rapid and impressive could be the international effect.

It is peculiar that periodic difficulties in getting consensus and united action among the European nations -- especially in the matter of armed action -- are adduced by those hostile to the European idea as evidence that the idea itself is unsound. I deduce the exact contrary. The disunity which so enfeebles a European initiative in international affairs is itself a consequence of the Community's constitutional disunity and could only be remedied by correction at source. Without such correction the effectiveness of individual European nations -- very much including our own -- is likely to be small, whatever the rhetoric.

I have set out why I believe Britain's future lies in wholehearted participation in a European polity which, in defence terms, becomes 'The State'. Hegel defined the State as an entity which can defend itself. Europe can; but there are certain practical essentials which should, I contend, be always

born in mind when applying the principle to the details of defence policy.

First -- and this is necessary not only for the Europe of tomorrow but for the Britain of today -- the fundamental question must be answered 'Might we, one day, again need to confront a major first class adversary, equipped with first class weapons?' And it must, I believe, be answered affirmatively. If the answer were to be 'No' it follows very naturally that sophisticated systems, rockets, tanks, submarines and anti-submarine warfare platforms and devices, high performance aircraft -- all this would be redundant. In an unpredictable world such a policy would be unthinkable. There must, therefore, be continuing high technology development, and it cannot be afforded across the board on a national basis. There must also be acceptance by all of the truth (unpopular in Britain and with British governments) that if ever we, like those bonded with us, were again to confront in life-and-death struggle a first class enemy it would require all the resources, including all the human resources, of the nation. (The most logical way of providing for this last is, of course, with some sort of National Service, training and constituting reserves, a logic naturally accepted by most European nations. The pros and cons of this in the case of Britain constitute an extension and a subordinate argument which is outside the scope of this paper.)

Second, in the matter of armed forces, unity of purpose and unity in terms of ultimate political control and industrial capacity need not and should not mean uniformity. The historic regions, as well as nations, of Europe have long-standing, admirable and wholly differing military attitudes and traditions. These can and should be nurtured, not extinguished. Each part of the whole should do what it traditionally does best -- and do it in its own way, within an overall European concept. The encouragement of diversity where it is appropriate -- and in human terms essential -- should co-exist with the strength which comes from unity where it is appropriate. Europe is no stranger to successful Empires wherein the virtues of both diversity and unity have been sought and found.

Third, and following on the last -- the matter being essentially considered on a European basis -- we and the rest of Europe should maintain our military establishments, our insurance premiums, as economically as possible, consistent with the duties and (often unexpected) demands of so-called 'peacetime'⁴ domestic and international existence. But we must plan how to be prepared for dramatically heightened military tension and serious self-defence if the need arises. We cannot eternally be 'ready', and no electorate would support that we should, even if Mr Gorbachev fell from grace tomorrow or Saddam Hussein were granted eternal life. But we can and should devote planning to how to move at a faster rate towards maximum readiness if the skies darken. That means a sophisticated understanding of the respective function of cadres, reserves and embodied forces. It means evolving plans for the mobilisation and conversion of industrial capacity. It means

4. I use this inexact term to imply the condition of international life short of a declared state of war.

understanding how, and by what stages, if required, to accelerate into a higher state of preparedness. And it costs little but staff officer, official, technologist and computer time. We must be ready to expand and expand again. We must know how to change gear.

These essentials -- the preservation of diversity in unity, the readiness to expand and accelerate into total preparedness, and the nurturing of high technology development should be at the heart of European defence policy. They would underpin an actual embodied peacetime strength and structure which, while adequate for foreseeable 'peacetime' tasks (including the projection overseas of European policy), could be relatively small.

From here to there

Meanwhile each nation must take its defence decisions. There is the nuclear dimension. Above all there is NATO. Does this paper imply a policy radically different from what has gone before? And how, if so, do we get from here to there?

A European defence polity and policy assumes, of course, a progression towards greater political unity; the tail of defence cannot wag the dog of that political unity. Since, however, I believe that more effective -- and economical -- defence potential would be one of the outcomes of Europe's 'statehood' it is worth considering what steps could usefully be taken in the defence field in advance of or in parallel to progress in the political.

The first essential in the progress 'from here to there' is the provision of a defence identity within the existing Community -- and I believe it must be the Community rather than, for instance, the Western European Union, because the Community has (although as yet incomplete) those political and economic dimensions which should, I believe, be inseparable from defence policy.

Defence is a facet of foreign policy, and presumably the existing attempts to coordinate foreign policy in the European Community could, without particular difficulty, be mirrored by similar work in defence; the sort of membership difficulties presented by Ireland could hardly be regarded as insurmountable, any more than they are insurmountable in foreign policy itself. Difficulties arising from any eastward extension of the Community are another matter. My own belief is that a polity so enlarged as to include all the existing states of central and eastern Europe would not only be unmanageable but could present a threatening Continental imbalance, viewed from the Soviet Union; and I would prefer work towards an explicitly neutral central and Eastern European association -- Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, perhaps Austria, and (if Yugoslavia dissolves under internal centrifugal strain) Slovenia.

But this goes outside defence policy and there is one practical area in which a step could, I think, be taken: that of defence procurement. A defence procurement post within the Commission could be the first -- and most immediately beneficial -- step on the road I propose; and a common defence procurement policy could be the aim. Further, and perfectly practicable, steps like the constitution of staffs should follow and could not precede progress in the political sphere, but defence procurement could set the pace.

Then there is NATO. NATO is a reactive organization. If the Soviet threat has really -- even if temporarily -- dissolved, NATO's purpose will tend to dissolve also. The Alliance and its organizations will wither, unnourished. In theory that will be both inevitable and unlamented. The

practical implementation of NATO strategy -- Allied forces stationed in Germany, the enormous infrastructure associated with the command and control of Allied airpower, logistic and communication facilities -- all this may appear increasingly irrelevant. Crises outside the NATO area may defer the day, but if the underlying situation which produced the Alliance changes fundamentally so will the Alliance.

But it may not. We are still in an early stage in the evolution of this particular drama, and it may not. If, however, there is no impediment it seems likely that NATO in its present form may pass into history, and that such NATO 'tablets' as 'Allied nuclear forces must remain on German soil' will appear derisorily inept (as well as unacceptable to the Germans themselves and probably sooner rather than later). What then?

NATO is a transatlantic Alliance or it is nothing. And I believe that it should be a central plank of European foreign and defence policy to preserve an Alliance with the United States. With a more united and self-sufficient Europe, there would, could and should be modifications but the linkage must survive.

I believe, however, that NATO -- if only because the process of disengagement and run-down must take a long time -- can play and should play a key part in transition to this somewhat transformed Alliance. It would indeed be the instrument of transition. As to the nuclear dimension, it is so interleaved with the European/American relationship as to necessitate separate treatment and negotiation. The positions and expertise of both France and Britain are vital in this context.

There are those who believe that the way ahead is not by Alliances -- whether a European union or a transatlantic understanding of the kind I have suggested, or both. Still less do they argue for reliance on the strong, self-sufficient nation State. They visualise, instead, some sort of universal association, binding round one table the nations of the Warsaw Pact as well as those of Western Europe, North America and in time other continents as well. This is Utopian. It ignores the realities of an ancient and often quarrelsome collection of peoples. It concentrates upon the horizon and neglects the hazards of the middle distance. It neglects the necessity for peace to be preserved by balance, so that no one nation or collection of nations is tempted by the possibility of success to settle a major issue by the sword. And it neglects the lessons of history, even recent history -- there is a tang in such Utopianism of 1920, of the League of Nations, of a world seeking to turn its back on the imperatives and responsibilities of power, a world shielding its eyes for too long from disagreeable realities.

The United Nations organization has an essential part to play as a forum of international discussion and, on occasion, a forum where resolutions of condemnation can be passed; and where effective action following condemnation can even be sanctified. But within the world community there

will always be power play, combinations and danger. Threats to the existence and vital interest of States will always from time to time arise. We should so combine, so organize and so plan that we belong to a 'State' -- Europe -- sufficiently strong to withstand threats from whatever quarter in whatever century; sufficiently strong to project power where a vital interest is threatened on a united and effective basis; and plan our defences therein.

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