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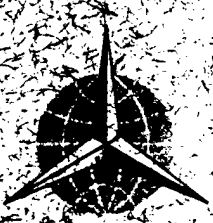
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Problems and Prospects

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THE CRISIS OF THE WESTERN ALLIANCE

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THE CRISIS OF THE WESTERN ALLIANCE

The Western alliance has ceased to be an instrument for policies to be pursued in common by its members. A *tour d'horizon* of the world scene presents a shocking picture of disintegration. There is not a single of the outstanding issues of world politics on which all members of the alliance see eye to eye. The United States stands alone in its policies vis-à-vis China, South Vietnam, and Cuba. The United States stands also alone in its policies concerning trade with the Communist nations. Great Britain, on the one hand, and West Germany and France, on the other, have taken contradictory positions with regard to Berlin. As concerns the German question as a whole and the overall relations between the West and the Soviet Union, irreconcilable divergencies of interest and policies have made abstention from initiative and a passive commitment to the *status quo* the order of the day. Greece and Turkey have been on the brink of war over Cyprus. In Africa, the allies go their separate ways; Portugal, in particular, stands virtually alone. The policies of the United States and France toward the United Nations are diametrically opposed. A similar cleavage separates France from the United States and Great Britain in the field of disarmament. As concerns military strategy and the policies implementing it, the United States is at loggerheads with its major European allies on two basic questions: the role of conventional forces and the disposition of nuclear weapons.

The members of the Western alliance have only one obvious interest in common: protection from Communist aggression and subversion. But such an interest is not a policy; it is an objective requiring common policies for its realization. It is both illuminating and disturbing to note that the allies come closest to pursuing common policies, of however dubious value in themselves, in the conventional military field

which is least likely to require common action in the foreseeable future, and that it is almost completely lacking in common policies in the political and economic spheres, which the Soviet Union itself has declared to be the arena where the fate of the world will be decided.

The Problem of Risks

What accounts for this decline in the fortunes of an alliance which a decade ago still appeared as the indispensable foundation for the security of the West? The decisive factor in this decline has been the transformation of the American nuclear monopoly, one of the foundation stones of the Western alliance, into a bipolar nuclear threat. That new "balance of terror" has rendered the Western alliance, as presently constituted, obsolete.

In the pre-nuclear age, nations who had certain interests in common would try to defend and promote these interests by coordinating or pooling their diplomatic and military resources. Thus nation *A* would go to war on behalf of the interests of nation *B*, or vice versa, when it thought that the defense and promotion of the other nation's interests was in its own as well. By thus reasoning, a nation would take a double risk: it could be mistaken about the identity of the interests involved and be drawn into a war without its own interests being sufficiently engaged, or it could miscalculate the distribution of power on either side and allow itself to get involved in a war which it would lose. What a nation had to guard against in its relations with its allies was a diplomatic blunder or a military miscalculation. If it failed to do so, it would as a rule risk at worst defeat in war with the consequent loss of an army or of territory.

The availability of nuclear weapons has radically transformed these traditional relations among allies and the risks resulting from them. Nuclear nation *A* which enters into an alliance with nation *B*, nuclear

or non-nuclear, runs a double risk different in kind from the risks a member of a traditional alliance must face. In honoring the alliance, it might have to fight a nuclear war against nuclear power *C*, thereby forfeiting its own existence. Or ally *B* may provoke a war with nuclear power *C* on behalf of interests other than those contemplated by the alliance and thereby force *A*'s hand, involving it in a nuclear war on behalf of interests other than its own. That latter risk is magnified if *B* is also a nuclear power, of however small dimensions. If *B* were to threaten or attack *C* with nuclear weapons, *C* might, rightly or wrongly, consider *B*'s military power as a mere extension of *A*'s and anticipate and partly prevent the commitment of *A* through a first strike against *A*. Or *A*, anticipating *C*'s reaction against itself or seeking to save *B* through nuclear deterrence, will commit its own nuclear arsenal against *C*. In either case, *B*, however weak as a nuclear power, has the ability to act as a trigger for a general nuclear war.

B, on the other hand, too, faces a double risk. It may forfeit its existence in a nuclear war fought by *A* on behalf of its interests. Or it may find itself abandoned by *A*, who refuses to run the risk of its own destruction on behalf of the interests of *B*.

It is this radical difference in the risks taken by allies in the pre-nuclear and nuclear age which has led to a radical difference in the reliability of alliances. In the pre-nuclear age, ally *A* could be expected with a very high degree of certainty to come to the aid of ally *B* at the risk of defeat in war. In the nuclear age, ally *A* cannot be expected with the same degree of certainty to come to the aid of ally *B* at the risk of its own destruction. Here we contemplate the reverse side of the mechanics of deterrence. The very same doubt that deters *C* disheartens *B*. *C* cannot be certain that *A* will not actually forfeit its existence by resorting to nuclear war and, hence, is deterred. *B*, on the other hand, cannot be certain that *A* is willing to forfeit its existence

by resorting to nuclear war and, hence, is disaffected.

It is ironic that the event which foreshadowed the decline of the Western alliance virtually coincided with the establishment of that alliance: the first explosion of a nuclear device by the Soviet Union in September 1949. While the destructive effects this event was bound to have upon the Western alliance could be, and actually were, predicted, the policies of the Western allies for almost a decade took no account of these effects. Three new facts were required to open the eyes of Western statesmen to the ever more acute contrast between the official declarations of unity of purpose and the institutions intended to serve common military action, on the one hand, and the crumbling political and military foundations, on the other. These facts are the new foreign policy of the Soviet Union, the Suez Crisis of 1956, and deGaulle's initiative of January 14, 1963.

Soviet Foreign Policy Since Stalin

The foreign policy of the Soviet Union has fundamentally changed since Stalin's death in 1953. The greatest asset upon which the foreign policies of the nations of Western Europe could bank was the foreign policy of Stalin. Whenever there was a slackening in the Western effort, whenever there appeared cracks in the fabric of the Western alliance, Stalin could be counted upon to make a drastic aggressive move demonstrating to the members of the Western alliance how necessary for their survival the alliance was.

The foreign policy of Khrushchev is of a different nature. His is not, at least for the time being, a policy of direct military aggression or serious military threats. Khrushchev has explicitly and emphatically ruled out nuclear war as an instrument of Soviet policy. His policies are aimed not so much, as were Stalin's, at the conquest of territories contiguous to the Soviet empire by diplomatic pressure or military

threats as at the subversion of the whole non-Communist world through the impact which Soviet power, derived primarily from its technological and economic accomplishments, makes upon that world.

That policy of "peaceful" or "competitive coexistence" has been widely misunderstood as indicating a radical change not only in the tactics but in the goals of Soviet foreign policy as well. We have tended to read into "coexistence" a measure of permanency, which, as Mr. Khrushchev has reminded us emphatically many times, it cannot have in the philosophy of communism; it is intended to be an intermediate tactical stage in the inevitable decay of capitalism. Thus we took genuine "coexistence" to be an accomplished fact rather than a state of affairs to be striven for and to be achieved only if the West has become so strong that the Soviet Union has no choice but to "coexist" with it. In consequence of this misunderstanding, the association with the United States appears to some of our European allies less vital than it once was. Thus the absence of unmistakable pressure, primarily of a military nature, at the confines where the Western alliance and the Soviet empire meet, has contributed to loosening the ties of the Western alliance.

Suez and its Aftermath

The intervention of the United States, in conjunction with the Soviet Union, against Great Britain and France during the Suez Crisis of 1956 provided what might be called "the moment of truth" as concerns the political vitality of the Western alliance. It made empirically obvious what before could only be deduced from general principles—that the United States was not willing to risk its own existence on behalf of interests which were peculiar to its allies. The Western alliance proved to be much less comprehensive, cohesive, and reliable than official ideology and the array of common institutions had indicated.

From the state of affairs thus revealed, deGaulle drew two alternative conclusions. The Western alliance, in order to regain its vitality, required a worldwide coordination of the policies of its major members, and to that end he proposed in 1958 a political triumvirate of the United States, France, and Great Britain. Since that proposal remained still-born (the United States did not even dignify it with an answer) deGaulle turned to the other alternative: the national nuclear deterrent. President deGaulle, in his press conference of January 14, 1963 and subsequent statements, has declared traditional alliances for all practical purposes to be obsolete and has proposed to replace them with national nuclear deterrents. He proposes to assimilate nuclear weapons to conventional ones in that at least their deterrent function be controlled by national governments on behalf of traditional national interests. France would use its nuclear weapons, as it has used its army, navy and air force in the past, for the purpose of exerting pressure upon a prospective enemy.

How has the United States reacted to this crisis of the Western alliance? As long as the crisis was not acute, the United States proceeded as though the foundations upon which the Western alliance had been erected in 1949 were a kind of immutable datum of nature and as though the factors which would make the crisis sooner or later inevitable did not exist. The extraordinary complacency and sterility which characterized the alliance policy of the United States in the 1950's not only precluded changes in policy taking into account the objective changes that had already occurred, and anticipating those which were sure to occur in the future, but also caused American power to be abused or not to be used at all for the purposes of the alliance.

Our intervention in the Suez crisis of 1956 is but the most spectacular and disastrous example of the capricious and devious disregard of the interests of our allies which marked that period of American foreign policy. Yet it is but the other side of the same medal of com-

placency and sterility that the United States during this period failed to exert within the alliance that positive political leadership which was its due by dint of its predominance and which its allies expected of it. Now that the leadership of the Western alliance has slipped from its hands, it is a cause for melancholy regret to remember how anxious our allies were then for American leadership to assert itself, how often, during the crises of that period, publications such as the London *Economist* implored the United States to that effect—and did so in vain.

Some U.S. Policy Choices

Now that the crisis of the Western alliance has become acute, five possibilities offer themselves to American policy: restoration of the *status quo*, drift, isolation, "Atlantic Union," pragmatic cooperation with a united Europe. Of these possibilities, only the last two present feasible policies.

In order to do justice to these possibilities, it is necessary to remind oneself that the momentous event which has transformed the objective nature of international relations and undermined the foundations of the Western alliance is the availability of nuclear weapons to more than one nation. This transformation, while recognized in the abstract, has not been able to affect our traditional modes of thought and action. Hence the dilemma which the Western alliance faces. On the one hand, the unity of the West is as necessary in the face of Communist subversion as it was in the face of military threats, now temporarily shelved. On the other hand, for the reasons mentioned above, that unity of interest can no longer be translated into common policies through the instrumentality of a traditional alliance. Where, then, can a new foundation for Western unity be found?

The Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

On rational grounds, there is much to be said in favor of a return to the *status quo ante* January 14, 1963, that is, nuclear bipolarity. The use of nuclear weapons as instruments of national policy by more than two nations greatly increases the risk of nuclear war, for erected into a general principle of statecraft to be followed by any number of nations, it would issue in the indiscriminate proliferation of nuclear weapons and thereby destroy the very mechanics of mutual deterrence. These mechanics repose upon the bipolarity of nuclear power. Detection systems, such as radar and sonar, are capable of identifying nuclear delivery systems in action, but they cannot identify their national identity, except in a limited way through the calculation of the projectory of land-based missiles. In consequence, retaliation requires the *a priori* determination of national identity, which bipolarity provides. Thus an anonymous explosion, caused by a seaborne delivery vehicle and destroying parts of the east coast of the United States, would automatically be attributed to the Soviet Union, calling forth nuclear retaliation. If a multiplicity of nations possessed such devices and the United States had tense relations with only two of them, such an anonymous explosion could with certainty be attributed to no one nation, however much suspicion might point to a particular one. And a new nuclear diplomacy would try its best to deflect suspicion and retaliation from the guilty to an innocent nation. In the face of such a contingency, a rational nuclear policy would become impossible.

Yet, however great the risks of nuclear proliferation are and however much nuclear bipolarity is to be preferred to nuclear proliferation, the latter could have been prevented only through nuclear disarmament or at least the enforceable prohibition of nuclear tests. In the absence of either, it is futile to oppose proliferation. What is necessary—and also difficult—is to create political conditions likely to minimize the

risks of proliferation and in the end to deprive proliferation even within the Western alliance of its rational justification.

The Multilateral Force

Yet we have insisted upon trying to restore the *status quo*. As the instrument for that restoration, we have chosen the multilateral sea-borne nuclear force (MLF), a fleet of surface vessels armed with nuclear missiles and manned by mixed crews recruited from different allied nations. This force is intended to serve three main purposes: the retention of the ultimate control over the use of nuclear weapons in American hands; the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons by giving the allies a share in planning and operations; and the satisfaction of the alleged nuclear appetite of Germany without giving her actual control over nuclear weapons. This is not the place to enter into a discussion of the technical, military, and specific political shortcomings of this device and the improbability of its success. It is only necessary here to point to two of its qualities, which shed an illuminating light upon the deficiencies of our foreign policy: the commitment to a *status quo* which has been bypassed by history, and the attempt to meet a political problem with a military device.

It is easier, both intellectually and in the short run politically, not to face up to the impossibility of restoring the *status quo ante* January 14, 1963, to keep the legal facade of the Western alliance intact, and to leave the crucial problems unattended. This policy of drift into which a stymied policy of restoration is likely to degenerate is of all the possibilities before us the most dangerous, for it combines in an incompatible interconnection the legal commitments of a traditional alliance with nuclear proliferation. It gives those of our allies who possess nuclear weapons the power to reduce to a minimum our free-

dom of choice with regard to nuclear war. Both France and Great Britain see the main purpose of the national nuclear deterrent in their ability to use that deterrent as a trigger with which to activate the nuclear deterrent of the United States. As the British White Paper on defense put it on February 13, 1964: "If there were no power in Europe capable of inflicting unacceptable damage on a potential enemy," the enemy might be tempted "to attack in the mistaken belief that the United States would not act unless America herself were attacked."¹ Or as the London *Economist* said in commenting on this White Paper: "The bombers also give Britain the ability to involve the United States in a nuclear war for which the Americans have no stomach, the argument being that the Russians would be led to loose off an attack on the United States if any foreign nuclear bombs went off on their territory, since they would not have time to see the Union Jack painted on its warhead."² In other words, proliferation combined with traditional alliance commitments turns the obsolescence of the Western alliance, as presently constituted, against the survival of the United States. Allies of the United States armed with nuclear weapons could virtually decide whether the United States shall live or die.

Isolation or Atlantic Partnership

Faced with this unacceptable possibility, the United States has two alternative courses of action. It can try to escape the risks its present policies vis-à-vis Western Europe entail by severing the ties of the alliance and retreating into isolation. This alternative is likely to become more tempting as frustrations multiply and awareness of the risks sinks in. Intercontinental nuclear strategy, taken as the sole determinant, would indeed make this alternative feasible. The military

security of the United States would not be appreciably affected by whatever course the nations of Western Europe, separated from the United States, would take.

Yet the worldwide conflict in which we are engaged is not primarily of a military nature. It concerns two different conceptions of man and society, and in that conflict the survival of our way of life is at stake. That way of life is an upshot of Western civilization, of which Western Europe is the fountainhead. It is an open question whether our civilization, still unsure of itself, could survive without being able to draw upon the example and the cultural resources of Western Europe. It is even more doubtful whether our civilization could survive in a world which, after the defection of Western Europe, would be either indifferent or hostile to it. It is for this ultimate reason that isolation, however tempting in the short run, is no longer an acceptable alternative for the United States.

The other alternative is presented by the grand design of Atlantic partnership which John F. Kennedy formulated on July 4, 1962 in his "Declaration of Interdependence." That design has remained in the realm of political rhetoric, but it contains a political concept which alone promises to combine Western unity with nuclear power. In order to understand its import, it is first necessary to remind ourselves again of the political character of the crisis of the Western alliance.

The Western alliance is in disarray not because the United States has monopolistic control over the nuclear deterrent, but because the members of the alliance pursue different and sometimes incompatible policies, on behalf of which they might want to use the nuclear deterrent. If the policies of the members of the alliance were in harmony, the issue of the locus of the nuclear decision would lose its present political sting and deGaulle would have had no need to raise the issue of the national nuclear deterrent. For the nations of Western Europe, either

severally or united, would then consider using nuclear weapons for the same purpose as the United States, and vice versa, and the issue of the locus of the decision would be of technical, but no longer of substantive importance. This is, then, the crucial question: how can the different policies of the members of the Western alliance be brought into harmony?

The Need for Statesmanship

Members of alliances have had to face this question since time immemorial, and insofar as they were successful, they have answered it by a supreme effort of statesmanship. For it is one of the great constructive tasks of the statesman to transform an inchoate and implicit community of interests into the actuality of operating policies. This is the task before us today. However, it must be doubted that we shall be able to perform it. Four facts support that doubt.

Statesmanship, that is, the ability to think and act in the specific terms appropriate to foreign policy, has been at all times and in all places an extremely rare commodity. For reasons which are imbedded in our historic experience and the political folklore stemming from it, it has always been in particularly short supply in Washington. It is unlikely, although it is not altogether impossible, that of the few among us who possess the intellectual qualities of statesmanship, one will rise to that eminence of political influence and power that would be necessary to equip the foreign policy of the United States for that creative task.

The chances for the achievement of that task are further diminished by the unprecedented complexity and diversity of the policies to be harmonized. This task cannot be achieved, as deGaulle recognized in 1958, through the ordinary processes of diplomacy. It requires a virtual fusion of the foreign policies of the members of the Western alliance

under centralized direction. In the heyday of NATO, we could at least hope for a political "Atlantic Union" to form a permanent political foundation for the military alliance. In the heyday of a revived nationalism, the leading members of the Western alliance, short of being faced with a direct military threat against them all, are not likely to bring forth simultaneously the political vision, determination, and skill necessary to achieve this rationally required goal.

Two further factors militate against this likelihood: the increase in the political and economic strength of the nations of Western Europe and the corresponding decline of that of the United States. The forging of a political "Atlantic Union" out of several independent political units requires, as deGaulle has correctly seen, a paramount power which is willing and able to impose its will, if need be, upon a recalcitrant member. In other words, in such an "Atlantic Union" the United States would of necessity be predominant. Yet when in the 1950's the United States had the power, and when its allies urged it to play that predominant role, the United States did not have the will to do so. Now even if it had the will, it would not have the power to make its will prevail.

It is exactly because an "Atlantic Union" would be dominated by the United States that deGaulle is opposed to it in no uncertain terms. The opposition of the other major European powers has remained implicit. But their desire for emancipation from the United States is obviously incompatible with the pursuit of a political "Atlantic Union."

Goals for the United States

The United States cannot afford to lose sight of political "Atlantic Union" as the ultimate goal; for nuclear proliferation, inevitable as it is likely to be, can be rendered tolerable only if its centrifugal and anarchic consequences are counterbalanced by the politically unified use of proliferated nuclear weapons. As long as political union is un-

unobtainable and since traditional alliance commitments joined with nuclear proliferation, as pointed out above, are intolerable, the United States must strive for three goals: to mitigate the consequences of proliferation by limiting the number of independent nuclear deterrents, to bring its alliance commitments for the time being into harmony with the interests it has actually or potentially in common with its allies, and in the end to render proliferation innocuous through unified political control.

The first goal requires of the United States active support for the political unification of Europe. For since proliferation appears to be inevitable and political "Atlantic Union" unattainable, a European nuclear deterrent controlled by a European political authority is the best attainable alternative. Such support implies a radical change in our present policies which, by trying to isolate France, render the political unification of Europe impossible and seek in vain to restore the Atlantic alliance on foundations which no longer exist.

The second goal requires similarly a radical change from the dogmatic insistence upon the restoration of an unrestorable *status quo* to the pragmatic adaptation to circumstances which for the time being are not subject to our control. We must narrow the gap between our comprehensive legal commitments and the limited sphere within which our interests and policies still coincide with those of our allies. Otherwise we shall run the risk, to which improvident great powers have succumbed in the past, *vide* Germany in 1914, of getting involved in a war not of our making and on behalf of interests not our own.

Finally, we must look beyond these short-term adaptations to the ultimate goal not only of our alliance policy but of our over-all foreign policies as well: the minimization of the risk of nuclear war. The substitution of a European nuclear deterrent for a multiplicity of national ones is a step in this direction. Political "Atlantic Union" would be

another step, impossible to achieve at present but to be sought for a not too distant future.

In the end, we must look for a settlement or at least decontamination of the great political issues which at present divide the world and conjure up the risk of nuclear war. We shall thus deprive the nuclear powers of the incentive to use nuclear weapons as instruments of their national policies. And we shall deal with the present crisis of the Western alliance and the policies, seeking first to take into account the new circumstances of the crisis and, then, to overcome the crisis itself not only as isolated moves aimed at short-term goals but also as steps toward the ultimate goal of banishing nuclear war itself.

Footnotes:

¹ *The New York Times*, February 14, 1964, p. 1

² *The Economist*, February 15, 1964, p. 587.