

BRITAIN AND NATO SINCE 1968

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P R E F A C E

For any country the potential aggressors' military strength rather than the size of the country and its economy is the decisive factor in deciding its defence policy. Despite its contraction from empire to nation, the strength of British Army has not been proportionately reduced. Its willingness to devote the maximum possible to defence in itself would not have deterred the potential aggressors from attacking Britain. Effective deterrence needed the American backing and the combined West European effort. Hence, Earnest Bevin, Britain's first post-War Foreign Secretary, realist as he was, sought the regular American support for the containment of Russia in Europe and the maintenance of Britain's position in the Mediterranean and the Middle East which were essential to maintain her world power position. This American support was institutionalized with the establishment of NATO. Since then NATO has been the most important factor in determining Britain's defence priorities.

The notable changes effected in Britain's defence policy in the sixties and seventies were in the direction of greater concentration in Europe and strengthening its commitments to NATO's military mechanism. This was clearly reflected in Britain's major Defence Reviews in

the late sixties and early seventies. Britain was an active but a cautious participant in the detente negotiations. In the developments that contributed to the crisis in detente in the late seventies, Britain actively co-operated with the other NATO members in responding to the Soviet activities in various parts of the world.

The last few years have witnessed persistent disagreements within the Atlantic Alliance over issues like TNF modernization and nuclear deterrence, East-West relations, crises in the Third World, etc. In all these Britain identified herself more with the NATO policy despite opposition from within and without. This increased identification with NATO strategy was the result of the realization that ultimately the defence of Britain has to start in Europe and that this is best assured by its continued membership in NATO. The recent conflict over the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic did help convince Britain of the role NATO plays in Britain's defence.

This dissertation attempts to analyse the actual role NATO plays in contemporary Britain's defence with emphasis on the period since 1968. The year 1968 is taken as the starting point as it was then that Britain formally announced her intentional retreat to Europe and

and NATO. The introductory chapter analyses the historical background which ultimately led to the British retreat to Europe and NATO. Chapter II deals with the British attitude towards NATO since 1968 to the present. Chapter III analyses British attitude to the most crucial issue, of late to test the NATO solidarity and resolve to meet the challenges to its security, namely, the Theatre Nuclear Weapons Modernization, and Chapter IV covers the Falklands war and the Allies attitude to Britain in time of her crisis. Chapter V is the Conclusion.

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CHAPTER I
I N T R O D U C T I O N

The political balance of power that emerged from the distribution of military power at the end of the Second World War virtually reduced all nations of Europe to the status of second or third rank powers which, to a considerable extent, were compelled to lean for protection up on one or the other of the super powers. The extent of that dependence determined the ability of those nations to pursue an independent foreign policy. However, unlike other West European nations, this was less true in the case of the United Kingdom. For, Britain was still a Great Power - one of the big three. It was one of the victors in the war. It was one of the three peace makers at Yalta and Potsdam and remained a major actor in world politics as it still was a colonial power also.

However, above all this physical pretence, one of the most important factors that made it possible for Britain to have a major say in shaping the post-war world was its assertive post-war political leadership, both in government and in opposition, which had a clear vision of the shape of things to come. In the government, it was provided by the Labour Party under the leadership of Clement Attlee; and, in the opposition by Sir Winston Churchill, the war-time Conservative Prime Minister.

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The first post-war Labour Government headed by Attlee, was quite confident in its ability to pursue an independent, balanced and effective foreign policy for Britain. This hope was widely shared by the British public as well as others elsewhere. It was generally expected that the Labour Ministry, with its socialist commitments, would help launch a "new more secure and peaceful international order". Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary in the Labour Government, had himself given some ground to the advocates of a Socialist foreign policy at the beginning of his tenure at the Foreign office. He implied that a Labour government would have a closer relationship with the Soviet Union and had spoken rhetorically of the "Left speaking to left in comradeship and confidence".¹ But this comradeship and confidence was a short lived phenomenon.

Faced with economic and political strains in a devastated Europe and with the prospects of a westward advance of the Soviet Union to fill the vacuum of power created by the defeat and division of Germany, the earlier hopes that Left will look to Left with confidence and hope had to be abandoned, and Bevin soon realised that American

1. Cited in Kenneth O'Morgan. Labour in Power 1945-51 (Oxford, 1984), p.240.

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Power had to be firmly anchored in Western Europe if the latter's economic health was to be restored and if an effective counter-weight to the Soviet Union was to be organised. It was out of this conviction of the need to anchor American Power on a regular basis in Western Europe, so as to effectively prevent Soviet Union from swallowing Western Europe, that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established in April 1949. An Analysis of the developments which led to such a change in the British conviction would help to clear the existing confusion today surrounding the future viability of the Alliance as a whole and to understand better as to how "uncertain" is the actual British commitment to the Atlantic Alliance.²

The first real test of Bevin's attitude came at the Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting, in London in September-October 1945, convened mainly to discuss the terms of peace settlements with Italy, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland. The pattern became established here, which the subsequent years were to confirm, of conflict between the British Foreign Secretary and his Russian counterpart in almost every point under discussion, leading

2. Michael Chiehester and John Wilkinson (eds.), The Uncertain Ally: British Defence Policy 1960-1990 (London, 1982).

to confrontations on both sides. By early 1946 tense relations between the British government and the Soviet leaders persisted in a wide variety of questions. Conflicts between Britain and Russia increased and multiplied on issues centred around Germany, Greece, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Far East. Britain held that Russia was anxious to discredit British Social democracy among the European working class.³

The true British perceptions of the Soviet Union and its satellites in this period was reflected in Winston Churchills' Fulton speech on 11 March 1946 in Missouri. Here Churchill took the opportunity, in the presence of American President Truman, to declare the existence of "an iron curtain across Europe" extending from Stettin in the North to Trieste in the South and an inexorable division of Europe into a Communist East and democratic West.⁴ Though this statement came from the most powerful Conservative leader in the Opposition, from the silence maintained by the Labour Government on this it was clear that the latter too subscribed to this view.

3. Cited in K.Morgan, n.1, p.244.

4. Winston Churchill. "The Sinews of Peace" speech made at Fulton Missouri in March 1946. For the Text of the speech see Lewis Broad, Winston Churchill: The Years of Achievement (London, 1964), p.477 ff.

At the meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers at Paris from March 1946 onwards, the United States had generally stood by Britain on every major issue in dispute. So too was France which was represented by Foreign Minister Georges Bidault. The final breakdown of the substantive negotiations with the Soviet Union took place at the Moscow conferences of the Council of Foreign Ministers in March 1947. Thus one is constrained to believe that there was hardly anything that could be specifically called a "Socialist Foreign Policy" in 1945-46, with the Labour government, at odds with the Soviet Union in Europe and in the Middle East, and, seeking the active support of the capitalist United States.

By the summer of 1947 the British Foreign office confirmed the general feeling of pessimism about the possibility of any new treaty with the Soviet Union. "The breach", commented Maurice Peterson, "between East and West was held to be an accomplished fact."⁵ The political turmoil, aided by the Communists in France, and the Communist infiltration into Greece still worsened the situation. The most vital case of all, the issue around which the cold war centred, however, was Germany.

5. Maurice Peterson's Minutes of Policy Towards Foreign Office Russia Committee, 14th August 1947 (F.O 371/66371, N.9549). Cited in K. Morgan, n.1, p.249.

The idea of the Labour government in 1945 was to ensure that Germany, while restored socially and economically, could never again become a threat militarily to Britain as in the past.

Initially, the Anglo-American relations were under considerable strain over differing occupation policies in Germany. However, the Soviet policies in Eastern Europe especially in the eastern zone of Germany steadily brought American and British occupation policies in Germany into closer rapport. By May 1946, Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, presented the cabinet with the opinion that the danger of Russia has become greater than a revived Germany.⁶ The worst possibility of all, for Bevin, was a revived Germany making common cause with Russia on the lines of Rappalo Treaty of 1922.⁷ To avoid the recurrence of the German threat, the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences had agreed among the four big powers - the USA, USSR, UK and France - to strive for the demilitarization, dismemberment, disarmament and de-Nazification of Germany.⁸ But differences

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6. Bevin's Paper drawn up for the Cabinet and Commonwealth Prime Ministers. Cited in Allan Bullock. Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary (London 1983), p.267.
7. Ibid., p.267. Rappalo Treaty: Treaty signed on 16 April 1922 between Germany and Russia which extended recognition to each other and clandestinely, with Russian connivance, provided for German rearmament against the Provisions of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles.
8. Alfred M. de Zayas. Nemesis At Potsdam: The Anglo-Americans and the Expulsion of the Germans: Background, Execution, Consequences (London, 1977), pp.228 ff (Apendix).

emerged shortly at various levels between the occupation powers which resulted in the abandonment of a unified approach to the German problem.

Thus, the prospects of Soviet expansionism, coupled with the Western counter-strategy of containment, finally led to the division of Europe into two hostile blocs, with the border passing through the heart of Germany. And Germany, geographically in the central Europe, became the centre of East-West confrontation also. The British and American governments were now convinced that the Russians intended to retain permanent control over the Eastern zone to build up their own armed strength, and for other economic and political reasons. Therefore, it seemed vital to build up some kind of a democratic alternative in the zones occupied in Germany by the Western powers. From the middle of 1946 onwards America took the lead in resisting Russian claims in Germany which was firmly supported by Bevin.⁹

Bevin now thought that unifying the British and American zones in Germany might force the Russians to lift the 'iron curtain' and open up the eastern zone. However, in reality it permanently institutionalised the division of central Europe into East and West. In this crucially

9. Bullock, n.6, p.262 ff.

important area Anglo-American political and military collaboration became a reality. The German 'settlement' also ensured the permanent stationing of US troops on the European continent. Thus the British and American occupation zones in Germany were merged into one economic unit in 1947. This was a decisive turning point in the post-war history of Europe.

Faced with the pressing problems of German economic and political recovery and European economic problems in general, the American Secretary of State General George Marshall delivered a famous speech at Harward on 5 June 1947. It was to inaugurate a new era in the foreign policy of the United States and the history of the world. Bevin and his French colleague Georges Bidault acted like what Groom called 'Midwives' to the Marshall Aid Programme and the economic recovery of Europe.¹⁰

Bevin seized up on the offer of Marshall Aid and transformed it into a new basis for the political, economic and, ultimately, military development of the North Atlantic world. For him this aid offer was the last chance of propping up the toppling economies of Western Europe not only to restore their economic life but also to encourage

10. A.J.R. Groom, "The British Deterrent" in John Baylis (ed.), British Defence Policy in a Changing World (London, 1977), p.124.

their regimes to stand up to Communist pressures both internal and external. This enthusiasm shown by Bevin in mobilizing the Western European support for Marshall plan also helped to cement Anglo-American relations. Although Britain and France had taken care to avoid any impression of the formation of a Western bloc, this was the predictable outcome of Marshall's speech.

The Soviet Union decided not to participate in the Marshall Aid plan and the European Recovery Programme and persuaded the East European countries under its aegis not to do so either and in turn revived Communist International in the form of the 'Cominform'.

By 1947 the broad ranks of Labour M.P.s and Ministers now accepted the diagnosis offered by Bevin and the Foreign office of "irreconcilable Soviet hostility" towards Britain. Pierson Dixon noted of the Foreign Affairs debate on 19 June 1947 that "the whole House was soberly anti-Russian."¹¹ As the Labour government ran into mounting difficulties at home Bevin's Foreign policy was a triumphant experience. It was in line with the doctrine of containment which was powerfully advocated by the United States. Bevin was now talking in October

11. Pierson Dixon. Double Diploma (London, 1968), pp.245-46.

1947 of a possible new political grouping in the West including besides Britain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg, Eire, Portugal and Italy.

The final Council of Foreign ministers conference was held in New York in December 1947 which led to a total breakdown between Russia and the Western powers. To Bevin this outcome was not unexpected. It made the need for filling up the power vacuum in Western Europe all the more urgent. At secret meetings at the British Foreign Office on 17th and 18th December 1947 Bevin outlined to George Marshall and Georges Bidault his vision of Western Union. On 13 January 1948 Bevin formally told George Marshall and President Harry S. Truman that Britain now envisaged a new political and defence arrangement between herself and France and the Benelux countries. A few days later, in a major speech in the House of Commons on 22 January 1948 Bevin publicly launched the idea of Western European Union.¹²

Bevin outlined the spread of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe in terms almost identical with those of Churchill's 'iron curtain' speech at Fulton. He recalled the refusal of Russia to join the European Recovery

12. U.K., Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Series 5, Vol. 446, Session 1947-48, cols. 383-409.

Programme (ERP) and the creation of the Cominform as a Centre for international espionage to punish Britain and France for launching the ERP and spoke with unusual eloquence of the political, economic and spiritual unity of Western Europe.¹³

Developments in the Western capitals were rapid from this point and on 17 March 1948 'Western Union' was given practical shape by the Brussels Treaty under which Britain, France and the three Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg) enjoined in a mutual collective self-defence arrangement for over the next fifty years. The Dunkirk Treaty between Britain and France in 1947 had formally named Germany as the potential aggressor. But no such future enemy was specified in the Brussels Treaty. This marked the changing perceptions in the British Foreign Office.¹⁴

Simultaneous with the conclusion of the Brussels Treaty, negotiations were going on apace to create the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC later to become OECD - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development - with the inclusion of Canada, Japan and the United States), the machinery to implement

13. Ibid.

14. Bullock, n.6, pp.517 ff.

Marshall's ERP. This was mainly in response to Marshall's plea that the countries of Western Europe must show what they were prepared to do for themselves and for each other before asking for further American assistance.¹⁵

But the Labour government in Britain was not so much enthusiastic about the closer economic integration of Western Europe. Bevin's order of priority was first, the economic restoration of Western Europe without too much of integration which could imply some supranational institutional arrangement, to which Britain was always averse, and then to secure a more lasting American military commitment so as to help preserve the existing national identity and reduce the increasing sense of insecurity. There were hectic moves, led by Sir Oliver Franks,¹⁶ for Britain to bring the United States into the new fabric of Western European defence. Gladwyn Jebb, a leading Labour M.P., headed a powerful British delegation to Washington from 22 March 1948 onwards from which the idea of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to deal with defence and security emerged.¹⁷

15. Ibid., p.531.

16. Sir Oliver Frank was the British Ambassador to the United States when discussion for the establishment of NATO took place.

17. For a detailed analysis of the circumstances leading to the establishment of NATO and British role in it. See A.Bullock, n.6, pp.513-48.

At first the United States was still reluctant to have a permanent military commitment three thousand miles away from its own borders. But the pattern of developments in early 1948 - the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February; the threat of further Soviet pressures in Norway; the deteriorating situation in Germany which led to the Berlin blockade of 1948-49 and the Western Allies response by an airlift, the rift between Tito and Stalin which led to Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform on 28 June 1948 - all pushed an increasingly receptive anti-Soviet American public opinion in going for the integration of Euro-American defensive mechanism.

The pressure from the Brussels Treaty, under the British initiative, for a long term American Military Commitment to Europe became overwhelming. Bevin, Robert Schuman and Paul Henry Spaak¹⁸ gave the idea strong support at Paris on 25-26 October 1948 which was found support also in George Marshall. In due course North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formally established at Washington on 4 April 1949. This marked the culmination of a process of the British Left drifting away from the initial hope of talking to the Left with 'comradeship and

18. Paul Henry Spaak was then Belgian Foreign Minister and Robert Schuman was his French counterpart.

confidence' to a process of the Left initiating an alignment with the Right prepared if necessary, to fight against the Left East of the Odder-Niesse line.¹⁹ For Britain, it was a crucial decision in strategy and defence policy. The most prominent personality who worked hard for the creation of NATO was British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin. "These historic and fateful events", rightly commented Kenneth Morgan, "formed an extra ordinary saga of achievement by Ernest Bevin. The period between Marshall's Harvard speech on 5 June 1947 and the establishment of NATO in April 1949 was a period of sustained creativity on the part of Labour Foreign Secretary Bevin."²⁰

All these events weakened the critics of British Foreign Policy even within the Parliamentary Labour Party. Richard Crossman who, in the spring of 1947, gave a call for the rejection of any alignment with the United States against the Soviet Union, now came out openly to support the government's foreign policy. Through a pamphlet in the 'Keep Left' Crossman declared that "the government was right to resist the Russian efforts through the 'Cominform'

19. Odder-Niesse line is the dividing line between Poland and East Germany which to the west mark the actual dividing line between the Communist East and Capitalist West or Free World.

20. K.Morgan, n.1, p.276.

therewith. These Boards have been empowered to establish air laboratories to enable them to perform their functions efficiently. In fact, no separate machinery was created for this purpose. Instead, the existing water pollution control boards were conferred with an additional responsibility for prevention and control of air pollution.

The Government of India has enacted another important statute with a broader range, known as the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986 (hereinafter cited as Environment Act). The Act seeks to achieve the following objectives: protection and regulation of discharge of environmental pollutants, handling of hazardous substances, speedy response in the event of accidents threatening environmental damage and giving deterrent punishment to those who endanger human environment, safety and health. Under this Act, the Central Government has been empowered to take all appropriate measures to prevent and control pollution and to establish an effective machinery to achieve this objective. The Act enables the citizen to approach a court provided he has given a notice of 60 days. A similar commensurate amendment was also inserted in the Air Act in 1987 and the Water Act in 1988. The Act also authorises the Central Government to issue directions for closer, prohibition or regulation of any industry's operation. It also authorises the Central Government to stop or regulate the supply of electricity or water or any other service directly without obtaining a court order.

However, NATO was seen as a great achievement of the post-War Labour government's foreign policy. In the first place it was the means by which Britain was enabled to harmonize her interest and obligations in Europe with her ties with the English speaking world and without sacrificing her interest in the Commonwealth. Secondly, from Britain's point of view it was the ideal type of international organization with no Federalist overtures but with maximum scope for co-operation. More important of all, NATO was not simply an assurance of American help in the event of war but it was also a framework for building up an effective counterpoise to the Soviet Power and on the effectiveness of which the sustenance and furtherance of a whole lot of values and institutions, which Britain has been cherishing for centuries depended.

The Labour government preferred the Atlantic ties to any supranational European system. Hence it rejected the various other proposals for a higher level of European integration in the economic and defence fields.²³ The Labour government was convinced that only within an Atlantic alliance system, underpinned by American power, could reliable restraints be placed on a rearmed West

23. For example, Britain rejected the Schuman Plan for European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the Pleven's proposal for a European Defence Community.

Germany and the Eastern bloc. The Government's policy was well reflected in what the conservative leader Winston S.Churchill framed in 1930: "we are with Europe but not of it. We are linked but not comprised. We are interested and associated but not absorbed (in Europe)."²⁴

Despite Labour's known hostility towards armaments and arms manufactures defence expenditures remained at a high level through out the 1945-51 period with about one fifth of the GNP spent on defence. During the first winter of the Korean war in 1950-51 the proportion of the budget spent on defence rose from 6 per cent to 10 per cent. In general, the Labour administration accepted the military aspects and financial costs of Britain's status as a great power, but, at the same time, recognised that Britain's own capability to sustain the great power status had already contracted and that it was possible only with the American connection and the Atlantic Alliance.

Under the first post-War Government, Britain's Atlantic connexions were not without friction. There were differences between Britain and America over the Anglo-

24. Cited in Geofry Godwin, "British Foreign Policy Since 1945: The Long Odyssey to Europe" in M.Michael Liefer ed., Constraints and Adjustments in British Foreign Policy (London, 1972), p.39.

Iranian oil dispute, over the Palestine question, Greece, Turkey, etc. In the Middle East Britain and France were distrusted by many Americans as "uncertainly reformed burglars who might stray back into their old ways".²⁵

With American refusal to share nuclear information with Britain, as was promised by Roosevelt during the War, Attlee and Bevin took the decision to go ahead on their own with an independent nuclear deterrent. Bevin insisted that it would be dangerous politically, to leave the United States with a monopoly of atomic weapons and Attlee also shared this view fully.

The differences between Britain and the United States were felt more during the Conservative administration in Britain in the fifties especially over the resolution of the Korean crisis and the Anglo-French intervention in Egypt over the Suez Canal issue. Britain was not happy with the American handling of the Korean crisis. In the Suez conflict not only that Britain did not get the expected support from the United States but took an openly anti-British position in the United Nations, and elsewhere, which ultimately led to the much humiliating British withdrawal from the Suez. A prime source of Anglo-American friction during this period was that, outside Europe each had a very different scale of priorities, the Pacific and the Far East

25. Ibid., p.40.

being the high priority for the USA and the Middle East was for Britain. Still British Foreign policy at the end of the 1950s was oriented first towards the United States, second towards the Commonwealth and only third towards Western Europe.

What James Wyllie characterised the position of contemporary Britain as one of "contraction of capabilities"²⁶ was equally true of Britain in the forties and fifties also. In fact it was in the forties that the contraction started as the empire had already started showing signs of cracking up. Britain was the world's first nuclear power in aspiration if not in fact. In the summer of 1941, a Committee, set up to consider the possibilities of producing atomic bombs during the war and their military effect, concluded that such bombs were possible and that "inspite of the very large expenditure we consider that the destructive effect, both material and moral, is so great that every effort should be made to produce bombs of this kind." He added that "...no nation would care to risk being caught without a weapon of such decisive possibilities."²⁷ The contraction of

26. James H. Wyllie, The Influence of British Arms (London, 1984), p. 87

27. Cited in Groom, n. 10, p. 124. Today's Labour Party's rhetorics about unilateral nuclear disarmament, withdrawal of American TNW's etc. should be understood in the background of this British aspiration. This aspect is elaborately dealt within Chapter III.

capabilities was evident from the fact that before Britain could truly conceive the idea America could deliver the weapons of this 'decisive possibilities'.

Harold Wilson's first Labour government of 1964-70 is "credited" for presiding over what has been described as Britain's "retreat" into Europe and for attempting to abandon British commitments East of Suez. In fact this process also began much earlier. What Wilson did was only to recognize the already accomplished facts and frame a policy to suit the changed situations. Actually the idea of establishing a proper balance between the country's economic strength and defence goes back to the late fifties when Duncan Sandys was appointed the Minister for Defence in 1957 by Harold Macmillan with the responsibility to effect a fundamental reshaping of the armed forces with an emphasis on the nuclear deterrent. It was emphasised in the Defence White Paper of 1957 and 1958: "...it is in the true interest of defence that the claims of military expenditure should be considered in conjunction with the need to maintain the country's financial and economic strength."²⁸

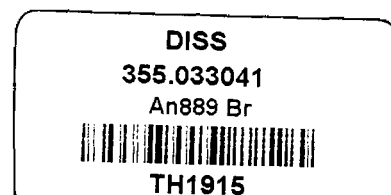
28. U.K. HMSO, Defence: Outline of Future Policy, Cmnd 124 (London, 1957); and, Report on Defence: British Contribution to Peace and Security, Cmnd 363 (London, 1958).

Sandys also proposed the "possession of an appreciable element of nuclear deterrent power of our own which would strengthen the alliance, reassure the continental allies and provide a means of assurance should the U.S. revert to isolation."²⁹ It was in conformity with this idea of deterrent that the strength of the conventional forces, the backbone of which was 690,000 armed forces reduced to 375,000 by 1962.

Thus originally the ideas of 'retreating' to Europe, strengthening the Atlantic Alliance, reliance on nuclear deterrence, etc. did not start with the defence reviews of 1964, 1966 or 1968 but from the days of the bitter experiences in Suez and the subsequent realization of risks involved in pursuing a global policy without sufficient resources to support it. Hence Britain decided, instead of abandoning her possessions outside Europe, to 'transfer' the same to the Alliance responsibility so that it could be effectively retained with lesser financial liability for her.

Britain's concern for the superiority of the Warsaw Pact conventional forces is also not a new phenomenon. In the 1958 Defence White Paper, presented by Duncan Sandys, it was clearly stated that "...the West on the other hand

29. Ibid.



TH. 1915



relies for its defence primarily up on the deterrent effect of its vast stockpile of nuclear weapons and its capacity to deliver them. The democratic western nations will never start a war against Russia. But it must be well understood that if Russia were to launch a major attack on them even with conventional forces only, they would have to hitback with strategic nuclear weapons. In fact the strategy of NATO is based on the frank recognition that a full scale Soviet attack could not be repelled without resort to a massive nuclear bombardment of the sources of power in Russia."³⁰

Even while taking this policy posture in late 1950s, Britain complained that NATO's nuclear forces in defence of Europe was very low. Thus the need to strengthen NATO's nuclear deterrent forces also was felt in the late 1950s itself. Britain's compulsion to subscribe to such a policy was not motivated by strategic considerations alone. The government realized that nuclear deterrent meant better value for less money than on conventional forces and thus it was also a means to reduce the claim of defence on national budget.

30. Ibid., para 12, p.2.

All these developments in British defence strategy and policy marked the changing perceptions in the British Foreign office about its potential and need to maintain a global strategy. Britain now started thinking of European defence with which Britain began to identify herself. Britain also began to look towards Europe for increased cooperation in various fields. Britain stopped thinking that the "channel is wider than the Atlantic" and that Britain's geographic proximity with Western Europe is something natural and that the fate of Western Europe is, by nature, interlinked.

This geographic proximity and identity of economic and socio-political systems obviously necessitated an equally strong military cooperation so that their common identity could be preserved against the onslaught of antagonistic systems. North Atlantic Alliance was the physical demonstration of this resolve. Accordingly, Britain started looking towards Europe for increased co-operation from the early sixties.

Between 1960 and 1965 British Government took their first substantial steps towards European industrial collaboration in civil and military technology proposing the formation of a European Launcher Development Organization

in 1961. This was to provide an international framework for the continued development of British rocket technology after the cancellation of the Bluestreak, helping to found the parallel European Space Research Organisation in 1962 and in the same year signing a bilateral Anglo-French agreement to develop a supersonic civil transport aircraft (Concorde). In the 1960s a number of collaborative projects in the defence field were agreed first with the French and then with the German, Italian and Dutch.

The initial caution and hesitation with which successive British Governments approached the continental commitments - in military political and economic terms - were justified from a British perspective by Britain's continuing responsibilities for its colonies and Commonwealth and by its special relationship with the United States. But disillusionment with the Commonwealth was felt on various issues in the 1960s. This downgraded the symbolic importance of the Commonwealth link for British government and on political and defence issues it came to turn more easily to its European than to the Commonwealth partners.

Besides Britain's bitter experiences in the Suez, various other developments contributed to this disillusionment. Harold Wilson's attempt to mediate, in the Vietnam

War, between the Lyndon Johnson Administration and North Vietnam was a dismal failure and caused some irritation on both sides of the Atlantic. Wilson's attempt to mediate in the Indo-Pakistan War in September 1965 had to give second place to the successful Soviet mediation at Tashkent. This period also witnessed rapid deterioration in the Commonwealth relations for Britain, owing to the passing of the Immigration Bill in 1965, the unilateral declaration of independence by Rhodesia, the Nigerian Civil war, etc. which in turn was reflected in the fast diminishing economic relations between Britain and the Commonwealth. These developments foiled Wilson's initial plan to pursue a global policy. He had actually, on assuming office in 1964, started with the presumption that Britain was still a world power.

However, these unexpected developments convinced Harold Wilson of Britain's reduced capability to pursue a global policy and the consequent need to review her defence posture and necessitated a reconsideration of Labour Party's stand on joining the European Economic Community (EEC). Through the 1966 Defence review an attempt was made to prevent a lessening of Britain's military role overseas by devising a new and cheaper strategy. The Labour Government felt that Britain's

overseas commitments were responsible for the nation's recurrent economic crises and that it adversely affected the country's balance of payment position. The decision to devalue the Pound in 1967 confirmed the validity of this argument. Also it was felt that the British forces were not large enough to cover all the commitments left by the previous Conservative governments. These constraints made it imperative to revise Britain's defence policy. First in the 1966 defence review they tried to find a cheaper strategic formulation which would allow them to cover the existing range of overseas commitments within the confines of a smaller budget. This having failed it was emphasised that only major foreign policy decisions could open the way to economies in defence expenditure. Accordingly a decision to initiate a full scale defence review was announced in the House of Commons on 16 January 1968. This was thought to mark a turning point in Britain's global defence policy which in turn was to affect her status as a global power. The following chapter analyses the actual effect of these reviews and the subsequent ones on Britain in particular and on Euro-Atlantic relations in general.

CHAPTER II

BRITAIN'S DEFENCE POLICY WITHIN NATO SINCE 1968

The period between 1968 and 1985 is very important in the history of Britain's defence policy as this is the period in which, on the one hand, Britain made her intentional 'retreat' to Europe and NATO and, on the other hand, of late, its need to retain the membership in NATO has been increasingly questioned. This period is also important for NATO as such as it was during this period that, under Britain's initiative a peculiarly European identity was sought to be attached to NATO without causing any dilution to its Trans-Atlantic connection in which essentially, even today, the strength of NATO resides.

For various reasons (mentioned in the previous chapter) Britain by late sixties realized that her security is inseparably linked with the security of Western Europe which again depends largely upon the nature of East-West relations. For Britain the essential framework of her post war foreign policy had already been laid by the first post-War Labour Government of Clement Attlee (1945-51). This basis would not have been much different even if the Conservatives had been in power during this period for, as

it has been said, no nation is entirely the master of its own fate.¹ The international political conjuncture is a major determinant in shaping a country's foreign policy especially in an increasingly interdependent world like ours. All governments since then, Labour and Conservative, have been the heirs of the Attlee legacy and have had to work within the framework, developing the implications of strategies initiated in the early post-war years. Commitment to NATO is only one of them.

On the question of European security there was hardly any fundamental difference in the outlook of the four British Prime Ministers in the sixties and early seventies - Harold MacMillan, Alec Douglas Home, Harold Wilson and Edward Heath - all of whom took steps to organically link Britain's destiny with Western Europe. All of them had hoped that Western Europe would eventually evolve a common defence and foreign policy. In the late sixties Harold Wilson thought that since Britain's security lay fundamentally in Western Europe and the Atlantic Alliance, it should give up its role outside Europe and the Mediterranean.

1. Walter Laquer, America, Europe and the Soviet Union (New Brunswick, 1984), p.83.

However, this retreat to Europe intended to strengthen the European arm of the Alliance was not to be achieved by increasing Europe's dependence on the United States, but only by ensuring that Europe's voice is adequately heard by both the Super Powers before decisions involving Europe's interests are taken. Britain expressed her dissatisfaction over the then existing imbalance and dependency relationship between Western Europe and the United States as early as 1967 during the administration of Harold Wilson:

The task of the great European powers - and I instanced France and Britain - was not to be mere messenger boys between the two power blocs. We had a bigger role to play... bigger than merely waiting in the ante-rooms while the United States and the Soviet Union settled everything directly between themselves.²

Similar sentiments were expressed by the Conservative circles also. For instance, Edward Heath, then a Conservative leader later to become the Prime Minister, while delivering the Hodgkin lectures in 1967 at the Harvard University said:

If we conceive of NATO and the Alliance as resting on the two columns of the American and the European Military efforts, our present troubles are caused by the weakness

2. Harold Wilson, Labour Government 1964-1970: A Personal Record (London, 1971), p.335.

of the European Pillar. It needs binding together and building up not necessarily to the height of American Pillar, but enough to carry a fair share of the weight.³

On all these Britain did not stop at rhetorics. Instead it chose to effect changes in her own defence policy. First a defence review was announced in 1966 in which it tried to find a cheaper strategic formulation which would allow them to cover the existing range of overseas commitments within the confines of a smaller budget. This having failed it was emphasised that only major foreign policy decisions could open the way to economies in defence expenditure. Accordingly the plan for a major defence review was announced by the Labour Government of Wilson in the House of Commons on 16 January 1968 so as to make it possible to effectively meet the changed situations.⁴

Justifying the review the Secretary of State for Defence said:

It has been a fundamental principle of the current examination that reductions in capability whether in terms of manpower or equipment must be accompanied by reductions in the tasks imposed by the commitments...

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3. Edward Heath, Old World, New Horizons: Britain, the Common Market and the Atlantic Alliance (London, 1970) p.75.
 4. U.K. Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Series 5, Vol.756 Session 1967-68, cols.1580-85.

we have no intention of allowing a repetition of the situation which existed in 1964 when, because of the lack of balance between military tasks and resources our forces were seriously overstretched.⁵

If this was the military rationale for the review there were other economic reasons too which were recognized by the government also. Along with the defence review it was also decided to carry out "a detailed and searching review of the whole range of public expenditure as one of the measures necessary for a radical solution of the country's balance of payments position."⁶

The major decisions announced by the government in the review were as follows:

- (a) Britain's defence efforts in future will be concentrated mainly in Europe and the North Atlantic area;
- (b) We shall accelerate the withdrawal of our forces from Malaysia and Singapore and complete it by the end of 1971. We shall also withdraw from the Persian Gulf by the same date.
- (c) Service manpower will be eventually reduced by more than 75,000 spread over a short time.
- (d) Carrier force will be phased out as soon as the withdrawal from Malaysia, Singapore and the Persian Gulf have been completed and the rate of some new naval construction will be reduced.
- (e) The Brigade of Gurkhas will be run down to 6,000 by 1971.

5. UK, HMSO, Statement on the Defence Estimates 1968-69
Cmnd 3540 (London, 1968), para 2, p.2.

6. Ibid., para 1, p.1.

- (f) The order for 50 F-III aircraft has been cancelled and the Royal Air Force (RAF) transport force will be cut.
- (g) No special capability for use outside Europe will be maintained when our withdrawal from Singapore and Malaysia and the Persian Gulf is complete; and
- (h) We shall, however, retain a general capability based in Europe, including in the United Kingdom which can be deployed overseas as in our judgement circumstances demand and can support United Nations operations as necessary.

These decisions meant big changes in the role, size and shape of the British forces, their equipment and support. Even before these decisions were formally announced Britain had already started withdrawing its forces from various parts which included the withdrawal of a total of 12,000 service personnel from the Far East; 18,000 from Saudi Arabia and elsewhere and a further 5,000 from out of the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR). Britain's force declaration to SEATO was also reduced. However, the review asserted that Britain's interest in certain areas especially the Middle East and the Far East was to be maintained and for this her membership in the SEATO and CENTO was to be continued besides keeping intact her commitment to other dependancies. The Hong Kong Garrison was also to be retained after the review.⁸

7. Ibid., para 3, pp.2-3.

8. Ibid., p.3.

The most notable point in the review was Britain's withdrawal from various parts of the world and reassertion of her commitment to remain a European Power as an integral part of NATO. "The foundation of Britain's Security Policy," the review said, "lies in the maintenance of peace in Europe.... Our first priority, therefore, must still be to give fullest possible support to the North Atlantic Alliance."⁹

Britain's "retreating to Europe" policy and re-dedication to the Atlantic Alliance had its effect on the NATO strategy also as was reflected in the new defence planning initiated in the NATO Defence Ministers meeting in May 1968. The NATO Military authorities developed a new strategic concept to replace that of 1956 (from massive retaliation to flexible response). The British Secretary of State for Defence claimed credit for this change. Major proposals in the new strategic formulations were: (1) it was recognised that the assessment of the Military threat, which the Alliance forces face, should take into account the political intentions as well as the military strength of the Warsaw Pact countries; (2) it was recognized that Britain should receive timely, possibly prolonged, warning of any change in the political situation that might make war in Europe more likely; (3) it was

9. Ibid., para 6, pp.3-4.

accepted that NATO strategy should be based on the forces that member countries were prepared to provide; and (4) it was agreed, within the total resources available to NATO adjustments should be made particularly in the air forces with the object of extending the conventional phase of hostilities should war breakout; this was to give more time in which any decisions to use nuclear weapon could be taken.¹⁰

This defence review marked a fundamental change in Britain's defence posture. Britain, partially out of her own domestic economic compulsions and partially in response to the changed international political situations, was forced to reconsider her whole defence policy commitments which were made more in response to the immediate post-war situations. Now the British efforts were concentrated on establishing a viable West European defence policy. "These efforts", Vivekanandan rightly observed, "emanated from the realization that Britain cannot carry out any large scale defence responsibility (including the retention of the still existing colonies and the consequent military presence there) single handedly

10. Ibid., para 8, pp.3-4.

whether in Europe or outside."¹¹ The immediate Alliance response to the British call to change the NATO strategy had partially recognized and redressed Britain's grievances expressed at various levels about ignoring the European interests by the Super Powers.

The developments in Europe in the late sixties was also supportive of the British policy of strengthening NATO defence. The most notable of such developments was the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union and her allies in 1968. This event further necessitated a rekindling of interest in a militarily viable and a politically unified NATO for all its members. The efficient and swift conventional occupation of Czechoslovakia highlighted the deficiencies and vulnerabilities of NATO's own conventional forces levels and military option.

The prospect was particularly worrying for the European NATO members since even after the invasion pressure continued in the United States for a severe reduction in its conventional forces stationed in Europe. Once again, in the NATO ministerial council meeting in 1968 after the

11. B. Vivekanandan, "British Outlook for West European Security," India Quarterly, October-December 1973 (Delhi, 1973), p.312 (emphasis added).

invasion of Czechoslovakia, Britain was able to convince the rest of the members about the existence of continuing Soviet threat to the Alliance as a whole and particularly Western Europe. Hence the meeting reaffirmed the renewed political solidarity among its allies who agreed that the continued existence of the organization was more than ever necessary and that they would work towards the improvement of NATO forces in "order to provide a better capability for defence far forward as possible". This decision inevitably committed NATO members to substantial development of conventional forces. Britain also very quickly responded to this situation and in February 1969 announced its agreement to contribute to the establishment of a new on-call Allied Naval Force in the Mediterranean and to make other improvements in its conventional commitments.¹²

The invasion of Czechoslovakia highlighted the military role of NATO for Britain as well as to other European NATO members. But politically it still wanted to seek secure, peaceful and mutually beneficial relations between East and West and accordingly work was to continue on formulating policies for detente. However, what was not

12. U.K.Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Series 5, Vol.777 Session 1968-69, col.73.

foreseen was the speed with which a climate conducive to the resumption of detente policies would emerge as the SALT negotiations opened on 17 November 1969 at Helsinki.

For Britain one of the implications of the Czechoslovakian crisis and the opening of SALT talks was that the Soviet Union and the United States placed the certainty and lack of mutual risk, associated with the status quo, above the probable benefits of unchecked political developments and change in Europe. It also fostered the thoughts in many European minds that America, with its bitter experiences in Vietnam, was willing to settle issues vital to Europe's security over the heads of her allies - if this meant a reduction of the burden and the risks of her military involvement in Europe.

Britain, which as a nuclear power had a very deep interest in the progress of the SALT talks, clearly felt that her relations with Washington were not strong enough to ensure that her interests would be considered in the negotiations. In the past also whenever Britain felt that its voice was not listened to, it always took the lead in formulating a 'European Opinion' so as to make it more effective. The same policy was adopted here also. Britain now became the leading advocate of the creation of a

'European defence identity' within NATO so as to ensure that the European members could maximise their influence on the negotiations by consulting together and speaking with a common voice. Thus, Britain and her European allies, by late sixties, came to regard membership in NATO as an invaluable channel of communication and influence with respect to all kinds of negotiations between East and West as well as between Western Europe and the United States. For Britain, so also for other West European states, the best way to influence the shape of the political reality in Europe was to work within NATO rather than outside it.

The Conservative Government that followed the Labour in 1970 again tried to re-establish Britain's world role and it marked a reversal of Labour's policy of confining to Europe. While accepting NATO as Britain's first strategic priority, it declared the Conservative Government's first objective to be the resumption, within Britain's available resources, of a proper share of responsibility for the preservation of peace and stability in the world. Edward Heath, the new Prime Minister asserted that "the voice of Britain is going to be louder and clearer than it has been and it will be an unmistakably British voice." However, Heath himself became aware of

the constraints in pursuing a global policy in course of time.

Deviating from the 1968 Defence Review commitment, the new Conservative Government was, at least initially, able to think in terms of spreading or retaining Britain's commitment beyond Europe and NATO area mainly because the detente negotiations were already on and moving in the direction of recognizing the status quo in Europe. Besides this, the nuclear deterrence and the balance of terror based on mutually assured destruction (MAD) could allow these former colonial powers to venture further adventures in various parts of the world. Britain also did not get an enthusiastic response from her European neighbours when she wanted to re-establish her European identity. Some of the newly emerged European dominant powers were reluctant to recognize Britain's European identity. The period between the late fifties and the early seventies was notable for this British endeavour to be fully European and the French-led resistance to the Anglo-Saxons.

Beyond this political rationale, militarily also, Britain felt it necessary to keep alive her interest beyond Europe. Britain was always very sceptical about Soviet

motives behind the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) which eventually led to the Helsinki Final Act in 1975.¹³ Heath's Conservative Government was quite apprehensive of the Soviet motives in Europe and elsewhere. For Heath the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was an affirmation that Moscow still had the intention to use force to defend interests. In a speech in London on 12 November 1973 he voiced his fear of the unchecked growth of Russian Power:

Over the last few years the relative military power of the United States, Russia and Western Europe has been changing. The Soviet Union has achieved nuclear parity with the United States. This means that the Soviet Union can negotiate from a position of strength in the talks on strategic arms limitations.¹⁴

Besides, Britain believed that the security of Western Europe always remained under the shadow of the potential threat of a militarily strong Soviet Union. These genuine fears actually convinced Britain of the need to strengthen the European arm of NATO through increased British integration into NATO instead of the initial plan to stretch the already weak British arm beyond the NATO area. This idea was reflected in Heath's later statement:

13. For Helsinki Final Act see, R.K.Jain, Detente in Europe: Implications for Asia (Delhi, 1977), Appendix 12, pp.311-32.

14. Edward Heath's speech at Lord Mayor's Banquet in London on 12 November 1973. British High Commission in India (New Delhi) BIS, B.487, 13 November 1973, p.2.

It would be foolish to disregard the constantly increasing armed strength of the Soviet Union and the old-fashioned class-ridden views still so predominant in the speeches and writings of communist ideologues. We must not, therefore, ignore our defences. Fundamental to this is the continued alliance between Europe and North America.¹⁵

This understanding about the uncertain Soviet motives determined British attitude to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Outlining his government's general approach in the CSCE Heaths said in March 1972:

...what I want to see emerge from a conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe is a Europe which is more secure. We all want to live in a continent in which attempts inspired from abroad to undermine the Society and institutions of each nation are brought to an end. And we want to see genuine measures of practical cooperation.¹⁶

Accordingly in the MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks) and the CSCE Britain suggested various practical measures to promote greater co-operation in Europe, especially in the humanitarian and other levels, so as to effect a lifting of the 'iron curtain' in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and to help build up confidence among the people of Europe. Britain emphasised that the

15. British High Commission in India, BIS, B 142, 17 March, 1972, p.3.

16. Ibid.

relative stability between the two collective security systems (the NATO and the Warsaw Pact) of Europe must not be disturbed.

Britain apprehended that the Soviet Union was looking towards a situation in which "sheer disparity of military strength would leave Western Europe with no convincing strategy and no confidence in its ability to sustain a confrontation if one occurred."¹⁷ Since it was not clear "whether the Russians are genuinely interested in the resolution of outstanding major issues or merely in western endorsement of the status quo in Europe on Soviet terms," Britain wanted the Western policies to be governed by the twin objectives of defence and detente; and that while the West would engage the Soviet Union and its allies in discussion to achieve a real and lasting relaxation of tensions between the East and West, the Military strength of NATO must be maintained at levels sufficient to deter aggression.¹⁸

Similar scepticism marked British attitude to the MBFR. In the British calculation MBFR is fraught with grave risks that once it takes place it may not be possible

17. UK Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Series 5, Vol. 812, Session 1970-71, col. 1416.

18. UK, HMSO, Statement on the Defence Estimates 1971, Cmnd 4592 (London 1971), p. 3.

to maintain the balance between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact in Europe. Britain rightly feared that it would have a weakening effect on the NATO and that the balance might tilt in favour of the Warsaw Pact. Moreover, if the troop reductions involve the American and Soviet forces, taking geographical factor into account, any forces the USSR might pull out from Eastern Europe might move only 100 to 700 miles on land routes to the West Russia and could be reintroduced much more quickly and easily than those of the United States whose forces may have to cross 3000 miles - Atlantic. This meant that any settlement both in the CSCE as well as in the MBFR talks, should necessarily have the full confidence of West European nations and no solutions would be possible in that way without the establishment of a proper machinery for on the spot verification which Russia was not willing to agree to.¹⁹ Therefore, Britain rejected the possibility of any serious arms reduction agreement between the two blocs.

Britain, on the one hand was convinced of the need to agree on force reductions in Europe and on the other believed that such measures could not be pursued in conditions of military imbalance between the two blocs and also

19. Vivekanandan, n.10, p.312.

that such agreements should not lead to the creation of any imbalance. Therefore, it suggested that NATO, besides maintaining the military strength to sustain the confidence of Western Europe, should also take into account the political intentions as well as the military capability of the Warsaw Pact, in planning its defence strategy.

This British, and the general European scepticism, was reflected although the detente and MBFR negotiations. That explains why both the blocs failed to arrive at any agreements on the MBFR and also why detente negotiations failed to produce concrete and lasting results. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act only recognized the status quo in Europe and thus legitimized the division of Europe into two mutually antagonistic power blocks without resolving the core issues of conflict.

For Britain the detente negotiations and the Helsinki Final Act were significant in many ways. Firstly, Britain was satisfied that its views about European Security prevailed over the initial American willingness to sacrifice European interest to serve her own immediate interests. Secondly, Britain was able to establish her European identity more strongly and she had been projecting a European perspective and presenting Europe's case as against a purely British

position although ^{the} negotiations. Simultaneously with the negotiations Britain had also been taking steps to strengthen European defence co-operation at various levels including in the nuclear field without negating the importance of the 'American connection' for the security of Europe.

Thirdly, detente process for Britain was a pointer to a not often recognized fact about British Foreign and Defence Policy, namely, the inherent continuity and consensus that cut across all party ideological differences. Major part of the negotiations were held under the 1970-74 Conservative Government whereas the Helsinki Final Act was signed by the Labour Government in August 1975. Fourthly, the Labour Governments optimism about detente encouraged it to undertake yet another defence review in 1974 which would provide for further cut in British defence spending. And lastly, it was the frustrating experience from detente in the late 1970s that compelled Britain to reverse its pacifist policies and resort to increased spending on defence, partly in response to the NATO modernization plan and partly out of Britain's own changed perceptions about European security.

The 1974 Defence Review was also thought to contribute to far reaching changes in British Defence policy. The Labour Government on assuming power again, in 1974, thought that defence was the source of all economic problems for the country. Hence on 21 March 1974 it was announced in the House of Commons that "the government had initiated a review of current defence commitments and capabilities against the resources that, given the economic prospects of the country, we could afford to devote to defence."²⁰

The aim of the review, it was announced was to achieve savings on defence expenditure of several hundred million pounds per annum over a period, while maintaining a modern and effective defence system.²¹ Explaining the rationale for the review the Labour Government made it clear that the 1968 review commitments continues to remain the new government's firm policy. But the Conservative Government's 1970 supplementary statement on defence policy, while accepting that the NATO should remain the first priority of Defence Policy, placed more

20. UK, Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Series 5, Vol. 870 Session 1973-74, cols. 153-54.

21. UK, HMSO, Statement on the Defence Estimates 1975, Cmnd 5976 (London, 1975), p. 1, para 1.

emphasis on a willingness to counter threats to stability throughout the world. So when the Labour Government came to office again in March 1974 it inherited a defence programme of world-wide political and military commitments and military forces stretched to meet those commitments.

Britain was the only European member to contribute to all the major areas of the Alliance: to the central region in Europe to the Eastern Atlantic and the Channel Command areas; to the defence of the United Kingdom and its immediate approaches; to the Mediterranean; to the Alliance's strategic and tactical nuclear deterrent; to the specialist reinforcement forces available for deployment to the central region and to the Northern and southern flanks. Britain's remaining few outside commitments in various parts of the world also imposed an extra burden which none of her European Allies and trading competitors was bearing.²²

Throughout the post-war period Britain's economic performances has lagged behind that of her European Allies. For many years Britain's annual average growth rate has been little more than half that delivered by France and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). For these reasons the government decided that resources must

22. Ibid., p.2.

be released for investment and improving the balance of payments. This required a reduction of defence expenditure so as to bring it in line with that of her major European Allies.

The following table will illustrate Britain's claim:

Table 1
Comparison of the Defence Burdens of NATO Countries in Terms of Percentage of GNP in 1974²³

S.No.	Country	Percentage of GNP	Per capita income (in dollars)
1.	U.S.A.	6.6	6,000
2.	Portugal	6.4	1,500
3.	U.K.	5.8	2,950
4.	Greece	5.0	1,800
5.	F.R.G.	4.1	5,450
6.	Turkey	4.1	700
7.	France	3.8	4,500
8.	Norway	3.8	4,800
9.	Netherlands	3.8	4,500
10.	Belgium	3.1	4,750
11.	Italy	3.0	2,500
12.	Denmark	2.6	5,200
13.	Canada ²⁴	2.4	5,300

23. Ibid., p.3, Figure I.

24. In 1974 there were only 13 members in NATO. The present strength is 16 with the inclusion of Iceland, Luxembourg and Spain.

It is evident from the above table that Britain with a lower per capita income was spending disproportionately higher on defence as against the other NATO Allies. While making the review the government announced that it was determined that the process of adjustment should not be at the cost of essential security interest of Britain and her NATO commitments.²⁵

The review, as it was done in the background of detente, about which the Labour Government was very optimistic, was in anticipation of a stable political condition in Europe and elsewhere. Hence it covered the whole of the forward period from 1975-76 to 1983-84 to make possible an orderly adjustment of its defence structure to meet the different sets of commitments and capabilities and to allow for full military, financial, manpower, equipment and industrial planning.²⁶ The review, however, did not result in any dilution of Britain's NATO commitment but instead it reaffirmed Britain's continued commitment to NATO recognizing it as the "linchpin of British Security."²⁷ Here again like in the 1968 review the

25. Cmnd, 5976, n.21, p.2.

26. Ibid., p.2.

27. Ibid., p.7.

emphasis was on reducing British commitments outside the NATO area and Europe.

After considering the political and military aspects of European Security the review stated:

...in parallel with their stated commitment to detente the Warsaw Pact countries maintain forces on the mainland of Europe which are increasing in strength and capability and appeared far larger than they could be necessary for defence.... Yet the government does not believe that the Warsaw Pact countries would contemplate outright aggression against the West in present circumstances; but this is a political judgement which neither alters the military fact nor necessarily hold good for ever.... Detente is not yet irreversible.... In common with its allies the government is working to establish a safer, warmer and more constructive relationship with the Soviet Union and its allies. But until detente is clearly established up on a lasting foundation of mutual security we would take a cautious view of the intentions of the Warsaw Pact. We cannot exclude the possibility the Warsaw Pact might try to use its massive military power especially its conventional weapons to bring political pressure to bear on Western countries in the hope of influencing their external and even their domestic policies.... It is essential in order to deter any more adventurist policy and to sustain the momentum of detente that the political cohesion of the Alliance should be maintained as well as an effective military strategy...."28

Accordingly the Government declared its continued commitment to the preservation of the credibility of NATO's strategy and political cohesion and to the maintenance of an effective military contribution to the Alliance forces.

28. Ibid., pp.8-9

The small reduction proposed in the review was to help ease the strain on British economy and to help share the burden equally by all the major NATO European powers. The government also declared its intention to concentrate British military efforts in those areas where it believed Britain could make the most significant contribution to her own security and equally that of the Alliance. The government also declared its intention to retain the existing tactical and strategic nuclear weapons in support of NATO without going for a new generation of strategic nuclear weapons.²⁹

Consequent to the review from 1976 onwards Britain's all major war ships were to be committed to NATO in the Eastern Atlantic and Channel with no more war ships committed to the Mediterranean areas.³⁰ The effect of these measures were to be progressive reductions of one seventh in Navy's planned numerical strength with increased specialization provided for in Nuclear Powered submarines. Thus it was a cost-effective measure without sacrificing efficiency. The shape and size of the Army was to be adjusted to meet the new framework of defence priorities and the demands of the economy. The fighting capability of the BAOR was to be enhanced. A reduction in strength

29. Ibid., p.10.

30. Ibid., p.16.

of the Army by 15,000 was to be effected without causing to affect the commitment to NATO. Some reductions were to be effected in the RAF also without affecting the NATO commitments.

As the remnants of the former global commitment, despite the 1968 review commitment to withdraw all forces from East of Suez by the end of 1971, Britain still maintained forces in various parts of the world including in Hongkong, Gibraltar, Belize, the Falklands Islands, Cyprus, Oman, West Indies, Gan, Mauritius, Brunei, Malaysia et.al. Britain also continued to be a member of CENTO and SEATO without her forces being declared to them. Though these commitments absorbed only a small proportion of the defence budget, about £150 million a year, it showed that between 1968 and 1975 defence reviews not much changes had taken place in Britain's actual defence policy except for the increased commitment to NATO.

Along with Britain's domestic economic problems and the changed international environment the Defence Review was also the result of an indepth matter of fact study of Warsaw Pact's military strength and strategy. This study convinced Britain that her security was essentially linked with the NATO strategy and strength and that her own

capability for action both in peace and conflict in Non-NATO areas had shrunk considerably. Hence the statement on Defence Estimate said:

The government is working and will continue to work for real and lasting detente in Europe through the North Atlantic Alliance which we regard as an instrument of detente no less than of defence. Progress in pursuit of detente, if it is not to be illusory, must be based on a strong and United NATO Alliance across the Atlantic and within Europe.³¹

Another notable point in the review was that it announced the governments desire for increased European defence co-operation within the framework of the Alliance. In the course of 1974 the British Government proposed that the Eurogroup should strengthen its own arrangements for equipment collaboration and evolve a rational policy towards the procurement of United States' defence equipment.³² Various steps were taken in this direction also. This is a pointer to the British government's desire to move away from a dependency relationship to a co-operative relationship with the U.S.A. Britain accordingly had already initiated a \$1000 million European Defence improvement programme in 1970.³³

31. Ibid., p.26.

32. Ibid., p.29.

33. Ibid.

Though the review did not provide for any major structural reform of the defence effort other than by cutting away at the most peripheral commitments and the government had expressed its continued commitment to maintain its four distinctive NATO roles, the government's policies were not free from criticisms from within the Labour Party and without. The first sustained attack on government's policy was mounted by the Defence Study Group appointed by the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party in 1974 with a unilateralist Ian Mikardo as its head. The Study Group not only challenged the fundamentals of government policy but prepared the outlines of an alternative defence policy. The conclusions of the Group rested on two premises. The first was that there was no Soviet threat, whether judged in terms of Soviet intentions, (which in Europe favoured maintenance of the status quo) Soviet interests, or Soviet capabilities. The second premise was that the British defence expenditure was far too high, a prime source of economic weakness and should be reduced over five years from 5.2 per cent of GNP to 3.2 per cent - a massive cut.³⁴

34. For a detailed report of the Labour Party Defence Study Group see M.Kaldor, D.Smith, and Vines, eds., Democratic Socialism and the Cost of Defence (London, 1979).

This was again an instance of the Labour Party trying to run away from realities and attempting to explain cause out of effect. In fact it was the fast declining British economy, and its consequences, reflected in the Party organizations realization of its failure to keep manifesto commitments, that influenced and shaped their thinking. Defence, an area of dead investments, was only chosen to be the scapegoat in helping to get out of the paradox. Such a thought was possible when everything went well within the Atlantic Alliance and the "special" American connexion really remained unshaky and the overall global situation was free of much tensions.

The cost and utility approach to defence dominated the Study Group Report and a number of options were discussed. This included abandoning Polaris, reducing the surface fleet and in particular abandoning the three anti-submarine warfare cruiser, halving the Army in Germany, abandoning the multi-role combat aircraft in favour of existing aircraft, using precision guided ammunitions to enhance NATO's defensive power, etc. The Labour Party's characteristic inconsistency in matters of defence was also well reflected in the report - at one stage defending the arms reduction as a unilateral gesture to the Soviets, at another arguing that Germany

could fill the gaps, and at yet another stage warning against an increased German defence effort.

Thus the Labour 'Reformers' Defence Policy emerged as non-nuclear defence within NATO, with Britain giving up all her nuclear weapons and removing American nuclear bases. The Labour Party organisation, it appeared, was taking it for granted that America and the Alliance would necessarily take care of British defence even if Britain continued to be indifferent to it. However, no responsible government leadership could have agreed with the recommendations of a party mechanism which remained idealistic both in matters of social security and national security and which essentially lacked any realistic appreciation of the intricacies of global politics.

The Study Group went to the extent of suggesting that high levels of research and employment in defence was counter-productive and, instead, resources should be diverted for research and employment to socially useful activities.

The response of Labour defence ministers to the report was hostile with virtually no common ground with the reformers. On employment they argued that the million-plus in defence related activities were not readily replaceable and were in any case socially useful in defending the

social fabric. This balanced position was the tone of the statement of the Secretary of State for Defence, Fred Mulley: "Just as it is no good having a defence policy which could bankrupt the society it is designed to defend it would be wrong to endanger national security in our concern for social justice."³⁵ On the Soviet threat the government took a realist position which conformed to the previous position. It held that the threat should be assessed in terms of high defence spending by the Soviets (about 16 per cent of their GNP), the brutality of their policies within Eastern Europe and foreign policy intentions which, while difficult to judge with certainty given the closed nature of Soviet Society, in Western Europe and the rest of the world, they remain firmly attached to revolutionary change. The Government defended each of Britain's defence roles implicitly rejecting the possibility of further economies, opposed a major expansion of the German defence effort and warned that any reductions of efforts by Britain could easily precipitate a general 'unravelling' of NATO.³⁶

35. Sunday Times (London) 31 October 1976.

36. John Gilbert, John Tomilson and James Wellbeloved, "Study into Defence Spending - Summary of Conclusions," in M.Kaldor, D.Smith and S.Vines eds., Democratic Socialism and the Cost of Defence: The Report and Papers of the Labour Party Defence Study Group (London, 1979), pp.505 ff. (This section (Part 3) deals with the Ministerial response to the Study Group suggestions).

The publication of the Study Group report and the Government's hostile response marked the beginning of a major sustained conflict within the party over defence policy which persists even today, with some sections within the party supporting unilateral nuclear disarmament by Britain and, demanding the withdrawal of American missiles deployed in British territory.

The 1979 and 1983 elections results have proved that the Labour Party's inconsistent stand on defence and disarmament has hindered rather than helped it in the election. Going by the Party's previous record once in power it is bound to take a more realistic stand on defence which will inevitably be a pro-Atlanticist one.

One of the objectives of the 1975 Defence review was to re-establish the Euro-centric nature of the British defence policy.³⁷ But the proposals in the review went to the extent of restricting British capabilities to pursue a military role even within NATO itself.³⁸ The political experience and military perception of the Labour Party in the mid-seventies made such a review necessary and possible. The global political atmosphere in the early seventies also

37. Cmnd 5976, n.21, p.1.

38. For details of the proposed reductions see Ibid., pp.1-16.

was favourable to think of such a review as there was remarkable improvements in East-West relations and Europe was becoming free from the cold war hang-ups as detente negotiations were going on in Europe. But this hope for peaceful co-existence did not last for long. Even before the Labour Government could start implementing its decisions in the review, various developments in Europe and elsewhere forced it to reconsider its entire stand on defence as detente started showing signs of crisis by the late 1970s itself. Before the Labour Government gave way to the Conservatives in the 1979 election it was forced to take various decisions within Britain and approve of or subscribe to many others which were essentially against the spirit of the review commitments. This included the 1977 NATO decision to increase defence spending by 3 per cent, TNF (Theatre Nuclear Forces) Modernization, pursue research for the replacement of Polaris in 1990s etc.

With the return of the Conservatives to power and following the shock of the Cuban intervention in Africa, the fall of the Shah of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Britain was found once again, reversing the Labour's review decisions and showing interest in the long-range projection of military power. In the Soviet

supported activities in various parts of the World Britain perceived serious threats to vital Western markets, trade routes, and sources of raw materials. This forced Britain to revive and project its military power beyond the NATO areas. The new government's first Statement on Defence Estimates in 1980 proclaimed its intention to integrate defence and diplomacy in the service of security. The statement was released in the context of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It said: "If we are not to witness further such adventures (like Afghanistan) in even more sensitive areas for the West, we must respond with firmness and resolve and in solidarity with all the free nations of the world."³⁹

The Conservative Party always had a futuristic vision and a consistent policy, as against the inconsistency of the Labour's, about defence. This was implied in the 1980 defence policy statement: "We must be ready to meet challenges to our security on whatever scale they may appear not only as we perceive them today but also in future circumstances which we cannot accurately foretell."⁴⁰

39. U.K., HMSO, Defence in the 1980s: Statement on the Defence Estimates 1980, Cmnd 7826-1 (London, 1980), p.1.

40. Ibid., p.1.

Expressing its characteristic refusal to give priority to social security measures over national security the statement said:

measures like housing, education, health, improving our environment and personal expenditure, are not alternatives to essential defence spending. Effective defence is an essential precondition for enjoying the other social security measures fruits. We live in a country which for reasons of history and geography cannot expect to opt out of the harsher realities of today. We cannot expect peace and security free of charge....⁴¹

Taking note of the emerging crisis of detente and the renewed cold war situation the statement said:

In the face of the threat posed to us by the military build up of the Warsaw Pact we believe that this is a time for giving a higher, not lower, priority to defence for our allies as well as to ourselves.⁴²

The statement identified the

gravest potential threat for Britain as coming from the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact Countries, which could be used directly in a military confrontation with NATO or indirectly to challenge the broader political and economic interest of the West world wide....⁴³

Reaffirming its commitment to NATO the statement added:

41. Ibid., pp.1-2

42. Ibid., p.2.

43. Ibid., pp.3-4.

The United Kingdom could not face this challenge alone. Even if we could hope to do so, purely in military terms, our political and economic survival is so closely bound up with that of our own allies in Europe and North America that our continued security and freedom cannot be seen in isolation.... In the thirty one years since its formation NATO has succeeded in deterring aggression. It is in this country's vital interest that it continues to do so. This will depend on the willingness of member nations to make the effort and accept the sacrifices necessary to sustain adequate defence. This government is whole heartedly committed to NATO and determined that the United Kingdom shall pull its weight.... The U.S. commitment to the defence of Europe remains the vital foundation of NATO's political and military strength. It reflects our American ally's appreciation of the importance to their own security of the continued security and liberty of Western Europe.⁴⁴

One central theme that run through the Conservative government's first defence policy statement on returning to power at a crucial time in the history of the Alliance and Europe as such is its commitment to the NATO Alliance. For example, it said: "All the Allies would commit their land and air forces to any battle on or over the European continent.... These commitment parallel the United States' commitment to the security of Europe. This sharing of risks and burden is a source of great strength to NATO."⁴⁵ The government also fully endorsed the Long Term Defence Programme (LTDP) initiated under the Labour Government.

44. Ibid., p.7

45. Ibid., p.9, para 125.

As against the ambiguous position taken by the Labour Party about the nuclear issue the Conservative Government reaffirmed its commitment to retain nuclear weapons and pursue its nuclear research programme and support the TNF Modernization plan.

Answering the critics who asked why should Britain maintain an independent nuclear force as it has American nuclear guarantee the statement claimed that British independent nuclear force is not a demonstration of her lack of faith in American guarantee but only to supplement to NATO's deterrent posture.⁴⁶ As deterrence is a matter of perception and particularly perception by a potential adversary the presence of enormous destructive power in independent European hands is an important insurance against any misperception by the Soviet Union regarding the effectiveness of American nuclear guarantee for Western Europe.

As against the Labour Government's policy of concentration in Europe the Conservatives on returning to power expressed its intention to keep alive Britain's interests in certain areas outside NATO. Their interests found concrete expression in the 1980 defence policy statement:

46. Ibid., p.12.

In common with our NATO allies we also have wider interests outside the NATO area which we cannot afford to neglect. We depend on the developing world for many raw materials. The security of our trade routes is, therefore, of vital importance to our economy and we have a substantial practical interest in the stability of the countries with whom we trade.⁴⁷

Though the statement on the face of it appeared to mark a major break from the previous Labour Governments policy in essence this was only an explanation of the policy already pursuing. The difference in essence between the two Parties' commitments was that while the Conservatives seemed to mean what they said the other seemed not. Soon after taking office the Conservative Government declared its support for the NATO aim of annual increase in defence spending in the region of 3 per cent in real terms up to 1986.⁴⁸ This was to be achieved by halting the growth in the overall public expenditure. The government justified it on the ground that the "military dangers facing the Alliance is such that we must make adequate provision for deterrence and defence even in these difficult economic times."⁴⁹

These sudden changes in British and general NATO strategic thinking was not the result of mere changes in

47. Ibid., p.37.

48. Ibid., p.87.

49. Ibid.

government in Britain followed by in the United States, West Germany and France. These arose mainly from perceptions of Soviet violations of the spirit of detente by building up massive nuclear and conventional military power throughout the 1970s and using that power to underwrite the Cuban military adventures in Africa and the expansion of North Vietnam in South East Asia as well as advancing Moscow's own ambitions in South West Asia. Secondly it arose from the internal upheavals in the developing world which were mostly anti-Western in nature. The British Government took stock of these threatening situation seriously was evident from its defence policy statements of 1980, 1981 and in the subsequent ones.

The statement on defence policy said:

The West must make it clear to the Soviet Union and its allies that it is capable of protecting essential interests by military means should the need arise. That task cannot and should not be left to the US alone.... Against this background the government believes that the services should also be able to operate effectively outside the NATO areas without diminishing our central commitment to the Alliance. British forces will, therefore, continue to deploy and exercise outside the NATO area from time to time. Moreover, certain improvement in the services worldwide capability are being considered. Such improvements can be achieved at relatively modest cost, yet they give the services significantly more flexibility to undertake tasks outside the NATO area.⁵⁰

50. A theme which runs through the Statements on Defence Estimates 1980, 1981 (I & II); Statement on Defence Estimates 1980, Cmnd 7826 I, paras 408-10; Statement on the Defence Estimates 1981, Cmnd 8212-1; and the United Kingdom Defence Programme: The Way Forward, Cmnd 8288, p.11, para 32.

The defence reviews of the sixties and seventies had removed many of the essential capabilities required to project major military force outside the NATO area. But through the Falklands War Britain once again demonstrated the tradition and the military and bureaucratic expertise which still remains within its defence establishment if a regular military role beyond the North Atlantic had to be revived.

The British perception was shared by the Americans also. The former American Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, said in an interview in 1981:

During my entire period in Europe, I spoke about the dangers of Third World developments, not just to the United States but to the NATO Alliance as a whole, and I also repeatedly made the point that whether or not NATO was concerned about Third World it was going to be affected by them in any event. I have always felt that our ability and will to deal with intervention in the Third World outside the formal NATO framework was in fact the work of the Alliance because it contributed to the security of all the member governments of the Alliance. In many respects Third World developments today are of even more crucial strategic importance to European members of the Alliance than they are to the United States. I would particularly be concerned about energy, but it also includes other increasingly important and increasingly scarce raw-materials as well.⁵¹

51. Secretary of State Haig in Derstern, United States International Communication Agency (London, 21 August 1981) cited in James H. Wyllie, The Influence of British Arms: An Analysis of British Military Intervention Since 1956 (London 1984), pp.3-4.

Here we find a commonality of perceptions between the United States and the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom had realized the importance of developments in the Third World for the NATO alliance as a whole and insisted that outside NATO area interest also should become the responsibility of the Alliance as a whole. This is precisely what Britain did through the defence reviews of the sixties and seventies. Britain's 'retreat to Europe' was not after totally renouncing all its extra European interests, especially in the former colonies which are mostly today's Third World countries, but largely as a domestic solution for the domestic economic compulsions and based on the strong belief that Britain's extra European interests were equally vital interests of the Alliance as a whole and hence the Alliance would take care, within which Britain could in turn pursue and protect her interests.

Thus, in effect, it meant a gradual transformation of Britain's individual interests to the Alliance's collective interests based on the belief that on matters of Security British interests were inseparably linked to and would be collectively and more effectively protected by the Alliance to which Britain had actually effected the retreat. The recent British responses to developments in various parts of the world have reinforced these arguments.

It was also noticeable that the major defence reviews were carried out free from the tensions of the past and the world was moving towards detente in which Britain was an active negotiator for peace. The essence of detente was the express recognition of status quo in Europe and an implied hope that this recognition would extend to the other areas, especially to Third World. But when the Soviet Union found that keeping intact the status quo in Europe an adventuristic policy could be pursued in other parts of the world combined with the Western concern for the need to preserve intact the sources of energy, outside their countries, in their favour detente started showing signs of crisis.

With the emerging crisis of detente in the late 1970s, Britain was found appearing once again in its true colours, committed to counter the Soviet activities in various parts of the world. Britain with her commitment to preserve the status quo, which was apparently in favour of the Western Alliance has been closely following the developments in areas where her economic and political interests lay, which at one time she pursued through her physical presence, and taking part in the Alliance Military planning which is also designed to operate in

such areas in times of crisis. Thus, it may be found that as there was physical withdrawal, arising out of economic compulsions from certain areas, Britain, psychologically, very much present in such areas, always inclined to act militarily under the aegis of the Alliance if the situation warranted it.

Withdrawal was also based on the conviction that the functions which presence served in those areas could very well and with added assurance be served without presence which meant with lesser financial liability, by projecting a posture to the rest of the world, especially to the potential adversaries, that British interest in those areas was equally live and that any attempt to change the status quo would be resisted more vigorously by the collective strength of the Alliance. Thus for Britain, it was a cost-effective measure as well as an austerity measure without renouncing the security and other vital interests. This was also evident from the fact that British withdrawal from certain areas was compensated by American presence in such areas, for example the Indian Ocean. American presence in such areas is intended to serve or in effect actually subserves British interest equally. For Britain in the past, military presence in outside NATO area was

one of her vital national interests and the Defence reviews or changes of Governments did not mean any dilution of such vital interests. This argument in terms of vital national interests may not conform to the moral norms. But to produce arguments, which are in conformity with universally valid moral principles, to substantiate facts in relations between nations, would be an impossible task. "Most statesmen", observed Michael Howard, "no matter how well intentioned, are aware of the amoral nature of the international system...."⁵²

If economic compulsions forced Britain to withdraw military forces from certain areas, the same compulsions forced her to keep these areas under the control of the Alliance partners so that her economic interests could be pursued. The reluctance of the European powers, after the second world war, to use direct military power as an instrument of foreign policy was only a tactical one. It is because they realized that trade and investment between and within the developing countries and the developed are the easy route to success rather than military conquest.

This argument could be reinforced by the fact that whenever the trading interests of these countries were seriously threatened either by the unilateralist policies

52. Michael Howard, "Ethics and Power in International Policy," International Affairs, Vol. 51, No. 2, 1973, p. 253.

of any trading partner or by the expansionist policies of an antagonist power or even by the conflict between two trading partners, the affected Western Powers generally ventured to use military as an instrument of foreign policy in the service of economic interests or to be precise, to legitimise the otherwise dependent economic relations. The Suez Crisis in 1956, the developments in Africa in late seventies, threat to Iran to interfere militarily if the Persian Gulf is blockaded etc. were only a few among many such instances.

The recent Falklands War demonstrated that the British defence forces are structured to play such a global role if necessary. It comprises a set of forces that still purport to discharge, albeit on a shrinking scale, virtually all the military functions undertaken by even the largest military powers. But this can be possible only within the context of the alliance. One of the secrets of success of the British forces in the Falklands conflict was that it was part of a global military structure and trained, as part of the NATO integrated military command to fight in any part of the world. The British Naval contributions to NATO is of a size and nature that still owed much to the imperial days. This make it possible for the British Navy to play effectively the NATO role and in an eventuality a global imperial role.

The fundamental problem today for Britain, is one of resources. But economic weakness could not be used as a reason to sacrifice defence efforts. For even the sustenance of this relatively weak economy needed a strong defence establishment. Reductions on defence spending might help solve immediate domestic economic problems but in the long run it would be counter-productive. This would explain why Britain, though relatively economically weak, remains militarily superior to other European countries. By 1979 the British GDP was less than half that of the FRG and less than two-third that of France. British industrial output rose at 2.5 per cent per annum from 1955-1972 as compared to an EEC average of about 6 per cent. GDP grew only one per cent per annum from 1973-1978 compared to 3 per cent in 1963-1973. In 1979 it grew only 1.5 per cent.⁵³

Against this background, the share of the British GDP spent on defence has fallen steadily since the end of the Korean war. At the peak of the Korean war while some 10 per cent of the GDP was devoted to defence by 1980 this fraction had fallen to 4.9 per cent and since then it was above 5 per cent, with the 1984-85 figure standing

53. K.Hartley and P.McLean, British Defence Expenditure Public Sector Studies Programme (York 1978); UK, HMSO and Statement on the Defence Estimates 1980, Cmd 7826 I, p.86.

at 5.4 per cent and 1985-86 at 5.3 per cent of the GDP. Equivalent claim of defence on GDP for the US in 1980 was 5.2 per cent; on France 4 per cent and on the Federal Republic of Germany 3.3 per cent. In 1984-85 this was 6.5 per cent for USA; 4.1 per cent for France and 3.3 per cent for Germany. In 1985-86 this was 6.9 per cent for USA, 4.1 per cent for France and 3.3 per cent for Germany.⁵⁴ The economic growth rate in all these countries have been much higher than that of Britain. The relationship between a weak dependent economy, like Britain and the need for strong defence is clearly established here.

Weak balance of payments have often been made a major argument against overseas military commitment. Economic problems also had provided justification for arms export, which in turn often had coloured policies within the Alliance and towards such areas further afield, as the Middle East, by necessarily creating some military interest in these areas in order to protect economic interests. In 1979-80 arms exports to Third World Countries earned about £1050 million compared to imports of only £304 million. In 1980-81 the arms export earning was nearly £1.2 billion and by 1985-86 exports were

⁵⁴. The Statements on the Defence Estimates 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

expected to earn £2.5 billion. This is a significant contribution to Britain's total exports and sustains 130,000 jobs.⁵⁵

The Conservative Party which contained in itself a persistent element that resist the process of decolonization and contraction of overseas commitment, was well aware of this essential paradox in British defence policy. An analysis of the defence policy statements of the Conservative Government since 1979 would convince that the British defence thinking since 1979 has been in global terms as against the Labour Party's Euro-centric thoughts. The 1981 defence policy statement, for instance, said:

As the Alliance collectively has acknowledged changes in many areas of the world together with growing Soviet military reach and readiness to exploit it directly or indirectly make it increasingly necessary for NATO members to look to Western Security concerns over wider field than before and not to assume that these concerns can be limited by the boundaries of the treaty area. Britain's own needs, outlook and interests give her a special role and a special duty in efforts of this kind.⁵⁶

Similar commitments which confirmed the Conservative Party's resolve to deemphasise the 'retreating to Europe'

55. Ibid.

56. UK, HMSO, The United Kingdom Defence Programme: The Way Forward, Cmnd, 8828 (London, 1981), p.6.

policy of the Labour administration could be seen in the later statements on defence policy also. The 1984 Statement on Defence Estimates had also admitted this policy to maintain the expanded British interests. It said: "We cannot ignore the significance of threats to Western interests posed in other parts of the world. The United Kingdom still retains a variety of defence commitments, in some cases backed by permanent garrisons beyond the NATO area."⁵⁷ The British objective was to ensure for herself that nothing should happen in the Persian Gulf area that could destabilize the continued supply of oil to the West. Britain depends on other countries especially on the Arabs for nearly two thirds of her oil needs. Peace in Cyprus was Britain's own interest. Therefore, Britain since 1964 has been contributing the largest contingent to the United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus. Such considerations also explain Britain's involvement in the Middle East crisis. British Government admitted this fact when it said:

Peace keeping task is often a dangerous and thankless one. But we believe that in areas where we have historic ties where our security interests are involved we need to be prepared to accept our share of the burden in trying to prevent a worsening in the spiral of violence.⁵⁸

57. U.K., HMSO, Statement on Defence Estimates 1984, Cmnd 8951-1 (London, 1983), p.2.

58. Ibid., p.7, para 131.

This is another instance of the hiatus in British policy between precepts and practice and also support the assessment as to why and to what extent Britain had actually retreated to Europe. The 1984 Statement on Defence Estimates also had implicitly recognized this fact:

Recognizing that we can no longer afford to make military activity on a global scale as a main priority of our defence effort we try as far as possible to employ for these tasks resources already devoted to a primary role within NATO. This careful use of resources enables our 'out of area' activity to make a significant and extremely cost effective contribution to the protection and promotion of our interests throughout the world without detriment to the overriding need to defend ourselves against the principal threat we face in Europe.⁵⁹

It was thus, apparent on the face of the statement that it was a policy of trying to keep the bread and eat it too. The fact that Britain has been successful, to some extent, explains the role NATO plays in her overall defence posture. This is possible only so long as NATO effectively deters the Warsaw Pact aggressions wherever it is intended to do and Britain, on occasions, as in the case of the Falklands crisis, is left alone to take care of exclusively British commitments in the outside NATO areas.

59. Ibid., p.7, para 132.

Except for the recent rhetorics of a section of the Labour Party, this irreplaceable role that NATO plays in Britain's overall defence policy has been recognized by all the successive British governments since the very inception of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The 1968 Statement on Defence Estimates which announced far-reaching changes in Britain's defence policy recognized NATO as the "foundation of Britain's Security."⁶⁰ The 1974 Defence Policy statement recognized NATO as the "linchpin of British Security"⁶¹ and the 1979 statement on Defence Estimates, the last of the last Labour Government's said: "

What is most remarkable about the NATO Alliance is that it has been able to ensure security for Europe for an unusually long period of time and that in its absence the risks of war would have been far higher.... The entire pattern of Alliance defence embodies the firm commitment of the United States to the security of the whole Alliance.⁶²

The Conservative Government's first Statement on Defence Estimates after returning to power in 1979 resolved: "This government is whole heartedly committed to NATO and

60. Cmnd 3540, n.5, p.3.

61. Cmnd 5976, n.21, p.7.

62. UK, HMSO, Statement on Defence Estimates, 1979, Cmnd, 7474 (London, 1979), p.1.

determined that the United Kingdom shall pull its weight... that the United States' commitment to the defence of Europe remains the vital foundation of NATO's political and military strength."⁶³ The 1981 defence White Paper further recognized this fact: "The North Atlantic Alliance remains vital to us, and neither its strength nor its cohesion can be maintained without our crucial contribution. This is at the top of the government's priorities."⁶⁴ This has been repeatedly reaffirmed in the subsequent years' defence policy statements in the first half of eighties, despite the fact that this period also witnessed considerable strain in the relationship between the Euro-group and the Atlantic partner. During this period, the European public, including the British, increasingly questioned the credibility of deploying nuclear missiles in their countries. But despite all public criticisms and ignoring the organised movements — (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), European Nuclear Disarmament Movement (END) etc.) — against it, the government committed itself to stand by the NATO decision.⁶⁵

63. Cmd 7826, n.39, p.7.

64. Cmd 8288, n.56, p.3.

65. British position of TNF modernization Nuclear deterrence etc. are dealt with elaborately in Chapter III.

Yet another issue which contributed to the tension between NATO Allies was that of the Siberian Gas Pipe Line issue and that of transfer of technology to the East. These issues clearly demonstrated that among the NATO members the collaborative relationship in defence exist side by side with a competitive relationship in economic activities. On these issues Britain took a common stand with her other European allies which was not to the liking of her Atlantic partner, the United States. However, the government attributed these developments to the nature of the Alliance as it is constituted by the free independent sovereign nations and hence bound to develop such differences of views. Turning the argument against the pessimists the 1983 Statement on Defence Estimates claimed that these developments "do not mean that the Alliance is in a state of crisis" and that "the forces that united the Alliance are far too strong to be broken by temporary differences".⁶⁶ This peculiar nature of the Alliance found expression in the present NATO Secretary General Lord Carrington's word: "We have learnt to sing in

66. UK, HMSO, Statement on Defence Estimates 1983, Cmnd 8951-1 (London, 1983), p.2.

harmony whereas others in the East, for example, can only sing in unison."⁶⁷

A noticeable change in Britain's overall defence policy towards NATO of late, is its attempt to strengthen the "European Pillar" through the informal Euro-group within the Alliance. The Thatcher government has become firmly identified with a forward position in European foreign policy. It took lead in engineering common responses to the crises in Afghanistan and Poland and has made major proposals for the institutional reforms of European political cooperation. Lord Carrington, the former Foreign Secretary and the Present Secretary General of NATO went on record as saying: "I believe also that British foreign policy must be conducted essentially in a European framework."⁶⁸

A new dimension was added to defence co-operation within NATO Europe under Britain's leadership of the Euro-group in 1984. The 1985 statement on Defence Estimates said: "The United Kingdom attaches great importance to the maintenance and development of bilateral relations

67. Lord Carrington, Obersee Speech in Hamburg, 17 November 1980 cited in Christopher Hill ed., National Foreign Policies and European Political Co-operation (London, 1984), p.22.

68. Ibid.

with its European allies and is also playing a leading role in the work of the major multilateral organizations devoted to European defence co-operation.

In the field of co-operation in development and procurement of defence equipment the most significant progress in 1984 had taken place in the Independent European Programme Group (IEPG) which consists of all the European members of the Alliance except Iceland. Besides Britain is also involved in a number of collaborative projects in defence production with other NATO countries. This included some of the very important weapons programme for the future like the European Fighter Aircraft, various missiles systems, multiple launch rocket system etc. However, Britain has taken care to ensure that increased European co-operation should not become an alternative to trans-Atlantic co-operation, but instead only to strengthen and supplement the Euro-Atlantic co-operation.

Thus, the ruling Conservative Party's vigorous foreign policy since 1979 helped Britain to 'narrow down both the Atlantic and the Channel'⁶⁹ by

69. This is in contrast to the early 1950s British position implied in Churchill's statement that "for Britain the Channel is wider than the Atlantic" referring to the British preference for the Atlantic (American) connection over the European countries.

reestablishing her position in Europe and spreading and maintaining the global interest without diluting the Anglo-American special relationship.

Since 1945 Britain has made radical adjustments in its defence policy, but as always when choices have had to be made the commitment to European security within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance has taken priority. By 1978 Britain had reached the probable limit of withdrawal from geographically defined military commitments as a way of reducing the economic burden on defence. But the actual record of the post-war years suggest that Britain will try to avoid any radical adjustments of its strategic role. Since early eighties once again we see the presence of British forces, in various parts of the world, either under NATO commitment or under the UN responsibilities or out of singularly British commitments. In 1985 British forces were present in twenty four different places spread across all the continents. These are in Northern Ireland, Canada, West Indies, Western Atlantic, Belize, Channel, Central Atlantic, Ascension Islands, Falklands Islands, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Great Britain, Eastern Atlantic and North Sea, Norway, Berlin, West Germany, Sinai, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sardinia, Indian Ocean, Diego Garcia, Brunei and Hongkong, besides an ice-patrolship in Antartica.⁷⁰

70. UK, HMSO, Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985, Cmnd 9430 (London, 1985), p.34, figure 7.

The post-war defence policies of the two major British Political Parties suggest that there has been more of continuity rather than breaks in their defence policy choices when in office. Normally what the labour in office began the Tories pursued when replaced the Labour and vice-versa. The Labour Party in office consistently failed to carry out the policies enunciated in opposition.

It can now take ten or more years to develop a major weapon system from the drawing board to their entry into production, a single project may thus have to survive two or three changes in government and several changes of defence secretaries before it enters service. The continuity which is necessary just to ensure that the armed forces get equipped with the tools of their trade can only be provided by stability in decision making which cannot be ensured by differing Party ideologies but only from the permanence of the State.⁷¹

An analysis of the development of Britain's major defensive systems since the immediate post-war days would further emphasise the essential consensus on defence policy between the two major political parties. After

71. Dan Smith, The Defence of the Realm in the 1980s (London, 1980), p.21.

breaking of the wartime collaboration with the United States and Canada for making the atomic bomb, the decision to manufacture a British Atom Bomb was taken by the Labour Prime Minister Attlee in January 1947. By the time the first nuclear test took place in October 1952 the Conservative Winston Churchill was again the Prime Minister. The first British Thermo nuclear test took place in 1957.

The order to produce the first V-Bombers, the first British aircraft specifically designed to carry nuclear weapons, was placed by the Labour Government early in 1951. Delivery of the full compliment of V-Bombers to operational units was completed by 1960. In December 1962 at Nassau Prime Minister Harold MacMillan obtained from President Kennedy an undertaking to supply Polaris missiles which would be armed with British made warheads and deployed in British made submarines. The Polaris construction programme was carried out under the Labour Government of Prime Minister Harold Wilson (1964-70).

The Chevaline project for improving the ability of the Polaris missile to penetrate Soviet-defences was initiated by the Conservative Government in 1973. The decision to go ahead with development of Chevaline was taken by the Labour Government in 1974. Chevaline became operational in 1980 under the Conservative government.

The decision to replace the Polaris in the 1990s by the Trident I (C4) to be purchased from the United States and fitted in the British made submarines was announced by the Conservative government in July 1980. In March 1982 it was announced that the longer-range Trident II (D5) missile was to be substituted for the Trident I C4.

Since 1947 the British nuclear weapons programme from which evolved the British nuclear deterrent has been maintained by successive British governments - under six Conservative and four Labour Prime Ministers. Still the British independent nuclear deterrent policy remains essentially without much change. In Opposition, the Labour Party's threat today that, in office, it would cancel the Trident Programme and phase out the British deterrent should be looked at in the light of the above fact.

Like the case of Trident it was the 1964-70 Labour Government which gave preliminary considerations to modernizing Polaris to cope with improved Soviet ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) systems. In 1969 the Labour Government agreed to strengthen the theatre nuclear element of NATO's flexible response by agreeing to base

70-F III long range bombers in Britain. In 1972 and 1973 resolutions were passed, against American nuclear bases and reliance on nuclear weapon, against the Party leadership's position. The 1974 election manifesto of the Party committed to removing the American Polaris base and disowned any intention of acquiring a new generation of British nuclear weapons. Nevertheless the Wilson-Callagan governments carried through the Polaris improvement programme. Moreover, in 1978 Government began preliminary considerations of a replacement system for Polaris in the 1990s and by the time of the election defeat in 1979 considerable progress towards a positive decision had been made. Likewise the 1974 commitment to seek the removal of the American Polaris submarines were replaced by the advanced Poseidons.

Conclusion

Defence policy, according to John Baylis, is to facilitate not only the protection but also the perusal of the perceived national interests of the state which includes protecting the political and economic interests and furthering the international aim of the state.⁷² And

72. John Baylis, ed., British Defence Policy in a Changing World (London 1977), pp. 13-14.

as the objective of a healthy defence policy being the protection and perusal of vital national interests and vital national interest being not negotiable there obviously cannot have any major difference between the policies pursued by two rather ideologically opposed political parties.

Whatever initiatives the Labour Government had taken in reviewing the defence policy were the result of a national consensus. The relative difference in political will for change explains why it all started from the Labour only. The basic postulates of Britain's post-war policies were laid down during the life of the first post-war Labour government between 1945 and 1951 - and these postulates would not have been different had even a Conservative Government been at the helm. Changes could possibly have had come had the international political climate been different. "The international determinants of foreign policy," said Dan Smith, "are not susceptible to unilateral solutions."⁷³ This is equally valid in the case of Britain also.

National Security is defined as the ability of a society to perpetuate its existence and to sustain its

73. Dan Smith, n.71, p.26.

values in the face of threats and challenges from internal or external sources.⁷⁴ The dilemmas faced by both the parties in matters of defence policy could be better explained by their diverging perceptions of national security which does not conform to the accepted definitions. To Labour Party, National Security for Britain meant abandonment of its 'expanded existence' and perpetuation of the original British national existence and sustenance of its values and institutions in the face of a changed post-War global situation. To the Conservatives, National Security meant the maintenance of Britain's 'expanded existence' disregard of the changes taken place in Europe and elsewhere.

Essentially the Labour Party has been strongly Atlanticist. Arising out of the frustrating experiences with the Left in Eastern Europe, it was the Labour Government which laid the foundation of post-war British defence policy on the Atlanticist special connections. The Labour initiated defence reviews did not dilute this Atlanticist commitments. Even after the defence reviews there was a strong commitment to working closely with the United States (despite Party conference resolutions in the 1960s opposing the Vietnam war, and the 1960 resolutions calling for the abandonment of British nuclear

74. Ibid., p.25.

weapons and the removal of American nuclear weapons from Britain) and after the abandonment of the 'east of Suez' policy to a concentration of military deployment within the NATO area. But once in power in the 1960s and 1970s there was an equally strong commitment to maintaining the independent nuclear deterrent. The Labour Government then, like the Conservative Government today, recognized no inconsistency between Atlanticism and independent nuclear policy.

The present Conservative Government has explained the rationale for the British deterrent (in defence open government document 80/23) as follows:

The government has great confidence in the depth of resolve underlying the United States' commitment to the defence of Europe. But deterrence is a matter of perception and perception by a potential adversary. The central consideration is what that adversary may believe, not what we or our allies believe. Our deterrent has to influence possible calculations made by leaders whose attitudes and values may differ sharply from those of the West. The decision to use United States' nuclear weapons in defence of Europe with all the risk to the United States homeland this would entail would be enormously grave. A Soviet leadership... might believe that it could impose its will on Europe by military force without becoming involved in strategic nuclear war with the United States. Modernized US nuclear forces in Europe help guard against any such misconception; but an independent capability fully under European control provides a key element of insurance.

...the nuclear strength of Britain or France may seem modest by comparison with the Superpowers' armouries, but the damage they would inflict is in absolute terms immense.... An adversary assessing the consequence of possible aggression in Europe would have to regard a Western defence containing these powerful independent elements as a harder one to predict, and a more dangerous one to assail than one in which nuclear retaliatory power rested in US hands alone.⁷⁵

It is difficult to believe that these scales of priorities and essential concern for defence can change in future under a Labour Government. In opposition it can engage in such rhetorics.. But once in power it will have to behave more carefully. Otherwise Unlike the Party mechanism, the British public wont tolerate it. If foreign policy is determined by a country's essential national interests, then the British national interest requires Britain's continued membership in NATO and full participation in its defence strategy and planning and the continued retention of her Atlantic connection which again is more a function of the Alliance itself. This is more relevant today, if one is to take the recent American Warning seriously that "if a future Labour Government went ahead with its pledge to remove American nuclear weapons from British soil, then the United States would

75. Cited in Clive Rose, Campaigns Against Western Defence: NATO's Adversaries and Critics (London, 1985) Annexure I, pp.243-44.

have pressure from the American people to shut all its military bases in Britain."⁷⁶ The implication of this statement is that the British need American military commitment for its security than the other way around. And the nearly 500,000 or so American troops stationed in Europe are more in the service of European Security than that of the United States of America, although in a broad sense Europe constitutes the United States' first line of defence.

76. Charles Price (American Ambassador to Britain),
Interview with the Sunday Times (London) 4 May 1986.

CHAPTER III

INF MODERNIZATION AND BRITAIN

British approach to the Theatre Nuclear Weapons Modernization should be viewed in the context of its possession of nuclear weapons and its perception on nuclear deterrence. As a matter of fact Britain was the first to aspire to be a nuclear Power as early as 1941. But it took seven years more for Britain to develop her own nuclear weapons, after the late aspirant, the United States, used the weapons on the battle field, and demonstrated to the rest of the world the potential destructive capability of this 'decisive weapons'. Since then the decisive nature of this weapon has not been disputed but instead reaffirmed time and again with advance in nuclear science. The assertiveness, inviting the displeasure of her Atlantic partner, which marked the initial British decision to go ahead with an independent nuclear programme, characterises British position on nuclear issue even today.

Britain had its own convincing reasons to pursue an independent nuclear programme. At the heart of the British strategic doctrine was the threat to retaliate against an aggressor using both strategic and theatre nuclear weapons. The independent deterrent component of

of British Nuclear force consists today of four Polaris submarines each with sixteen missiles individually armed with three multiple re-entry vehicle (MRV warheads). Following the July 1980, and March 1982 agreements with the United States, Britain now intends to replace this force with Trident II (D₅) missiles in the early 1990s. The extra-range of these missiles together with the larger number and greater accuracy of the warheads would make it a significantly more powerful instrument than Polaris system. In addition to this formidable strategic deterrent force, Britain also contributes a number of nuclear capable systems to the overall NATO alliance deterrent. These included aircrafts which are capable of a nuclear role. In addition, Britain has some missiles equipped with American nuclear warheads with 'dual-key' system.

Britain maintains this whole range of nuclear weapons systems with certain well defined political and military roles attached to it. Firstly, Britain sees it as an integral part of NATO's defensive mechanism, within NATO, also as a second centre of decisions. In all the defence policy statements since early fifties British government claimed that the British nuclear force had played a crucial and indeed unique role in enhancing the security of the NATO by providing a nuclear deterrent

capability committed to the Alliance, yet fully under the control of a European member. This was expected to help undermine the Soviet belief that the United States would not risk its own destruction by reacting to a Warsaw Pact aggression on Western Europe and thus it could safely venture to attack Western Europe. Thus the British nuclear force was the European answer to the often raised question - would Washington trade Chicago for Hamburg? - to imply that Hamburg's security or insecurity is linked not necessarily with that of Chicago or Washington only but also directly with Warsaw's and Moscow's security and insecurity as well.

Thus, it was assumed that the existence of a separate nuclear force, under the full command of a European state like Britain capable of inflicting enormous damage, would cause the Soviet Union to think very seriously indeed about the desirability of venturing an aggression on Western Europe. It thus provided an extra insurance for the Alliance to the extent that it represented an additional centre of decision making. As such it helped to complicate the calculations of a potential aggressor. This would mean, according to Francis Pym, the former Defence Secretary, that the Soviet Union would be forced to contend with two sets of decision makers rather than one

in the United States; that "the risks to the Soviet Union would be inescapably higher and the outcome of its actions less certain." This was called "the certainty of uncertainty".¹

Another argument used in support of Britain's independent deterrent was that it could be used to trigger the use of the much bigger American nuclear arsenal. If the American Government were hesitant in a crisis, or both Super Powers agreed to try to limit a conflict to Europe, the British deterrent could be used as a catalyst to force the American hand. This was based on the assumption that the Soviet leaders would not be able to distinguish between the British and the American missiles, and, given the mutual suspicion of any European confrontation, they would inevitably respond to any nuclear attack by striking the United States itself. In turn, the United States would be forced to respond with its strategic arsenals.

A third argument used in support of Britain's strategic nuclear capability was that it would provide 'an insurance policy for an uncertain future.' As a result of strategic parity between the United States and the USSR and the increased questioning of the American nuclear guarantee, it was frequently argued that in a

1. John Baylis, "Britain and the Bomb," in Gerald Segal, John Baylis, eds., Nuclear War and Nuclear Peace (London 1983), p.121.

dangerous world Britain must have ultimate control over its own national security. A fear often expressed was that Britain might at some point in future have to stand alone. In such circumstances nuclear weapons would be reassuring and might be decisive in preserving British identity, values, and institutions.

A 1975 House of Commons Expenditure Committee report argued that "In the last resort if the Alliance was to collapse, the possession of an independent strategic weapon provides the United Kingdom with a means of preserving national security by deterring large scale conventional or nuclear attack or countering blackmail."² This was indicative of the British readiness to stand alone even in a nuclear world and her desire to substitute the Anglo-American dependency relationship with a truly co-operative relationship. Such a situation presumably could only come about if the United States had dissociated itself from the defence of Western Europe, and NATO had disintegrated or alternatively, Britain might have opted for a policy of isolationism in an increasingly anarchic international system, basing its independence on the

2. Second report from the expenditure committee, Session 1975-76 (SCOE 73/1).

threat of nuclear retaliation against any threat to the integrity of the nation.

A fourth argument in favour of an independent nuclear force for Britain in Europe was that at some point in future Europe would achieve a level of political integration which would force states to reconsider proposals for a European Defence Community and perhaps a nuclear deterrent system of its own. In such an eventuality Britain would be, in collaboration with France, able to provide the nucleus of a future European defence system.

Yet another reason put forward in defence of an independent deterrent was that it would confer a degree of international prestige and status for Britain. Such a capability would demonstrate technological excellence and in the case of Britain it would confer a special influence in the United States and an important say in arms control negotiations between East and West. Indeed the possession of nuclear weapons also enabled Britain to play an influential role in the nuclear planning group in NATO, since it was the only European nuclear power in the Alliance. (Though France, another nuclear power, is also a member of NATO, its military force is not integrated into the NATO integrated military command.)

The central theme of all these arguments was that British dependence on nuclear weapons was the most effective deterrent against the potential aggressors at all levels. Britain's strategy of defensive deterrence was made possible by the existing range of nuclear weapons. This fact has been recognized from the very beginning of her nuclear research programme. In the summer of 1941 a Committee, that had been set up to consider the possibilities of producing atomic bombs during the war and their military effect, concluded that such bombs were possible and that "inspite of this very large expenditure we consider that the destructive effect; both material and moral is so great that every effort should be made to produce bombs of this kind." It added that "no nation would care to risk being caught without a weapon of such decisive possibilities."³

In the early fifties Winston S. Churchill confirmed this deterrent character of British nuclear programme: "I have sometimes the odd thoughts that the annihilating character of these agencies (the atomic bomb) may bring an utterly unforeseeable security to mankind."⁴ This

3. Margarent Gowing, Britain and Atomic Energy 1939-1945 (London, 1964), Appendix 2, p.394.

4. Cited in A.J.R.Groom, The British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons (London, 1974), p.104.

theme marked all his thoughts on the deterrent. In the 1955 Defence White Paper these sentiments were translated into a government policy of massive retaliation.⁵ In defending the White Paper in Parliament Churchill stressed the on set of mutual deterrence in which "it may well be that we shall by a process of sublime irony have reached a stage in this story where safety will be the sturdy child of terror and survival the twin brother of annihilation."⁶ The post-war European history testifies this fact. Peace in Europe rests on the doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD) which the enormous quantity of nuclear weapons has made possible.

Britain has relied for its defence, primarily upon the deterrent effect of its vast stockpile of nuclear weapons supplemented by the American strategic nuclear weapons with less emphasis on the Alliance's conventional strength. This basic postulate of Britain's defensive strategy was announced as early as 1958 and it continues to be equally valid even today. The 1958 defence White Paper declared in unequivocal terms:

5. UK, HMSO, Statement on Defence, Cmnd 9391 (London, 1955).

6. UK, Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 537, Session 1954-55, Cols. 1894-1905.

...the democratic Western nations will never start a war against Russia. But it must be well understood that if Russia were to launch a major attack on them, even with conventional forces only, they would have to hit back with strategic nuclear weapons. In fact the strategy of NATO is based on the frank recognition that a full-scale Soviet conventional attack could not be repelled without resort to a massive nuclear bombardment of the sources of power in Russia. In that event the role of the Allied defence forces in Europe would be to hold the front for the time needed to allow the effects of the nuclear counter offensive to make themselves felt.⁷

This British position, which is apparently the NATO position as well is equally valid then and now. This explains why the West refuses to make a categorical 'no-first-strike' commitment. To Britain, as well as for the whole NATO, deterrence is meant not only to avoid a nuclear exchange but equally to avoid a conventional war as well which would eventually lead to a nuclear war which both parties want to avoid. An undertaking not to strike first would not in itself deter all wars but on the other hand a policy posture that a conventional attack would be reciprocated by a nuclear attack would, out of fear of mutual destruction, deter not only a conventional war but a nuclear war as well. It is based on the assumption that if the sanction was sufficiently catastrophic for the target actor, it would be dissuaded, whatever the likelihood of the sanction being applied.

7. UK, HMSO, Statement on Defence Estimates 1958, Cmnd 363 (London, 1958), para 12.

However, a well defined and seemingly effective strategy in itself would not ensure defence. It has to be necessarily backed by an effective military mechanism. Britain was well aware, even in the fifties, of the gap between its professed deterrent strategy and its capability to implement that strategy. Hence, even while formulating this strategy in the late 1950s, Britain complained of the inadequacy of NATO forces in Europe's defence. Thus the need to strengthen NATO's nuclear deterrent forces was felt as early as the late fifties.⁸ Britain's compulsions to subscribe to such a policy was not motivated by strategic considerations alone. The government realized that nuclear deterrence meant better value for less money than on conventional forces and thus it was also a means to reduce the claim of defence on national budget.

Thus Britain used its strategy for deterrence in Europe, a chief component of which was Britain's independent nuclear capability, not only to beef up its own nuclear arsenal but to increase co-operation with the United States in the nuclear field. To remedy the existing gap between capability and the task imposed, Britain had to depend on the United States' nuclear weapons. Subsequently Britain

8. A.J.R. Groom, "The British Deterrent," in John Baylis ed., British Defence Policy in a Changing World (London, 1977), p.134.

allowed the United States to deploy the controversial 'Thor' and 'Jupiter' missiles, and later the Polaris submarines, to be deployed in British territory.⁹ Besides, Britain was also willing to accept a considerable degree of deterrent with that of the United States. This was reciprocated by the United States' modification of the McMahon Act in Britain's favour and in 1958 information began to flow in quantity across the Atlantic for new missiles and submarines.¹⁰

Looking at the British strategy of deterrence as such it becomes clear that meaningful deterrence needed large scale American support. Rather than American contribution supplementing to British/European deterrent against the potential aggressors, British efforts supplemented the large scale American effort. Justifying the need to maintain an independent British deterrent the 1961 Defence white Paper said:

The British contribution still provides a valuable degree of strength and diversity to the Western forces as a whole. It increases dispersal and reduces reaction time. It provides powerful backing for our alliance. The government believes that we should continue to share the burden and responsibility of maintaining this important element in the total power of the Western deterrent.¹¹

9. Groom, n.4, p.281.

10. Ibid., p.564.

11. Cited in Groom, n.8, p.140 (emphasis added).

Thus, the actual role of the British deterrent forces is confined to providing diversity, increasing dispersal and mainly to share the burden, with the major part of the burden being shared by the United States' forces.

Nearly five lakh American military personnel are stationed in Europe. In Britain alone, under NATO commitment, there are 27000 American Army personnel besides 23000 US Air Force Personnel. 360 of the 800 aircrafts stationed by the United States Air Force (USAF) are in Britain.¹² Without this American commitment for the defence of Europe, there could not be any effective deterrence in Europe. Given the nature of today's balance of power in Europe, European Security is largely the function of the collective security arrangement made between Europe and North America through NATO, in which the latter's contribution is the most decisive.

Deterrence cannot survive in an unequal military relationship between two antagonistic blocs. This is the rationale behind today's arms race - i.e. as effective deterrence is dependent on equality of military strength especially nuclear parity, anything that would radically alter the balance is counter-productive for deterrence. Thus given the conventional superiority of the Warsaw Pact,

12. UK, HMSO, Statement on the Defence Estimates 1983, Cmd 8951-1 (London 1983), p.19.

deterrence being the pronounced objective of both the blocs, NATO's refusal to make a 'no-first-strike' commitment supplements to the strategy of deterrence. For Europe the strategy of deterrence being not negotiable and given its inability to provide its own effective deterrence it has, inevitably, to depend on the American nuclear and conventional forces to supplement to the former's efforts. In today's nuclear age this is made possible by both American strategic and long-range theatre nuclear weapons deployed in Europe.

Here, it is apparent that it is out of the Western European powers' failure to provide an effective, European strategic nuclear deterrent force that it had to depend on the American Pershing II and the Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCM) to be deployed in Europe. If the European powers could match with the Soviet nuclear power - a West European TNF modernization minus American missiles - the entire issue would not have become so controversial and had the West not responded to the Soviet advanced SS-20 missiles, the Western deterrence would have been weaker.

Britain realized this fact as early as the late 1940s when Britain did everything it could to ensure American commitment for the defence of Europe and institutionalized it by establishing the NATO. British-American

cooperation for nuclear defence of Europe dates back from 1951 when an understanding was reached between the Labour Prime Minister Attlee and President Truman about the use, in an emergency, of the American bases and nuclear weapons system in the British territory. This was reaffirmed by the conservative Prime Minister Churchill and President Truman in 1952.¹³ This stipulated that such use would be a matter of joint decision by the two governments. This decision has been reaffirmed on each change of Prime Ministers or President and was reaffirmed by the present Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Reagan in February 1981.¹⁴

It is out of Europe's realization of its inability to match the Warsaw Pact Military strength, supported by an enormous quantity of advanced nuclear missiles, and its failure to offer effective deterrence that NATO had to opt for the deployment of American Long-range Theatre nuclear weapons. In the face of the Soviet advanced SS-20 missiles, already deployed in Eastern Europe, without a matching Western counter force NATO's strategy of flexible response would have become militarily non-viable. Hence

13. Ibid., p.6.

14. Ibid.

the TNF Modernization and the NATO 'dual-track' decision of December 1979 was explained by the Government in its 1983 Defence Policy Statement, in the context of the increased Soviet Missile deployment in Eastern Europe.

Convinced of the need to react to the Soviet deployment of SS-20 medium range missiles in the European theatre, the 1983 Defence Policy Statement said:

...for NATO to have done nothing in these circumstances would have resulted in a severe erosion of its capability to deter aggression and would have been seen as a lack of resolve to maintain the security of the Alliance. This would have encouraged the Soviet Union to think that it could threaten the European members of NATO with nuclear strikes without provoking a response from the strategic forces of the United States, which are the ultimate guarantee of Allied security and so decouple the United States from the defence of Europe.¹⁵

Britain was not merely subscribing to the NATO position nor was this statement a mere endorsement of the other European leaders particularly the West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's, statement that a 'missile gap' existed in Europe. It is an often unnoticed or deliberately ignored fact that it was Britain, in the course of the defence review in 1975, that first voiced Europe's concern about the already existing disparity in favour of the Warsaw Pact in the nuclear field in European

15. Ibid., p.6, para 204.

Theatre. The 1975 statement on defence estimates expressed the concern of the British Government when it said:

The strategic nuclear force of the West are the ultimate deterrent against strategic nuclear attack. But in a period of strategic parity they do not necessarily constitute a credible deterrent against lower levels of aggression. For this purpose the West must also deploy credible number of conventional and tactical nuclear forces. These can be provided in an effective way only through the North Atlantic Alliance to whose support the government is fully committed.¹⁶

This was when for the first time a West European power formally expressed its concern about the increased Soviet nuclear threat to the security of Western Europe. This statement was important for several reasons. First significance was that it came from a Labour Party Government, the Party which subsequently opposed the nuclear weapons and which had voted in the House of Commons against deployment of American missiles in Britain in 1983 and also which has threatened that, if it was voted to power it would call for the withdrawal of American missiles from Britain's territory.¹⁷

16. UK, HMSO, Statement on the Defence Estimates 1975 Cmnd 5976 (London 1975), p.28 (emphasis added).

17. The New Hope for Britain: Labour's Manifesto 1983, p.36. Cited in Peter Byrd, "The Development of the Peace Movement in Britain," in W.Kaltefleiter and P.Pfaltzgraff, eds., The Peace Movements in Europe and the United States (London, 1985), p.83.

Secondly, it is significant^{as} it came when the detente negotiations were seriously progressing and an agreement recognizing the status-quo in Europe was in sight. Labour Government's expressed fear was clearly inconsistent with its declared optimism about detente. It was also important that Britain's fear was expressed even before the Soviets had started deploying its advanced SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe. All these lead to the conclusion that the Labour Party whenever in power, never wanted to gamble with Britain's security. Its calculated "retreat to Europe" was also to strengthen British defence within Europe, where it was facing the actual threat from the Warsaw Pact.

The immediate provocation for the 1979 decision to modernize the Theatre Nuclear Forces in Europe was believed to be the West German Chancellor Schmidt's speech at the NATO Heads of government meeting, in London in May 1977, when he pointedly referred to the implications of Super Power parity for Western Europe's defences. Schmidt emphasized how the onset of strategic parity had ushered in a third phase in East-West military relations. He argued that NATO Europe no longer relied on the deterrent capabilities of superior American strategic forces as in the 1950s or on the flexible response strategy of the 1960s and 1970s. Rather, Soviet attainment of strategic

parity had brought on this third phase making it necessary during the coming years, at least within the Atlantic and European framework, to reduce the political and military role of strategic nuclear weapons as a normal component of Europe's defence and deterrence.¹⁸

The Chancellor's statement that the "strategic nuclear component would become increasingly regarded as an instrument of last resort to serve the national interest and protect the survival of those who possessed these weapons of last resort" was, indeed, a European voice which was also shared equally by Britain. Many American strategic experts including Henry Kissinger later shared Schmidt's concern. Kissinger also dismissed the utility of American strategic forces to provide anything other than deterrence of a Soviet strike against American homeland.¹⁹

As against the already expressed British concern Chancellor Schmidt's statement got immediate response for various reasons. Firstly, though expressed in candid terms, the British fear was meant mainly for domestic

18. For the text of Schmidt's remarks see "The North Atlantic Summit Meeting: Remarks by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt," May 10, 1977, Survival (London), July/August 1977, pp. 177-78.

19. For the Text of Kissinger's Speech see, Kenneth A. Myers ed., NATO: The Next Thirty Years (London 1980).

consumption as it was evident from the fact that Britain did not take it to the NATO forum as against Schmidt's presentation of the case in the highest NATO decision making body, the heads of government meeting, which had the authority and responsibility to act so as to undo the European fear. Secondly, as against the British statement made in the detente climate, Schmidt's statement came in the context of the emerging crisis of detente as was evident from the Soviet deployment of its advanced SS-20 intermediate range ballistic missiles in Eastern Europe directed against the West. This provided the military rationale for NATO's acquiring a similar intermediate range Nuclear Forces (INF) capability. German concern, which was fully backed by other European powers including Britain, could not have been ignored by NATO, as by fact of geography, Germany was to bear the brunt of any attack from the Warsaw Pact and also the other Europeans were well aware of the military fact that the defence of Western Europe had to start with the defence of West Germany.

Europe was also critical of America's negotiating strategy in the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT-II) as they feared that America was neglecting European security interests. This was also raised by Schmidt in :

his speech. He was disappointed over possible restraints in providing NATO with American Cruise Missiles while the SS-20 and the new Soviet nuclear capable backfire bombers were left unconstrained. Accordingly Schmidt criticised the codification of Super Power Parity in SALT II as magnifying the significance of the disparities between East and West in nuclear, tactical, and conventional weapons adding that "we in Europe must be particularly careful to ensure that these (SALT) negotiations do not neglect the component of NATO's deterrent strategy."²⁰

The Summit meeting took the European concern very seriously and recognized the need for some TNF modernization by including TNF as point 10 of its Long Term Defence Programme (LTDP). The American administration under Carter also was convinced that NATO INF modernization was one way to respond to the concern voiced by Europe. Consequent to the failure of the NATO's nuclear planning group (NPG) to study the problem of TNF, a special body, the High Level Group (HLG) was appointed to solve the TNF issue.

The HLG recommended that for political and military reasons the alliance should adopt both a deployment and arms control approach and to re-establish a NATO land based

20. See Survival, n.18, p.178.

missile (INF) capability that the Alliance had not had since the 1960s. It was felt that what was needed was a convincing alliance response that would both induce the Soviets to negotiate seriously over INF systems, while providing NATO with a credible INF military capability. A formal decision, keeping in mind the recommendations of the High Level Group, was taken in December 1979 providing for the modernization of intermediate range nuclear weapons.

This decision was seen as strengthening the coupling of NATO forces to American strategic forces, a coupling that, many argued, had been called into question by the on-set of US-Soviet Strategic parity. From at least late 1960, when the Soviet Union began to reach that parity with the United States, there was growing concern within the Alliance that parity would neutralize American strategic forces thus decoupling Western Europe from the United States.²¹ It was out of this fear that Europe raised its concern and voiced the need to fill the 'missile gap' in European theatre.

That was why initially it appeared to every one that the NATO decision to proceed with INF modernization and arms control was heading for a more successful resolution than previous NATO nuclear weapons deployment decisions. While Norway and Denmark rejected any stationing of INF systems

21. Groom, n.4, pp.600-01.

on their soil and the Netherlands and Belgium took a wait and see attitude on deployment, Britain was all prepared to deploy the missiles on her soil. As time went by, however, a combination of distrust over Reagan Administration's arms control and defence policies, the rise of Peace Movements across Europe and continued Soviet political pressure blighted the initial hope for a smooth implementation of the modernization decision.

Initially, when the decision was taken both the prominent socialist governments in Europe - the Labour government in Britain and the Social Democratic party government in West Germany were truly convinced of the validity of their decision. The undisputed fact that the initial concern about the serious 'missile gap' in Europe was raised by these Governments testifies this. These parties had backed out of their commitments only when they went out of power. TNF modernization was the answer to an initially, purely NATO European perception of Soviet threat, which was not otherwise foreseen by the Americans, as was expressed in the Labour governments 1975 defence policy statements and in Schmidt's famous speech in 1977. When Schmidt made his speech in the NATO Summit Meeting other European powers including Britain was only very keen to catch it up and share the threat perception

which was ultimately responsible for the immediate solution found, namely the INF modernization and the 'dual-track' decision.

The Labour Government's last Statement on Defence Estimates also had recognized the importance of nuclear defence provided mainly by the American strategic nuclear forces and supplemented by the conventional European Long-range Theatre Nuclear Forces. The 1979 statement said:

The strategic nuclear forces provided essentially by the United States give protection and ultimate deterrence. The TNF in which several Alliance members participate in various ways are a crucial link between the strategic forces and the conventional elements.²²

It was only when the European NATO members feared that this link was becoming narrower that controversy arose on TNF issue. TNF modernization was only a corollary to this strategic thinking.

With the attainment of Soviet strategic parity in the 1970s, West European NATO members began to think of the need for NATO to acquire a long-range theatre-nuclear force capability (i.e. systems capable of striking the Soviet Union from the European territory/Eurostrategic weapons) so as to maintain the credibility of the NATO continuum of deterrence, based on the strategy of flexible

22. UK, HMSO, Statement on Defence Estimates 1979, Cmnd 7474 (London, 1979), p.1, para 103.

response, up to and including American strategic forces. Long range INF systems were not seen as providing an in-theatre military capability that by itself could deter Soviet aggression or the use of Soviet SS-20s. Their importance also lay in acting as a trigger for the possible use of American strategic systems. The INF systems were seen by the West European governments primarily as a "means of holding American strategic forces hostage to the defence of Europe."²³

The validity of this military fact - the dependence of the West European nations on America for security - has never been disputed by any European nations including the British and the West Germans even under the Social Democratic governments. As was explained in the beginning of the chapter, one of the arguments in favour of maintaining an independent nuclear deterrent for Britain was to act as a trigger for the possible use of American strategic systems. Pragmatic as it is, the Conservative government on returning to power in 1979 saw the INF modernization as in the service of this military thinking and went ahead with missile deployment in British territory despite the Labour Party now in Opposition, backing out of its earlier commitments.

23. J.D.Boutwell: "Nuclear Weapons and NATO Politics," in J.D.Boutwell, Paul, Dotty and G.F.Treverton eds., Nuclear Confrontation in Europe (London, 1985), p.152.

The Conservative Government also shared the concern of the other West European nations that Europe should not become an exclusive battlefield in which the Super Powers themselves might be sanctuaries. But Britain, however, could not be convinced of the Eastern propaganda that its Atlantic partner is bent upon a return to the cold war. Hence, despite the Conservative Governments initial opposition to the Reagan Administration's new economic policies leading to high interest rates, when it came to the NATO security issues Britain stood firmly behind the Administration.

TNF modernization, for Britain, was not meant in any way to precipitate crisis but very much in conformity with the pronounced strategy of deterrence keeping open the option of first strike. As against the Labour Party's 1983 election manifesto proposals for a policy of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons, withdrawal of battle field nuclear weapons, withdrawal of long range theatre nuclear weapons, decoupling from the American strategic nuclear deterrent, etc.²⁴ the Conservative Party presented a policy emphasizing the need to retain all that the Labour Party wanted to reject. Defending the government position, the Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said in a Press conference before the 1983 elections:

24. Peter Byrd, n. 17, p. 36.

If this is a deterrent then the Russians must know that under certain circumstances it would be fired. Otherwise, it would cease to be a deterrent. As a deterrent, knowing that under certain circumstances it would be fired it has kept the peace.²⁵

Reacting to the Labour leader Michael Foot's contention that it would be an 'act of criminal insanity' for a Prime Minister to use nuclear retaliation against Soviet aggression Margaret Thatcher said:

If they (the Soviets) believe that some one was just sitting there and saying, well, we have got them, but don't worry... we would never use them then it wouldn't be a deterrent.... The only alternative to nuclear deterrent is surrender of capitulation.²⁶

The Labour and Liberal Parties argument was that since Britain's nuclear weaponry was negligible in comparison with that of the Soviet Union to deploy them against the Soviet Union would be to commit suicide as the Russian weapons could destroy Britain, while Britain's seapons could do comparatively little damage to the Soviet Union. The logical conclusion from this, it appears, should be that since complete defence is not possible it is better to have no defence at all. No responsible government or rational public could have subscribed to this logic. And

25. Report of Mrs. Thatcher's Press Conference, The Times (London), 1 June 1983.

26. The Times, 2 June 1983.

that partly explains why the Labour Party and Liberal Parties failed to reach to the public and the Conservatives stole the show in the 1983 elections. As against the Labour Party's inconsistent idealistic position on national Security, the Conservatives had a consistent realistic perception of national security.

In the BBC Panorama, a few days before the 1983 elections, Margaret Thatcher explained her refusal to seek dual key control of American cruise missiles based on British territory by accusing those who argue for it of "mistrusting our allies." She claimed that nobody can deny the fact that what has kept peace in Europe since 1945 was the mutually opposing collective security arrangement - the NATO and the Warsaw Pact - backed by the balance of nuclear terror.²⁷

Britain, more than any other country, is concerned that anything that damages that collective security or upsets that balance of terror, therefore, will make war more of a possibility. TNF modernization, for Britain, is only to help avoid a war in Europe. Britain like the rest of Western Europe, while not accepting that the Soviet Union is simply waiting for a chance to take over the West at the first opportunity has to live under the perpetual

27. The Times, 3 June 1983.

fear of Soviet ill intentions. It is to reduce this fear and instill more confidence that American missiles were sought to be deployed in Britain. The British Government today is convinced of what it is doing.

Explaining the rationale behind the British support for the NATO's INF modernization decision the 1984 statement on Defence Estimates said:

...the only force in this category (i.e. capable of striking Soviet territory from bases in Western Europe) before the initial deployment of Pershing II and Cruise missiles consisted of about 150 US F-III aircraft based in the United Kingdoms. These aircrafts will experience growing difficulty in penetrating Soviet air defences and their airfield bases are comparatively vulnerable to attack. Without modernization, NATO's capability could have been expected to decline steadily in effectiveness in the coming years. The result would have been a dangerous gap in the range of forces that NATO must maintain if it is to be able to deter aggression at every possible level from conventional through to strategic nuclear attack. The Soviet Union had already made a major improvement in its own capability in this area by introducing large numbers of the SS-20 missiles which, compared with the earlier SS-4 and 5 missiles, has a larger range and greater accuracy, is mobile and has three independently targetted warheads when its predecessors had only one. It was against this background that NATO reached its decision to deploy 464 GLCM and 108 Pershing II missiles in Europe.²⁸

Though, Britain has not insisted on 'double key' arrangement for the American nuclear weapons deployed in British territory an informal understanding reached between

28. UK, HMSO, Statement on the Defence Estimates 1984, Cmnd 9227-1 (London 1984), p.21, paras 107-108.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Reagan in 1983 provided that no nuclear weapons would be fired or launched from British territory without the agreement of the British Prime Minister.²⁹

America also recognizes the importance of Britain in its nuclear planning. It finds in Britain, a foreign but firmly associated interlocutor on nuclear matters. But this is a peace-time thinking. Strategically on the other hand Britain has also to foresee an eventuality in which America in the interest of its own security refuses to respond or come to the aid of Europe against Soviet attack. One reason given in support of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent is to meet such an eventuality. The 1980 Defence White Paper recognized this point. It said:

the decision to use the United States' nuclear weapons in defence of Europe with all the risks to the US homeland would entail, would be immensely grave.... A Soviet leadership might believe that at some point in the development of conflict the determination of the Americans could waver.³⁰

Hence defending the government policy of pursuing with the INF modernization and the simultaneous plan for the replacement of Polaris by Trident D5, the Secretary of state for defence said: "In strategic thinking what

29. Cmd 8951-1, n. 12, p.9.

30. UK, HMSO, Defence in the 1980s, Cmd 7826 (London, 1980), p.12.

matters most is not what we think but what the Russians think, the task is to present to a would be aggressor... a clear chain of terrible risk."³¹ This need also justifies both the maintenance of a national nuclear force and the governments decision to accept deployment of the US missiles in Britain. This was why the TNF modernization plan was supplemented by a simultaneous modernization of Britain's independent nuclear component as it was decided that Polaris should be replaced by the most advanced Trident II D5 system. Trident is seen as the ultimate independent strategic nuclear deterrent in the service of Britain's supreme national interest:

Our strategic deterrent remains, however, at all times under the independent control of the British government and could be employed independently of the Alliance should our supreme national interest so dictate. A British strategic nuclear deterrent force provides the ultimate of our national security and makes a unique contribution to the NATO Alliance ...we are convinced that for Britain to abandon its nuclear deterrent would constitute a reckless gamble with peace and security of future generations; and that the Trident D5 system is the best way of providing a credible deterrent into the 21st century.³²

Once again in 1985 the government rejected the argument put forward by some that intermediate range

31. UK, Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Series 5, Vol.977, Col.678.

32. UK, HMSO, Statement on Defence Estimates, 1985, Cmnd 9430 (London 1985), p.8, para 15.



nuclear forces and any other short range deployment are unnecessary for the West and undesirable because they might lead to limited nuclear war and suggest that Britain should go back to relying entirely on the US strategic nuclear defences. The government's explanation was that such a step would imply a return to the old strategy of trip-wire (massive retaliation), would weaken the US Europe link and would pose all the same difficulties for deterrence that led to the abandonment of the original strategy in the 1960s.³³

Conclusion

The issue of INF modernization in Britain's nuclear and Alliance Policy presents a picture of continuity, reiterating some of the cardinal elements of logic behind Britain's independent nuclear deterrent. Although the need for the modernization of a theatre nuclear force was felt by the British Government in 1975, INF modernization did not become an Alliance issue until 1977 until after Chancellor Helmut Schmidt voiced European fears of decoupling of the Trans-Atlantic alliance. Therefore, by endorsing and backing the European concern Britain demonstrated that Alliance cohesion on nuclear matters was one of its top priorities.

33. Ibid., p.9.

However, being the only European nuclear power of the Alliance, Britain's stand on decoupling could not have been identical with its non-nuclear European Alliance members. Since an independent deterrence at the strategic level was also required Britain supplemented the INF modernization with the Trident D5 system.

This period demonstrated that British nuclear doctrine after a period of transition had come to rest on a different plane, reflecting a newer balance between the logic of maintaining the transatlantic nuclear linkage and of deterring Soviet Union in Europe. This apparent contradiction between these two sources of British nuclear policy became a factor in its domestic politics. The politics involved in nuclear doctrinal legitimacy compelled the Labour Party to oppose INF modernization while the Conservative Government retained the political will to push through the programme inspite of vocal domestic opposition.

One eduring legacy of the INF modernization is the debate on the fundamentals of British defence policy it left in its wake. It remains a moot question, to what extent this transformed domestic political environment will affect the continuing logic of Britain's independant nuclear deterrent. Between continuity and change the balance may well rest with the former.

CHAPTER IV

FALKLANDS WAR AND NATO SOLIDARITY

In the sixties Britain's economic constraints had necessitated the abandonment of its global military role and a retreat to Europe and NATO so as to effectively defend itself against the major potential source of threat - the Warsaw Pact. At that time or even in seventies she could not envisage any threat coming from anywhere else, nor could think of a situation in which she would have to embark upon an exclusive military venture outside Europe, although her extra-European interests remained more or less intact. Hence, Britain had committed 95 per cent of her military strength to the NATO's integrated military command.

As the post-war division of Europe into two militarily and ideologically opposed blocs was an accomplished fact, the European Powers knew that the defence of Western Europe had to start with the defence of Central Europe, starting with West Germany. Given the size and strength of the potential aggressor - the Soviet Union - and the apparent inability of the West European countries to match it, the task of defending Europe required the collective effort of the Atlantic community. Thus the security of Western Europe was well taken care of by the

Atlantic Alliance through its strategy of effective deterrence.

The changed international political climate evident from the emerging crisis in detente in the late seventies had convinced Britain of the need to project her military power beyond the NATO area. As a result, Britain's defence policy since 1979 is partly directed in this line also. This was also inevitable since Britain still retained whatever interests it had outside Europe to be safeguarded partly with the help of some of its NATO allies and partly under its exclusive responsibility. The Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic belonged to the latter category. The recent conflict there in 1982, provides a concrete example not only of the British ability and readiness to project her military power beyond the NATO area, but also of the reliability of NATO in safeguarding Britain's security interests.

The conflict was significant for Britain in various ways. Firstly, it was a test-case for the British resolve to project her military power once again outside NATO area in defence of her economic and military interests and to save the British honour whenever it is seriously threatened. Secondly, it was a test-case for the ability of British forces to undertake military tasks outside NATO area in an

eventuality. Thirdly and most importantly, the conflict provided a test case for NATO Alliance solidarity and also to some extent for the Anglo-American 'special relationship' in times of crisis, although the crisis was technically outside the general framework of NATO.

Besides producing some international repercussions the Falklands war also had caused some political controversy within Britain and Argentina and it still continues to be a matter of controversy, some questioning the wisdom of resorting to military action to recover the Falkland Islands from the Argentines, and others questioning the pre-war Conservative Government's policy which made the military action inevitable.

Argentina's claim of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands ('Islas Malvinas' for the Argentines) has been long-standing. As a result, even in 1920s and 1930s the cruisers of the Royal Navy's South American Squadron were required to pay periodic visits to Port Stanley, the Falklands capital, to check possible Argentine invasion. These claims got some kind of recognition when in December 1965 the UN General Assembly passed a non-mandatory resolution (No.2065) on the issue. The resolution, in its Preamble, referred to the "cherished aim of bringing to an

end everywhere colonialism in all its forms, one of which covers the case of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)," invited the governments of Argentina and of the United Kingdom to proceed without delay with negotiations with a view to finding a peaceful solution to the problem, "keeping in mind the provisions and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and of Resolution 154(XV) (on colonialism) and in the interest of the population of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)" and requested the two governments to report to the Special Committee and to the General Assembly at its next session.¹

Since then negotiations have been held at various levels, without success, to find a solution to the problem. As a result tension began to build up between Britain and Argentina over the issue which reached its culmination in the invasion of the Falkland Islands by the Argentine Forces on 2 April 1982. According to Lebow: "But for the two serious and mutually reinforcing misjudgements the Falklands War could have been avoided." First, was the belief in Britain that Argentina would not invade Falkland Islands and second was the expectation in Buenos Aires that Britain would reconcile itself to a military takeover of

1. UK, HMSO, Falkland Islands Review: Report of a Committee of Privy Councillors under the Chairmanship of Lord Franks, Cmd 8787 (London, 1983), p.4.

the Islands.² The illusion that Argentina would not venture on an invasion of Falklands made British policy makers unresponsive to warnings of invasion³ whereas Argentina totally misjudged the likely British response to a military action in Falklands.

It may be seen that the direct or indirect involvement of the leading NATO Power, the United States, in support of Britain was constant. In fact, most of the negotiations prior to the conflict took place in the United States. The last round of bilateral negotiations on the future status of the Islands between Britain and Argentina, held in New York, was disavowed by the latter on 3 March 1982.⁴ On 2 April 1982 Argentine Marines stormed ashore near Port Stanley, the Falklands capital, overwhelmed the small British garrison there and raised the Argentine flag over the Falklands.⁵ The short span

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2. Richard Ned Lebow, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War," The Journal of the Strategic Studies (London), Vol.6, March 1983, No.1, p.5.
 3. This has been a widely held belief in Britain during and immediately after the conflict, but has been disputed by the government. The Frank Committee also absolved the government of this allegation. See Cmd 8787, n.1.
 4. The Times (London), 4 March 1982.
 5. The Times, 3 April 1982.

of a month between these two events was marked by steadily escalating tensions between Argentina and Britain, as well as obvious Argentine military preparations for an invasion. However, Britain did not take the threat seriously. On 29 March 1982, realizing the seriousness of the situation, Britain ordered a submarine and support vessels of the Royal Navy to cruise to the South Atlantic.⁶ But, by then it was too late to deter the Argentine invasion.

Britain's inability to foresee the Argentine motives cannot be attributed to any lack of information. Britain had intelligence reports about Argentine intentions and military preparations from both open and clandestine sources. Between 3 March and 2 April 1982 Britain had received ample information which, if taken seriously, would have confirmed that Argentina was up for a military invasion of the Falklands.

Despite intelligence report about a possible Argentine military invasion, the British Policy makers insisted upon an evidence of the near certainty of an Argentine invasion before they were willing to authorise the kind of military preparations that might have been successful in deterring it or at least in limiting its chances of success. This proclivity to do nothing unless

6. The Times 30 March 1982.

invasion appeared imminent was reinforced by political and economic considerations.

On 3 April 1982, after the invasion had already taken place the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, explained to her critics in the House of Commons that "several times in the past an invasion had been threatened. It would have been absurd to despatch the fleet everytime there was bellicose talks in Buenos Aires. The only way of being sure of preventing it would have been to keep a large fleet close to the Falklands, 8000 miles away from home base. No government has ever been able to do that because the cost would be enormous."⁷ Sending a tripwire force would also have cost resources. Without a compelling evidence of the likelihood of Argentine attack, the government could not have afforded to despatch its Naval forces anticipating an attack from the Argentinians. This was lacking until 29 March 1982 four days before the actual invasion. The concern for saving money was so pronounced in early 1982 that any government would have invariably thought of avoiding the avoidable.⁸ However, once the

7. U.K. Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Series 6, Vol.21, Session 1981-82, vols.634, 637.

8. Lebow, n.2., p.8.

invasion took place the concern for saving Britain's honour was so great that the policy makers were forced to think that no sacrifice was too big in defence of it.

For years the British government had been committed to the twin goals of a negotiated settlement of the problem, taking into account the liberties and interest of the inhabitants of Falklands. Superficially each round of talks in New York seemed to bring these objectives closer to realization. However, the Islanders never pleased with the prospect of absorption by Argentina, became even more hostile to the idea when the Argentine Junta's bloody suppression of the Argentine Left revealed its utter disregard for the fundamental human rights.⁹

Sometime before Argentina's repudiation of the New York talks, the British officials had begun to recognize that a negotiated settlement of the dispute was very unlikely, as there existed an unbridgeable gap between the interests of the Islanders and the demands of the Argentines. Moreover, there was a powerful Falklands lobby among Conservative members of Parliament. This lobby portrayed the Falkland Islands as a test case of the Government's commitments to uphold traditional British

9. Ibid., p.10.

freedoms. There were supporters to this view within the Left Wing Labour also who opposed any concession to the ruling 'Junta' in Argentina on the ground that it was a fascist dictatorship.¹⁰

The Argentine military rulers had their own compulsions to recapture the Islands militarily as they wanted to appease the largely dissatisfied Argentine public. They used the issue to turn the attention of the masses away from the crippled state of the economy and the politically alienated rulers.¹¹ The Argentine Junta apparently believed that there was little or nothing in a military sense that Britain could do to dislodge Argentina from the Falklands once they had actually occupied it. Many British and American military experts also shared this view.

Rear Admiral John F. Woodward, Commandor of the Royal Navy Task Force, himself agreed that "recapture of the Falkland Islands could be a long and bloody campaign.... There was no simple, short, quick military solution..."

10. The Conservative members were more or less unanimous in their support for the Government's plan to recover the Falklands Islands from the Argentines. The Labour on the other hand, though critical of the Government's policy preceding the invasion generally supported the plan to recover the Islands. For the positions taken by the respective parties see, UK Commons, n.7, cols. 633-68.

11. Lebow, n.2, p.16.

while the Argentines resisted."¹² Many American Naval experts who were presumably well informed about the subject doubted Britain's ability to liberate the Falklands even after the British government had committed itself to this course of action. "The British are not going to be able to do it," predicted a Senior American General. "They will control the seas but not the air."¹³ The general assessment was that the British Task Force would not be able to do much when it arrived in Falkland waters because it lacked sufficient air power and logistical support. A retired American admiral told the Washington Post, "The British made the decision to structure their navy to only certain NATO tasks and have lost their ability to conduct independent operations in the process."¹⁴ Argentine President General Galtieri confided that the Junta "thought an amphibious operation inconceivable."¹⁵ When the British subsequently prepared to carry it out he gave it little chance of success.

12. The Guardian (London), 29 April 1982.

13. The Wall Street Journal (New York), 27 April 1982.

14. Washington Post, 4 April 1982.

15. The Times (London), 16 April 1982.

But the subsequent events, the successful British operation, disproved all these predictions, although Britain had to pay a heavy price for their inability to provide adequate air cover for their fleet.

Both Argentina and Britain conceived the Falklands problem from very different cognitive contexts. From the Argentine perspective, the Falkland Islands were part of Argentinas national territory that had been occupied by a colonial power since 1833. Continued British sovereignty over the islands was an atavism in the 20th century which had witnessed numerous wars of national liberation to bring the age of colonialism to an end. General Galtieri gave voice to this sentiment in his address to the Argentine nation on 1 May 1982: "Our cause had ceased to be an Argentine problem. It has become a cause of America and of the world which does not acknowledge colonialism as a situation which can be tolerated in this century."¹⁶

His claim was more than mere rhetoric. Within Argentina every newspaper and all the political parties which were otherwise opposed to the military regime greeted the recovery of the 'Malvinas' unconditionally.¹⁷ What linked the desperate and antagonistic factions

16. The Times (London), 3 May 1982.

17. The Times, 4 April 1982.

together within Argentina was the common belief that the British occupation of the Falklands represented an insult to Argentine independence and nationhood. To them it seemed a far fetched notion that in 1982 a colonial power would try, let alone succeed, to reimpose its rule on a liberated colony by force of arms.¹⁸

The British, on the other hand, perceived of the Falklands controversy in an altogether different way. Politicians, the press, and the public opinion for the most part dismissed the colonial metaphor as inappropriate because the population of the islands was of British stock and wished to remain under the protection of the crown. Majority opinion in Britain did not see the Argentine invasion as an effort at national liberation, but as an act of naked aggression carried out by a dictatorship against a democratic and peaceful people. For the major political parties, and most factions within them even those who admitted some legitimacy to Argentine claims, the military means Buenos Aires had used to achieve its end were repugnant and unacceptable. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher justified the cost, in terms of lives and resources of retaking the Falklands with the twin

18. Ibid.

arguments that "aggression must not be allowed to succeed and freedom must be protected against dictatorship."¹⁹

If it was inconceivable for Argentina that Britain would ever go to war to regain the Falklands it was equally inconceivable to most Britons that they would not if it proved the only way to effect an Argentine withdrawal.

Following the Argentine invasion Margaret Thatcher declared:

We defended Poland because we had given our word and because the spread of dictatorships across Europe had to be stopped for our own sakes.... As in 1939 so today the same principles apply to the Falkland Islands. We have given our word and we must, where we can prevent the expansionist policies of a dictatorship affecting our interests.²⁰

The extent of public outrage in Britain was apparent immediately following the invasion. In the three hour emergency Parliamentary debate, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Defence Minister were subjected to a verbal battering.²¹ The Times reported of a savagery reserved by the House of Commons for occasions of national humiliation.²² It was clear that only a forceful and

19. UK Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Series 6, Vol.24, Session 1980-81, col.478.

20. The Times, 5 April 1982.

21. UK Commons, n.7, cols. 633-68.

22. The Times, 5 April 1982.

successful response would have had any hope of restoring the government's credibility.

Domestic politics aside Britain had important interests and commitments throughout the world that would have been seriously compromised by passive acceptance of the Falklands invasion. A senior British defence official observed: "If we cannot get the Argentines out of the Falklands, how long do you think it will be before the Spaniards take a crack at Gibraltar."²³

Loss of the Falklands might have weakened Britain's position in Hong Kong also. Besides, there were also questions of economic rights in South Atlantic waters and territorial interests in Antarctica to be considered. Argentina and Britain had extensive clashing claims with regard to both. In the British Parliament and in the press concern was expressed that British interests would be prejudiced if not inseparably narrowed by continuing Argentine occupation of the Falklands.²⁴

Therefore, Britain rejected the whole basis of Argentine claims. Rejecting the Argentine claims, R.D. Parsons, the British representative in the United Nations said:

23. The New York Times, 5 April 1982.

24. UK Commons, n.7, cols.633-68.

It has been said, but not on any evidence that the people of the Falklands are a transient, expatriate, population. That is untrue. The Census result show the lie. The Falkland Islanders have been in the Falkland Islands as long as or longer than, most Argentine families have been in Argentina. They are an entirely separate people with a different language, culture and way of life from the people of Argentina.²⁵

Similar thoughts were expressed by Margaret Thatcher in an interview to the German Television:

The Falklands were British sovereign territory. Our people have been on them without a break for 150 years; they were discovered by us. Our people did not displace any indigenous population; they have been there for seven generations - far longer than some of the Spanish, Italians and some of the Germans in the Argentina. By the same right that those people went and claimed Argentina as their own, so do our people on the Falklands claim the Falkland Islands as their own. So let there be no doubt about the sovereignty or about the nationality of the people who live there.²⁶

Rejecting the Argentine claim for sovereignty the British representative, said in the U.N. Security Council meeting:

Argentina claims sovereignty on the basis of 18th and early 19th century history. Argentina's claim is not strengthened by anything which has happened since 1833. The United Kingdom has sovereignty on the basis of 18th, 19th and 20th century history, on the basis of the nationality of the population, on the basis of the freely

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25. Falkland Islands: U.K. Representatives statement in the Security Council. British High Commission in India, British Information Services, BIS, B-154, 24 May 1982, p.5.
26. For the text of Mrs. Thatcher's Interview to German T.V. see British High Commission in India, British Information Services (New Delhi), BIS, B-173, 7 June 1982, p1.

chosen wishes of the people and on the basis of what they have achieved in the territory.²⁷

Britain meant what it said. It was fully convinced of the need to recover the Islands from the Argentines to save the British honour and to help make the world safe for democracy and human freedom.²⁸ But it was not going to be an easy task, as it involved considerable risks. When Britain committed herself to military action to recover the Falklands, it meant fighting an enemy 8000 miles away from the home base and almost in the mouth of the enemy territory, i.e. only 400 miles away from the Argentine mainland. This task could have been accomplished only with positive help from Britain's friends and Allies especially in the NATO. Thus for Britain the whole issue was a test-case for the Alliance solidarity and British resolve. Without the support of her NATO Allies, both moral and material, what could have been militarily possible would have been politically impossible.

Britain was overwhelmed by the initial response of world-wide condemnation of Argentine invasion of the Falklands. Starting with the United Nation's Security Council, more than fifty states, mostly of Europe, Africa and the Commonwealth, as well as from important sections of the world press, the

27. Ibid., p.5.

28. The Times, 9 May 1982.

Argentine action was unequivocally condemned. On 3 April 1982 a day after the invasion, the UN Security Council Resolution 502 (SCR-502) called for the cessation of hostilities and immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces from the Islands.²⁹ As a mark of solidarity with Britain, the European Community and European Parliament had condemned the invasion as did the United States. Britain's close ally, New Zealand besides condemning the Argentine action broke off diplomatic relations with Argentina and imposed trade sanctions besides offering to help militarily. Australia, Belgium and Canada also recalled their Ambassadors from Buenos Aires. The European Community Countries, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Norway placed import ban and banned arms exports to Argentina.³⁰

The NATO Eurogroup in its meeting on 7 May 1982 also condemned the Argentine invasion and asked Argentina to comply with the UN resolution and urged the need to seek a negotiated settlement. Putting the whole dispute in a North Atlantic context, John Nott, British Defence Secretary said in the meeting:

29. Cited from Falkland Islands: The British Position, British High Commission in India, British Information Services, BIS, B.150, 21 May 1982, p.1.

30. UK, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Background Brief, International Reaction to the Argentine Invasion of the Falkland Islands (London), April 1982.

The Atlantic Alliance's response provided irrefutable evidence of the strength of our commitment to the same ideals. It also represented a concrete expression of the growing recognition in NATO that Western interests were not limited to the Treaty area.³¹

He further added pointing out the lessons of the conflict for the overall NATO strategy:

This is not to say there can be any deflection on our part from the Alliance's primary purpose which is to deter the Soviet threat.... The Falkland crisis, in an important sense, had strengthened the allied deterrent in showing the solidarity of the countries and in proving Britain's defence capabilities in a fashion that can leave few doubts in Soviet minds as to their readiness and effectiveness.³²

A communique issued by European defence ministers (the twelve NATO Eurogroup defence ministers) on 6 May 1982 also emphasized "the importance of maintaining the principle that aggression or occupation of territory by force should not be allowed to succeed."³³ The full 15 nation NATO Defence Planning Committee meeting on 7 May 1982 also gave its full support to Britain over the Falkland Islands and the dependencies as well as her failure to comply with the Security Council Resolution 502."³⁵ The North Atlantic Council meeting in Luxembourg

31. The Times, 7 May 1982.

32. Ibid.

33. The Times, 7 May 1982.

34. The Times, 8 May 1982.

35. Ibid.

on 17-18 May 1982 also reaffirmed its support for the British position.³⁶

A statement issued by the Presidency of the European Community on 2 April 1982 also condemned the Argentine invasion. It said:

The Foreign Ministers of the Ten condemn the armed intervention in the Falkland Islands by the Government of Argentina, in defiance of the statement issued on April 1, by the President of the Security Council of the United Nations which remains seized of the question. They urgently appeal to the government of Argentina to withdraw its forces immediately and to adhere to the appeal of the UN Security Council to refrain from the use of force and to continue the search for a diplomatic solution.³⁷

Besides this verbal condemnation the EEC member countries also imposed trade sanctions against Argentina though later on some of the member countries like Italy and Ireland backed out. In the initial imposition of trade sanction all the member countries unanimously supported. It was only when they found that their quickly expressed solidarity with Britain had born little fruit that they started reconsidering their position on economic sanctions.³⁸

36. The Times, 19 May 1982.

37. British High Commission in India, British Information Services, European Communities Information (New Delhi) EEC 153, 7 April 1982, p.1.

38. The Times, 18 May 1982.

Besides these common position taken in the NATO and other European forums some of the NATO countries also individually declared their support for the British position and extended moral and material support. Since the crisis began on April 2, 1982, the French Government took an unequivocal position: it condemned the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands as a violation of international law and insisted on the strict application of the Security Council Resolution, but it did take a stand on the issue of sovereignty. French President, Francois Mitterand, at a press conference, said that France remained at Britain's side in the conflict.³⁹ On his visit to Hamburg President Mitterand, along with West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, supported the continued EEC sanctions against Argentina. "France" Mitterand insisted, "does not claim to lay down the law in the debate about sovereignty; but Argentina is wrong to have taken justice into its own hands. There is no question of punishing Argentina. However, there is no reason for the European Community to show any lack of solidarity."⁴⁰ Claude Cheyson, the French Minister for External affairs, made the French position more explicit. He said:

39. The Times, 17 May 1982.

40. Ibid.

Our solidarity (with Britain) is not linked to any other affair. It has been complete. We have certainly, as a country, adopted the strongest stand at the side of the British.... So long as the Security Council resolution on the Falklands is not respected we shall support the British.⁴¹

France also helped Britain with all possible information about its arms sales to Argentina, in particular the Exocet Missiles, which caused some damage to Britain in the conflict. After the Argentine invasion the French Government also stopped supplying arms and military spares to Argentina. It also refused to make available to Argentina the technical know-how to fix the already supplied missiles on the underwing of the Super Entendard aircraft meant to fire the Exocet missiles.⁴²

France refuted the allegation from various sources that the Exocet missiles fired by the Argentines to destroy H.M.S. Sheffield and H.M.S. Glamorgan in the course of the war, was fitted by the French technicians in Argentina. The French official statement said: "British Government had been given precise details of French missile deliveries to Argentina. It did not appear to have drawn the right deductions from this information otherwise the attack on the Sheffield should not have

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

come as a surprise in London." It further added: "The Argentines are no fools; they did it themselves."⁴³

Besides France, West Germany, Turkey, Canada and the United States individually and collectively supported Britain while Ireland and Italy refused to extend unconditional support which was evident from their refusal to continue with the trade sanctions after the first two phases of the sanctions.

A statement by the Turkish Foreign Minister on 7 May 1982 said: "Turkey is in solidarity with Britain over the Falkland Islands dispute. We are conscious of the fact that our membership in the NATO alliance is a cause for solidarity with Britain over the dispute."⁴⁴

Spain, however, refused to take a categorical position on the dispute but instead offered to mediate in the dispute. The Spanish King, Juan Carlos' statement identified Spain both as an American and as a European country. It said:

We know very well that Europe is our nearest geographical horizon, and we also know that Europe without Spain would be mutilated, lacking one of its essential parts. But Spain must be faithful at the same time to an historic destiny of universal dimensions. We are a European country but we are likewise an American country.⁴⁵

43. The Times, 11 May 1982.

44. The Times, 8 May 1982.

45. The Times, 11 May 1982.

However, the initial show of solidarity with Britain in the European Community as well as in the NATO alliance did not last till the end of the war. Italy, because of certain political problems attached to her "strong-blood ties" with Argentina, reinforced by the common religious identity, refused to extend prolonged unconditional support to Britain. Ireland also because of her pronounced neutral status refused to extend the economic sanctions agreed immediately after the invasion. West Germany, when it began to feel the economic impact of loss of trade, also wanted to reconsider the steps and advocated a peaceful solution for the dispute.⁴⁶

However, for Britain, politically and militarily, the decisive factor was the US position on this issue. It was an extremely difficult choice for America to make. The American dilemma over the issue, which Jean J. Kirk Patrick, United States' Permanent Representative to the UN characterised as 'the terribly difficult problem'; was reminiscent of the Soviet dilemma of choosing between India and China in the Sino-Indian conflict in 1962.⁴⁷ This was evident in what Alexander Haig, the US Secretary of State, stated at the meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS):

46. The Times, 19 May 1982.

47. For the text of J. Kirk Patrick's statement in the UN Security Council meeting on 26 May 1982. See Department of State Bulletin (Washington), Vol. 82, No. 2064, July 1982, p. 28.

Is there a country among us that has not counted itself a friend of both countries; our hemisphere and the Western society of nations would be far poorer without their (Britain and Argentina) notable contributions to our common civilization. When friends fight it is truly tragic.

It is from Great Britain that the United States drew the inspiration for many of its most cherished institutions. Most of us stood at the side of Great Britain in two world wars in this century. Great Britain is a vital partner in the Alliance with Europe which is the first line of defence for Western civilization against the dangers of Soviet aggressions.

Argentina is an American Republic, one of us. It is a nation like the United States, founded on the Republican ideal that all men are created equal.... President Reagan moved early in his administration to make clear the high value we place on our relations with the Government of Argentina and the high esteem in which we hold the Argentine people.⁴⁸

The tact and diplomatic skill which United States used to get out of her responsibilities imposed under the Rio Treaty, which established the Organization of American States (OAS), to come to the defence of her special ally, Britain, was evident in Haig's speech:

The war puts the inter-American systems under stress. Some say that this is an 'anti-colonial war' because the islands were formally administered as a British colony. Some say that since this is a war that puts an American republic against an outside power, the Rio Treaty requires that all its members come to the assistance of the American republic.

48. For the text of Alexander Haig's speech in the OAS meeting. See *ibid.*, p.87.

Others say that it is impossible to speak of colonialism when a people is not subjected to another and, as we all know, there was no such subjugation on the island. Others say there is no way in which the inter-American system based on peaceful settlement of dispute can be interpreted as sanctioning the first use of armed force to settle a dispute.

With full respect for views of others the United States position is clear. since the first use of force did not come from outside (here, Britain) the hemisphere this is not a case of extra-continental aggression against which we are all committed to rally.⁴⁹

The United States blamed Argentina for lack of proper communication and for not taking Washington into confidence before Argentina committed itself to military action. "We face a conflict", the statement further added, "that involves us all but to which the Rio Treaty does not well apply".⁵⁰ The United States viewed it as a conflict over competing claims of sovereignty, each with profound historical and emotional sources. While on the one hand Argentina was deeply committed to recover the islands which, they believed, were taken from them by illegal force, on the other Britain held that the rights and views of the inhabitants (which was overwhelmingly in Britain's favour) should be considered in any future disposition of islands. And the United States refused to

49. Ibid. (emphasis added)

50. Ibid., pp. 87-88.

believe that Britain's attitude was simply a colonial reflex to retain possession of distant islands. The United States also defended her own position holding that it was in conformity with its commitments in the Rio Treaty, as was defined during the signing of the Treaty in 1947 when it was set forth that the Treaty would not be operative in any outstanding territorial dispute between American and European States. Taking advantage of that condition, the United State refused to take any position on the substance of the dispute:

We must search for ways in which we can all join to help bring about peace, not ask the Rio Treaty mechanism to adjudicate a conflict for which it was not conceived.⁵¹

Hence the United States, initially made sustained efforts to avoid a military confrontation and to settle the issue through negotiations. And it subsequently offered full support to the efforts of the President of Peru Belaunde and of the UN Secretary General, Peres de Cueller. . . But, when the United States found that Argentina was refusing to heed to the world opinion, it gave up its posture of neutrality and came out openly to support Britain. Though the United States held that it was extending only moral support to Britain the Organisation of American States refused to believe it.

51. Ibid., p. 89

The misgivings of the OAS in this regard were contained in a resolution it passed on 29 May 1982 in which the United States was accused of "applying coercive measures against the Argentine Republic and giving its support, including material support, to the United Kingdom."⁵²

In another interview on 23 May 1982 Alexander Haig once again clarified the US position which was implicitly supportive of Britain. He said:

...we recognize as well that the U.S. has been guided in this crisis by a fundamental principle and that is that we must support those forces that support the rule of law and no first use of force.⁵³

Obviously, the reference to the 'rule of law' was another dig at the Argentine Military regime, which had resorted first to the use of force. The United States had extended various kinds of help to Britain to meet the crisis created by the Argentine invasion of Falklands. It imposed economic sanctions against Argentina and provided military communication facilities, through American satellites, to the British task force fighting 8000 miles away from the British homeland. Without American help and Allied support, both moral and material, Britain would have had to

52. For Text of the Resolution, see, OAS Resolution II of 29 May 1982, Department of State Bulletin No.2064, Vol.82, July 1982, pp.90-91.

53. For the text of Haig's Interview on Face the Nation on 23 May 1982, see *ibid.*, pp.52-55.

pay a heavier prize for the recapture of the Falkland Islands.

Britain acknowledged this allied help immediately after the war. To quote the Defence White Paper issued after the war:

From the outset the Government were heartened by the understanding and support of the United Kingdom's partners in the European Community, our Allies in NATO and not least, our friends in the Commonwealth. This international support which in many cases represented a clear choice of Principle over material interests by the Governments concerned was of value in bringing home to the Argentine leaders the extent of their international isolation. It was also extended in some instances to the provisions of material help which was of direct benefit to the task force.⁵⁴

Militarily, diplomatically and politically the victory over Argentina on the question of Falklands was not a mean achievement for Britain. Military significance lies in the fact that in a span of seven weeks a task force of 28000 men and over 100 ships had been assembled, sailed 8000 miles, effectively neutralised the Argentine Navy and fought off persistent and courageous attack from combat aircraft, which outnumbered its own by more than six to one, and finally brought the outnumbered Argentine Army to surrender within three and a half weeks.⁵⁵

54. UK, HMSO, The Falklands Campaign: The Lessons, Cmnd 8758 (London 1982), p.15.

55. Ibid.

Militarily it was a unique campaign. The British armed forces demonstrated their capability to operate at distant waters in the most difficult circumstances.

Diplomatically, it was a test-case for the solidarity of NATO Alliance for Britain. The conflict instead of weakening its trust and confidence in NATO helped only to reinforce them. The Defence White Paper also focussed the special problem the British Task Force faced in conducting the operation in the South Atlantic. Aircrafts and equipments were constantly in demand to perform unfamiliar tasks which were important to the occasion. However, it cautioned against generalizing the experience gained from the war saying that "the bulk of the emergency practices used were special to the operation and because equipment requirements were narrowed to the immediate task of countering specifically known Argentine capabilities.... Though eventualities of the South Atlantic type could arise in the future, the whole campaign cannot be over-estimated as to ignore the long term security threat to Britain which comes from the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact."⁵⁶

Another notable result of the campaign was that it marked a departure from the British commitment in 1968,

56. Ibid., p.31.

not to alone deploy its forces outside Europe for any major operation. In the light of the Falklands conflict the British Government has decided to maintain a sizeable garrison on the Falkland Islands for the foreseeable future. And this was to be done without affecting its NATO commitment.⁵⁷

Politically, Britain has succeeded to convey to the rest of the world that the British case for sovereignty over the Falkland Islands is more solid than that of Argentina. Rejecting the Argentine claim over the Falkland Islands the British Government stated in 1985:

...the islands are British territory. Britain's title is derived from early settlement, reinforced by formal claims in the name of the crown and completed by open, continuous, effective and peaceful possession, occupation and administration of the Islands since 1833. The exercise of sovereignty by the United Kingdom over Falkland Islands, has further more consistently been shown to accord with the wishes of the Islanders, expressed through their democratically elected representatives.... The Government have consistently defended the Islanders' right of self determination and will continue to do so.... There could be no question of resuming negotiation with Argentina about the future of the Island as if nothing has happened....⁵⁸

57. Ibid., p.32.

58. UK, HMSO, Falkland Islands: Observations by the Government (Fifth Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee), Session 1983-84, Cmnd 9447 (London 1985), p.46.

Conclusion

After the Suez crisis in 1956-57 the Falklands conflict was the first in twenty five years to test Britain's capability, will and resolve to fight war in defence of its honour, cherished values and material and other interests. It was also important in yet another way that it provided for Britain an opportunity to test how reliable its Allies were in times of crisis. Britain's success in the conflict, in most unusual circumstances, owed both to the NATO solidarity and the British resolve and capability.

The United States' material and moral support helped to instill confidence in the fighting forces. However, what was of crucial importance for Britain was the collective NATO support. When a major chunk of the British forces were fighting in the South Atlantic, 8000 miles away from home territory, the British National Security in Europe was taken care of by NATO. Without NATO, Britain, possibly, could not have thought of sending the Task Force to recover the Islands from the Argentines.

It was the lack of solidarity in NATO, as was reflected in the American position, that forced the humiliating British and French withdrawal from Egypt in 1957. In the Falklands conflict the support Britain received from

her Allies in NATO facilitated an easy victory over Argentina and also to reestablish British claim over the Islands on a stronger footing.

It provided lessons for the future also. Britain still has various interests outside Europe. If, in an eventuality, these interests are to be defended militarily then NATO's position will be a fundamental factor for Britain in deciding to use its own forces in defence of such interests outside Europe.

CHAPTER V

C O N C L U S I O N

Britain's descending position in the world scale of power in the post-Second World War period, following its declining resource base, had placed its policies into a process of constant re-adjustment. As a result, major reviews of its security policy perception, and its own role in the world as well, have also been carried out from time to time.

It may be recalled that when Britain realised in late 1940s that neither Britain alone nor a constellation of West European powers together could really match the ascending Soviet power, and its potential to commit aggression on Western Europe, Britain began to think in terms of creating a military mechanism which should ensure a regular involvement of the United States in defence of Britain and Western Europe. It is important to remember in this context that the initiative in this direction had come from no less a person than Ernest Bevin, who had stoutly defended the Russian Revolution by forming a Council of Action of the British trade unions to stop the British Prime Minister Lloyd George from intervening in Russia against the revolution. But, many years later Bevin had to adopt this course of action

against Russia when he realised in the aftermath of the Second World War that the Russian intentions in Europe were neither good nor peaceful, and that to ward off potential threats from the Soviet Union to Western Europe it required a regular US involvement in support of West European countries. That was considered a long-term basic perception on which the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was built up in 1949 under Bevin's initiative. Since then the NATO remained a fundamental element of Britain's defence policy.

Although NATO thus ensured Britain's own national security, and the security of Western Europe as well, Britain's global perspective and a readiness to continue to play a global role remained undiminished. The need to safeguard its own economic and strategic interests, its responsibilities to its colonial possessions and to some of its ex-colonies with whom it had treaty obligations, and potential threats from the Soviet and Chinese Communists to Asia and other parts of the world cumulatively made Britain to do regular flag-showing exercise, and physical presence as well, in the extra-European world as well. In South-East Asia, for example, it had to make even a sizable deployment of forces in early 1960s to support Malaysia against Indonesia's

'confrontationist' policy. This process went on till mid-1960s when economic constraints forced Britain to undertake a review of its overall defence perspective. This was done by the Labour Government, headed by Harold Wilson, which was in power then. One of the objectives of this review was to cut drastically the projected defence budget. The outcome was the major policy statement Wilson made on 16 January 1968 by which Britain decided to withdraw its forces from the East of Suez. The review marked a major shift of emphasis of Britain's post-War defence policy and a gradual disengagement from the extra-European world. The global role of the British forces was narrowed down and the NATO became the area of concentration of British military activities. (Of course, Britain still keeps two major war ships and other supporting vessels in the Persian Gulf, besides a Garrison in Hong Kong). Simultaneously, a new approach was adopted in Britain that its vital interests elsewhere in the world could be safeguarded by pursuing a vigorous diplomacy rather than by maintaining a direct military presence.

Besides economic constraints, which were quite decisive of course, the other factor which influenced Britain to increasingly concentrate on NATO for its defence strategy was the growing Europeanness in the

British outlook, especially after the consolidation of the European Economic Community, which provided an added impetus to view Europe as the main stay of Britain in future. This has really reinforced the British inclination to play a dominant European role. No doubt, within the European pillar of the NATO alliance system Britain was still the dominant power. And, on security matters, the British voice in the Euro-group in NATO has always been quite decisive. Its independent nuclear strength, its still substantially large navy and other military capabilities keep the British position strong among the Euro-group in NATO.

From the angle of British outlook to NATO, the British decision to withdraw its forces from the East of Suez had great significance. Since then the extra-European element in the British defence policy got shrunk considerably and the NATO became the cardinal element of Britain's defence strategy. Although Britain still continue to maintain an independent nuclear deterrent, and still a reasonably powerful navy, and the Rhine Army, they are all in a way either complementary to the overall NATO defence strategy or integral parts of it.

Britain's involvement in NATO is quite close and substantial. It has a co-operative and collaborative arrangement with it. Moreover, its forces are standardised with other NATO forces. Besides the fact that Lord Carrington, a British, is the present Secretary-General of NATO, Britain is the only European power which contributes substantially to all the wings of the NATO Command. It has been taking part in the entire NATO strategy at all levels. The British Army of Rhine is a significant component which reinforces the NATO strategy in Central Europe.

Britain has found NATO quite valuable to its defence strategy. It has found it an important spring board of action against various Soviet moves in Europe and elsewhere. The common strategy, the NATO members by and large follow, on East-West questions, in which the British contribution in moulding it is by no means small, their attitude towards the question of modernisation of Theatre Nuclear Weapons in Europe, and a cautious approach to detente, all bear the stamp of British way of thinking on these questions. Being the most experienced member in NATO which has the record of longest experience in dealing with big powers, including the Russians, Britain's perceptions on various issues have special value for other members of NATO, including to the United States.

That apart, the value of NATO for Britain has been quite explicit during its recent war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands. During the crisis the moral, diplomatic, technical and material support Britain received from other members of NATO, by and large, was quite substantial. That was, indeed, a great encouragement Britain received to venture sending a naval task force 8000 miles away from its shores to fight the Argentines and recover Falkland Islands from the Argentine occupation. Undoubtedly, the success Britain scored in the Falklands War owed a great deal to the solidarity and support it received from most of the members of the NATO.

The importance Britain attached to NATO was evident when, in late 1970s, like in late 1940s, it took the lead in evolving methods to meet the crisis situation in Europe arisen out of the new Soviet threat following the deployment of SS-20s targetted to Western Europe. The British role in harnessing the new NATO strategy of modernising Theatre Nuclear Weapons to counter the Soviet challenge, and the readiness it had shown to station some of the new missiles on the British soil were demonstrative of the continuing British perception that there should be a united approach in meeting threats to the security of Western Europe.

An important feature of Britain's interaction with other NATO powers is its "special relationship" with the dominant NATO Power - the United States. They have special consultation channels and co-operative and collaborative arrangements which cannot be called strictly a purely bilateral one or an extension of a purely NATO connection. At best it could be a combination of both which both the countries utilise profitably. This was quite obvious on a number of crises situations, including the ones during the Cuban crisis of 1962 and the Falklands War of 1982. An exception to this was during the Suez Crisis in 1956 when the US administration adopted a negative attitude to British moves in the Suez which caused considerable heart-burning in Britain.

Although NATO has become the centre-piece of Britain's defence strategy, especially since 1970s, it will be incorrect to assume that Britain's defence perception now has only a NATO orientation. As British interests are quite widespread outside Europe also, it is quite natural that its strategy will always have a substantial global orientation and content. Of course, some of these British interests coincide with the interests of many other members of NATO as well. Therefore, while Britain tries to influence the NATO strategy

to sub-serve its interests elsewhere also, it still keeps a capacity and an option to play a wider global role open. Not only that, even within NATO Britain retains its right to act alone also, as is clear from its resolve to maintain an independent nuclear deterrent as an ultimate answer to its national security.

Obviously, the present defence policy of Britain revolves around the concept that Britain is and should remain a great power at the top next to the two super powers. In NATO it is the most important power after the United States and a nuclear power whose main focus during the last two decades has been shifted considerably to Europe, but still enjoys considerable influence in the extra-European world. At the same time the escalating defence cost continues to cause considerable anxiety among the policy makers in Britain. Therefore, it appears that the British Government, if indications in the 1986 Defence White Paper are of any guide, seems to be thinking in terms of another defence review in the near future to further economise military spending. But, whatever the nature of such a review it is quite certain that it can hardly affect Britain's basic approach and commitment to NATO, or the pivotal position NATO enjoys today in the British defence strategy.

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