

ment and NATO's adoption of a "no-first-use of nuclear weapons" pledge. In truth, alliance plans for the use of nuclear weapons were never "deeply secret," as Messrs. Bundy, Kennan, McNamara and Smith have asserted; but these former architects of American foreign policy, who have propagated the idea of conventional alternatives to a reliance on nuclear weapons in their influential *Foreign Affairs* article "Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance," are essentially correct in saying that the coherence of the alliance has been maintained by "general neglect" rather than by "sedulous public discussion" of nuclear war-fighting scenarios.

The myth of NATO's nuclear war-fighting intentions must be sustained because it is a necessary component of America's "extended deterrence" to Western Europe. Extended deterrence, of course, is essentially an extension of the American nuclear "umbrella" to NATO Europe, through the coupling of theatre nuclear systems to American strategic capabilities, and NATO might have done well to explain the logic of its TNF modernization in these terms rather than as a knee-jerk reaction to the Soviet deployment of the SS-20. Whether the Pershing II and the Cruise are the most appropriate systems for this deterrent role is another matter, which should be addressed in terms of their stabilizing qualities within the overall strategic nuclear balance. The point to be made here is that the by now deep-seated opposition to the principle of TNF modernization and the related pressures for a clear firebreak between NATO's conventional theatre capabilities on the one hand and alliance and US nuclear systems on the other might undermine extended deterrence.

### Flaws in conventional forces argument

This and what follows is not an argument against conventional weapons in NATO's arsenal. Politically, these are a necessary component of the triad of flexible response. It should be recognized, however, that as a consequence of the technological, political, moral and military-strategic factors which now fuel the drive toward conventional alternatives to nuclear weapons, the alliance could at some point in the near future find itself on the brink of doctrinal revisionism. If the shield of nuclear deterrence is thereby shifted in favor of the conventional sword, this could have less than salutary implications for European stability. If this be heresy, cast aside the matter of whether NATO members are now finally prepared to shoulder the socio-economic costs of conventional rearmament, and consider the logic of the following conventional wisdoms:

1. *A strengthened alliance conventional capability will contribute to stability by filling in the gap in NATO's spectrum of deterrence.* Yet are conventional weapons instruments of deterrence? This is a matter of perception. In psychological as well as etymological and military terms, deterrence cannot be separated from the concept of terror. As noted below, a number of conventional weapons are indeed potential weapons of terror, but they are not as yet seen as such. Conventional weapons do not have the stigma attached to them that nuclear weapons do, which they need in order to be effective instruments of a system of deterrence.

2. *If conventional weapons are not useful instruments of deterrence, then they are useful weapons for defence.* Given the possibility of war in Europe, it is morally appropriate for the alliance to have a defensive capability which will not

necessitate recourse to the ultimate weapon. This is granted, but given the new conventional weapons in or scheduled for the arsenals of NATO and the Warsaw Pact (the non-nuclear air fuel-explosive, for instance, which reportedly equals the blast of an atomic bomb), to describe any possible non-nuclear conflict in Europe as a "conventional war" would be a misnomer. Thanks to technological innovation, a conventional war in Europe would be no more a useful instrument of policy, in the classic Clausewitzian conception of war, than would nuclear conflict.

3. *Conventional weapons will "raise" the nuclear threshold. This is a military necessity, just as it is morally appropriate, because any use of nuclear weapons in Europe will surely escalate to the strategic threshold.* The notion of "raising" the nuclear threshold is fuzzy at best, and raises two fundamental questions from a military standpoint: is it possible? is it desirable? The possibility of raising this threshold must be assessed in terms of the willingness of the two adversarial military compacts in Europe to adhere to agreed upon and understood rules of limited war. This would presume a degree of rationality on the part of decision-makers, and in the process of war itself, which would be at best imprudent. The question of the desirability of raising the nuclear threshold can of course only be addressed in relation to the prewar situation. Presuming this could be done in economic and military force structure terms, the issue is then whether raising this threshold would in fact make war in Europe any less likely. This is to carry the point about the limited utility of conventional weapons as instruments of deterrence one step further: would a reduction in the fear of the consequences of war enhance rather than reduce the likelihood of war itself?

4. *A credible alliance conventional capability is now militarily feasible because of NATO's commitment to a posture of readiness and because of NATO's acquisition of "smart" precision-guided munitions (PGMs).* True, these weapons give the alliance a capability to interdict Soviet second-echelon forces which lie well behind the Warsaw Pact's front line, and thereby would throttle a Soviet tank blitzkrieg. But the counterforce qualities of PGMs seem at least to threaten Soviet nuclear retaliatory systems, the ultimate guarantor of the adversary's territorial integrity. In war these systems could well take on a "use them or lose them" character, thus forcing the adversary to initiate a nuclear war. In peace PGM counterforce technologies help to blur the distinction between conventional and nuclear weapons, a distinction which remains politically useful for the alliance.

5. *An increased commitment by NATO to conventional alternatives would do double duty insofar as its present predicament over TNF modernization is concerned. It could facilitate Washington's ability to reach a militarily-significant INF agreement with Moscow and help to dissipate Western peace movements which are weakening the political cohesion of the alliance.* There is much to be said for the political cohesion of the Western alliance. It is at least as crucial to Western security as any particular weapons system. And in truth Western peace movements have not done much to help alliance cohesion of late. Yet are conventional weapons the answer to anti-nuclear movements? Is Western public opinion too uncertain a trumpet on military matters to act as a basis upon which NATO should make its hardware choices or establish its doctrinal directions? Is the