

Nuclear Warfare Revisited

Ken Coates

For a very long time, the development of nuclear weapons (and associated military technology), was inextricably related to the progress of the Cold War. From 1945 onwards, fear of Communism ranged the United States and its European allies into what quickly became the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. An Eastern Alliance, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, emerged shortly afterwards. The balance of power became more and more dependent on military strength, and immense efforts were put into the refinement of nuclear weapons. The resultant arms race became ever more expensive as destructive capacity became ever more unimaginable. In the West fear of Communism not only stimulated military co-ordination: for a time, it also promoted economic co-operation, and the ascendancy throughout the West of what is now thought of as the Keynesian world order. These were to be the years of a social welfare consensus in Western Europe, and of the emerging Common Market. Public planning and governmental intervention prospered in the West European economy as never before. Undoubtedly leaders such as Jean Monnet drew support from the business communities with which they were working, on the supposition that their policies would help to fortify the institutions of liberal democracy in the West. Were not Stalin's tanks massed along the newly defined Eastern border? And were not the Communist Parties in Italy and France able to count their votes in many millions?

But if the phobias of the time guaranteed a long period of full employment and relative prosperity, they also launched frenetic military competition. Ultimately the welfare consensus began to wear off: but the military confrontation proved more enduring.

Those who had worked on the development of the bomb in the United States had not expected that it should be tried out on cities without prior warning. They had presumed that a public test of its powers might be made at sea, or

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in some unpopulated area. In fact, the decision to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki seems to have had little to do with military exigencies in the war with Japan, which was already drawing to a close. The presumption of many, politicians and scholars alike, is that the first nuclear bombardment took place in answer to the felt need of the American leadership to send a chilling message to the Soviet Union.

In a very short time, Stalin showed that he had understood, and the Russians detonated their own bomb four years after the Hiroshima explosion. The Soviet hydrogen bomb followed inexorably, just as had the American fusion device.¹ The nuclear race was on. Soon after there opened the race to perfect intercontinental and other rockets, which might deliver the new weapons.

This contest was precisely encapsulated in the metaphor which Bertrand Russell presented to describe it:

‘Since the nuclear stalemate became apparent, the Governments of East and West have adopted the policy which Mr. Dulles calls ‘brinkmanship’. This is a policy adapted from a sport which, I am told, is practised by some youthful degenerates. This sport is called ‘Chicken!’. It is played by choosing a long straight road with a white line down the middle and starting two very fast cars towards each other from opposite ends. Each car is expected to keep the wheels of one side on the white line. As they approach each other, mutual destruction becomes more and more imminent. If one of them swerves from the white line before the other, the other, as he passes, shouts ‘Chicken!’, and the one who has swerved becomes an object of contempt. As played by irresponsible boys, this game is considered decadent and immoral, though only the lives of the players are risked. But when the game is played by eminent statesmen, who risk not only their own lives but those of many hundreds of millions of human beings, it is thought on both sides that the statesmen on one side are displaying a high degree of wisdom and courage, and only the statesmen on the other side are reprehensible. This, of course, is absurd. Both are to blame for playing such an incredibly dangerous game. The game may be played without misfortune a few times, but sooner or later it will come to be felt that loss of face is more dreadful than nuclear annihilation. The moment will come when neither side can face the derisive cry of ‘Chicken!’ from the other side. When that moment is come, the statesmen of both sides will plunge the world into destruction.’²

But apt though it was in the beginning, the game of ‘Chicken!’ was soon to become a most inadequate guide to the state of the nuclear threat as it extended into wider areas. The polarisation of world conflict was not to remain absolute. New nuclear powers continuously arrived. At first, people in the grip of the Cold War mentality perceived the French and British bombs as if they were at the service of the overarching Western alliance. The British bombs may have been, but the French were something different. Later the Chinese bomb was also mythically assimilated to the Russian armoury. But in truth the nuclear potential divided allies, as well as cementing enmities: the French bomb was manufactured as a result of an intense political argument about the autonomy of France within the Western alliance system: and the birth of the Chinese nuclear capacity was engendered in a ferocious dispute with China’s Russian ally. The growth of Chinese nuclear armaments was simultaneously the eruption of the

Sino-Soviet dispute, which was in due time to generate actual military exchanges, and to cause the Chinese to ‘dig deep and store grain’ by constructing vast labyrinths of nuclear shelters under their main cities, in preparation for Soviet nuclear attacks.

So rooted had the Cold War mentality become by this time, that senior American Intelligence officers went to considerable lengths to persuade the United States Government and its allies that the quarrel between Russia and China was a mock-battle, got up especially in order to mislead the West, as part of an extremely subtle campaign of world domination. The most eminent proponent of the notion that the Sino-Soviet conflict was an elaborate deception was James Angleton of the CIA, who was much influenced by a Soviet defector called Anatoli Golytsin. The split, he said, was

‘simply a clever ruse to tempt the United States into commitments and aid to China, which would then be used to weaken and exploit the United States.’

Angleton’s suspicions were apparently indulged by Morris Oldfield of MI6, who also refused to believe those of his own specialists who confirmed the reality of the split.³

But in reality it was the repeated specific American nuclear threats against China which had convinced the Chinese Government that it needed its own nuclear weapons in order to guarantee its continued independence. Relentless and systematic pressure were undoubtedly a key feature of America’s China policy.

This first became public knowledge on the 30th November 1950, during the Korean War, when President Truman called a press conference to announce that he was considering a nuclear bombardment of China. The resultant outcry persuaded Clement Attlee to fly at once to Washington, in order to dissuade the Americans. But after the departure of Truman, the same thought recurred. President Eisenhower told us in his memoirs:

‘In order to compel the Chinese Communists to accede to an armistice, it was obvious that if we were to go over to a major offensive the war would have to be expanded outside of Korea – with strikes against the supporting Chinese airforce in Manchuria, a blockade of the Chinese coast and similar measures . . . Finally, to keep the attack from becoming overtly costly, it was clear that we would have to use atomic weapons . . . we dropped the word, discreetly, of our intention.’⁴

So the Korean War concluded in the truce at Panmunjon in 1953.

Subsequently Sherman Adams, the White House Chief of Staff, gave his view of these events.

‘Talking one day with Eisenhower about the events that led up finally to the truce in Korea, I asked him what it was that brought the Communists into line. “Danger of an atomic war”, he said without hesitation. “We told them we could not hold a limited war any longer if the Communists welched on any truce. They didn’t want a full-scale war or an atomic attack”.’⁵

The tensions created in the Korean War were not to die away with the cessation of that conflict. There remained a strong American engagement in the continuing conflict between the two Chinas: mainland China and Taiwan. After the Communist victory in 1949, the United States, and for a long time some of its allies, recognised the exiled government of Chiang Kai-Shek, which established itself in the island of Taiwan, as the legitimate authority in all China. Taiwan occupied the Chinese seat in the Security Council of the United Nations. More American threats, lacking nothing in explicitness, were evoked by the ensuing disputes between China and Taiwan, concerning the Tachen Islands in 1954, and the Islands of Quemoy and Matsu in 1955 and again in 1958. Chiang Kai-Shek was using these Islands for the continued molestation of Chinese shipping, and as jumping off grounds for hit and run raids on the mainland. The Americans confirmed their support for Chiang at each point in this stand off, with direct nuclear warnings. Of course, nuclear confrontation can involve generalised non-specific threats, such as visible deployments or warning manoeuvres. But these threats were direct, anything but hints. In the end, Eisenhower sent the 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Straits, and announced that the United States Air Force had, in readiness for any eventuality, been equipped with nuclear missiles during the Quemoy crisis. This mobilisation cost a billion dollars. Small wonder that the Chinese Communists turned to their Russian allies with a request for countervailing power.

However, the Soviet leaders were nervous about devolving nuclear weapons into the control of their largest ally. They sensed that they might court total destruction themselves if they yielded the nuclear initiative to a proxy.

Even so, on the 15th October 1957, a secret agreement was reached by which the Russians undertook to provide the Chinese with 'a sample of an atomic bomb and technical data concerning its manufacture'. But after the later Quemoy crisis there were second thoughts about this issue, because the Soviet Government believed (and the historian Roy Medvedev tends to think they were right⁶) that the Chinese were provoking an incident for reasons of their own. From this distance, in the absence of inside information, it is quite impossible to provide categorical proof either way: but it does appear perfectly clear that Chiang Kai-Shek was himself an adept provocateur and had a permanent interest in maintaining the highest level of tension between People's China and his American backers. Quemoy was not an innocent desert island, but an advanced and active military base, and the Chinese bombardment of it was arguably a reasonable form of self-protection.

This indeed, whatever he thought privately, was the public assumption of Khrushchev in his message to Eisenhower on 8th September 1958. If we are to regard Khrushchev's memoirs as authentic, they show that in fact he went a great deal further than this.

'We were all in favour of Mao Tse-Tung's liquidating these two islands as potential jumping off points' he wrote.⁷

Chiang, he thought, was hoping to recover possession of the mainland and the Americans were 'egging him on'. Indeed, Khrushchev expresses his impatience because the Chinese were not more resolute in pressing their offensive. 'You can imagine our surprise' he said, 'when the balance tipped in favour of Mao Tse-Tung ...' but 'they suddenly halted their offensive. As a result the whole operation came to nothing'.

In any case, what is not in dispute is that the Chinese later asserted publicly that after the Quemoy face-off, on 20th June 1959, the Russians unilaterally 'tore up' their 1957 promise. It is also beyond doubt that thereafter Moscow cut off all direct nuclear assistance to Beijing. Khrushchev indeed was attempting to promote the idea of an Asian nuclear-free zone in his discussions with the Americans, even though the Chinese were not parties to this proposal.

All the public polemics between Russia and China on ideological questions, including the acrimonious debate on the question of the alleged 'inevitability' of war, followed these events. Not one of the main doctrinal quarrels preceded them. There were undoubtedly gross excesses in the polemic war which became known as the Sino-Soviet dispute. As often happens, this dispute appears to have gained a momentum of its own. However, it did not fall out of the blue, and its aggravation was to a very considerable degree influenced by specific events, which were far from being simply matters of doctrine.

In 1963 the Cold War stand-off between the United States and the Soviet Union came to a head in the October crisis in Cuba. Khrushchev had agreed to deploy intermediate range nuclear missiles in Cuba, to deter any repetition of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. President Kennedy insisted on the withdrawal of all such missiles, and imposed a naval blockade to prevent the importation of arms to Cuba. The Cubans appealed to the Russians not to give way, and it became clear that a Soviet fleet of ships, some of which carried arms, was approaching Cuba. An armada awaited them. Here was the chicken game fully operational, on the high seas. In the event it was Khrushchev who swerved, and the world survived. But the Soviet Government drew the conclusion that the avoidance of any similar climb down required that it should embark upon a superhuman programme to construct overwhelming nuclear force. Cuba frightened the civilised world, but escalated the Cold War arms race beyond anyone's imagination. However, if most of the world saw the Cuba crisis as a momentary reprieve, and accepted it with relief, in China it looked quite different. Now it was evident that the Russian leadership would not risk the destruction of Russia in order to defend its allies.

The Chinese thenceforward entered on a policy of self-reliance, and exploded their own atomic bomb in October 1964. Within the short space of three years they had progressed to the point where they were able to detonate a thermo-nuclear explosion on 17th June 1967. Delivery systems of such weapons were very much more difficult to perfect. A large part of the technical problem in preparing a nuclear explosion inheres in the difficulty involved in refining a sufficient quantity of fissionable material. This is much easier to do if there exists an expendable labour force who are allowed to die of radiation poisoning, and

thus enable development to dispense with the need for complex robotic handling techniques. It appears very possible that the speedy growth of Soviet nuclear technology may well have initially depended on such a grizzly involvement of human forces. The Chinese successes might not have been so costly in human terms, because the first Chinese bomb, according to American monitors who checked on the results of its explosion, was not a simple plutonium device but a more sophisticated one using a rare uranium isotope.

Be that as it may, for the Soviet leaders, Chinese progress in nuclear armament was doubly upsetting. Even though the Chinese bomb was for a long time lacking in any adequate delivery mechanism, these leaders saw the writing on the wall.

Part of the writing contained a message of simple opportunism. Henceforth nuclear proliferation offered a potential new danger, and the Americans were probably already influenced by this when they moved towards the conclusion of a Test Ban Treaty with the Russians in 1963. The Chinese called this 'a big fraud'. The following year, Averell Harriman asked Khrushchev what Russia would do if Washington decided to eliminate Chinese nuclear sites⁸. This was the first time such a question arose between great nuclear powers: but it would not be the last. Very soon it was Soviet diplomats who were exploring American responses to the question, 'How would you react if we were to launch a pre-emptive attack?' The Russians never nuked the Chinese atomic installations: but ferocious squabbles turned into physical battles in a protracted border conflict, which raised tension to a very high level.

This was not reduced by events in Czechoslovakia, where the evolution of 'socialism with a human face' triggered a full-scale intervention by the Soviet Union and its allies in the Warsaw Treaty, in 1968, shortly before the Czechoslovak Communists were scheduling their 14th Party Congress. The Chinese were by now involved in a frenetic political and ideological squabble with the Soviet leaders, and were themselves preparing for their 9th Congress in April 1969. The notions of limited sovereignty which were clearly implied by the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the installation of a puppet Government, were anything but acceptable to the Chinese. But of course, the sovereignty of China was a more difficult quality to limit than was that of Czechoslovakia.

Whilst the Sino-Soviet confrontation intensified, on the 11th September 1969, Premier Chou En-Lai met with Premier Kosygin in Beijing. It is difficult to disentangle the knot of threads which had been tied before this meeting, but it appears clear that the Russians were threatening a surgical strike against Chinese nuclear installations, and that Chou En-Lai insisted that any such strike would bring about all-out war. But the Soviet threat 'worked', in that negotiations between the two Communist powers resumed. However, the underlying situation was clearly not resolved, but greatly aggravated. Then began the feverish campaign in China to construct nuclear shelters in every major city. Immense labyrinths were dug beneath Beijing and other major towns.

All this remarkable history is relevant, because it reveals how far the chicken

game had extended itself into an inconceivable map of suicidal potential, in which a variety of vehicles could approach each other on different axes, making collisions completely unpredictable, and thus grossly jeopardising any possible future.

The calculations which the Russians had to make were superficially simple. Their chicken vehicle was very powerful, and the Chinese opponent was very frail. A collision would probably entail small damage to Russia, but dreadful destruction to China. But all the time there was the larger game, in which the mighty American vehicle might unleash itself against the Russians. How would the Americans respond to a bombardment of China? Of course, the Chinese perceived this dimension of the problem, which is why we saw in short order, the meeting between President Nixon and Mao Tse-Tung, and the American declaration that they 'would not be indifferent to a Soviet attack on China'.

Already, other games of chicken were beginning to shape up. Would the Chinese intervene in a conflict between Pakistan and India, to protect their Pakistan allies? If they did, would the Russians seize the opportunity to defend their Indian allies by a strike on China?

All this complexity was indeed faced down, and by some sort of miracle, no nuclear exchanges took place.

But, if we jump forward to examine the situation a quarter of a century later, we can begin to intuit a very real new danger.

The game of chicken, so naturally an analogy to Russell at the time when the Cold War dominated international relations, was, we can now see, in fact already beginning to break apart when his vital little book was first published. Within a decade, to all intents and purposes, it had gone. Even so, the Cold War dominated the political imagination. But all the while, nuclear proliferation sped ahead. The development of the Israeli bomb brought a new dimension into the balance of power, and terror, in the Middle East. Nuclear research hastened ahead in India and Pakistan. The list of countries anticipated to be on the brink of nuclear testing extended itself in the most daunting way. Dark talk of Islamic bombs became more and more noisy. But in 1963 President Kennedy had anticipated that up to twenty countries would have nuclear weapons by 1975. This did not happen. The Non-Proliferation Treaty, which came into force in 1970, soon gathered more than 150 adherents, and has now enrolled 187. But the failure of the five main nuclear powers to show any willingness to meet the Treaty commitment to negotiate about their own nuclear disarmament was to bring continuous disruptive pressures to bear.⁹ A succession of review conferences has understandably found it more and more difficult to renew the Treaty, in this context.

The alleged end of the Cold War began by denuclearising some parts of the former Soviet Union. But this process was accompanied by a deceptive movement in alleged 'deterrence' doctrine. Far from leading to mutual disarmament it saw a continuous extension of American power, ultimately matched by a deterioration in the Russian response, which became more, not less nuclear with the abandonment of the long-standing commitment to 'no first use'.

Because of the grip of the Cold War on all our thinking, the end of bipolar

confrontation was assumed to mean a radical new departure in terms of nuclear doctrine. After all, history had ended, had it not? Opponents of American hegemony called for a multipolar world. In terms of the diffusion of political power and space for democratic opposition, this had much to be said for it. But in terms of nuclear chicken, it was clearly a most difficult area. Serial confrontations could easily become entangled, repeating the experience of the Russian, Chinese and American stand-offs at the end of the 1960s, and aggravating them with the 'progress' in nuclear armaments of India, or Pakistan, or Iran, or a host of other territories.

In 1995, Michael Mandelbaum, the Director of the American Project on East-West Relations in Washington, cast a cold eye over the immediate future when he offered us 'Lessons of the Next Nuclear War'¹⁰. Three different categories of states were now candidates for nuclear armaments, he told us. The first group were those whose acquisition of nuclear weapons would impact most strongly on international policies.

'They are the allies. Germany and Japan forswore nuclear weapons during the Cold War because they received security guarantees from the United States. Whether they continue as non-nuclear states depends on whether those guarantees continue.'

To be more accurate we might add that the continuity of the American 'umbrella' may not be all that is required. If that umbrella takes the form, now proposed, of the National Missile Defence, more widely known as 'Son of Star Wars', it may provoke such instability in the relations between these allies and, say Russia or China, as to hasten them towards making the very decision to go independently nuclear, which it is Mr. Mandelbaum's ardent desire to avoid.

The most likely form of German proliferation would follow the development of a European 'deterrent' in the course of closer military integration within the European Union. This might be 'justified' with reference to the resolutions of the Western European Union, a defence organ with a sternly nuclear deterrent philosophy. But however it was presented, proliferation within the Atlantic Alliance would pose all the risks we saw earlier in the steady deterioration of the Sino-Soviet alliance once both parties embarked on becoming nuclear powers. The bomb offers an even more powerful menace to allies than it does to antagonists.¹¹

Leaving aside the allies, the second group of would-be nuclear powers are what Mandelbaum calls the 'orphans'.

'They feel seriously threatened but lack the nuclear protection the allies have enjoyed. None has become a full-fledged nuclear power but each is close. The orphans, particularly Pakistan, Israel and Ukraine, are the objects of a different American policy – diplomatic efforts to end the conflicts that have made nuclear armaments attractive to them.'

But America's diplomatic efforts are not disinterested, and follow the perceived interests of the American Government. This interest has been bluntly stated, in

1997, in respect of Ukraine, by Zbigniew Brzezinski in his blueprint for American policy, **The Grand Chessboard**¹². It sees American power as dependent on the establishment and maintenance of hegemony over Ukraine, which is defined as part of the critical core or ‘geopolitical pivot’ of ‘American primacy’. Whether in fact this is to become the case or not, it is perfectly clear that at present Ukraine has been quite incapable of ceasing to be part of the old Soviet economy however many efforts it has made. This is one orphan which is likely to generate continual insecurity, whilst the other two which are named by Mandelbaum are even more obviously centres of volatility. Both, incidentally, can now be seen to be very much further advanced in nuclear capacity than Mandelbaum apparently thought as recently as 1995.

Mandelbaum’s third category are the rogues, notably Iraq and North Korea.

‘The prevention of proliferation may ultimately require destroying those states’ nuclear programmes by force’.

Here again, says Mandelbaum, ‘the chief responsibility will fall to the United States’. But if more American raids are to be unleashed, on territories which are outside the imperium of the world’s pre-eminent superpower, the one certain outcome will be to engender greater nervousness among the ‘allies’, and greater instability among the ‘orphans’.

Is it thinkable that comprehensive nuclear disarmament might come to seem preferable to this bizarre evolution? Doubtless hoping to encourage the signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to stand by their earlier commitments, the five nuclear powers did, at the beginning of the new Millennium, find it necessary to conclude an agreement jointly to move towards nuclear disarmament, within this framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.¹³ Before we greet this joint resolution with too much enthusiasm, we are bound to note that it has no timetable, no fixed staging points, and no means of enforcement.¹⁴ But it does appear at a moment when it was necessary to dissuade new powers from beginning the construction of nuclear weapons.

Mandelbaum’s dismal analysis presumes no surge towards disarmament. On the contrary, it seems to anticipate certain moves to proliferation:

‘The United States has at least one reason to welcome German and Japanese nuclear weapons. They would relieve Americans of defending two countries sufficiently wealthy and powerful to defend themselves and separated from North America by large oceans.’

However, even if all this was an advantage to the American defence appropriations it would

‘cause more than a ripple in international politics: it would make waves. The change would usher in a multipolar nuclear order, which would supplant the more or less bipolar arrangement of the Cold War. A multipolar order would by some reckonings make the world more dangerous – less stable, less certain and less easily managed. In multipolar systems, none of the great powers can ever be certain who will side with whom.’

Here we reach the nub of the question. For the United States, it is not a good idea to render the world 'less easily managed'. But there is another way to manage the world, which does not require the concentration of nuclear force. It requires better behaviour by those with power, which might encourage better behaviour to become more widespread.

In this respect, Bertrand Russell's little book *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare* has stood the test of time. We have lived through the Cold War, and survived the extension of the famous chicken game into ever more dangerous, and ever more baroque, permutations. Now, it seems, we have lived through the post-Cold War, and squandered every opportunity for orderly progress towards comprehensive disarmament and the development of a genuinely new world order. The bombardment of Yugoslavia by Nato, which kicked away the veto in the UN Security Council, the last surviving constitutional safeguard for the interests of Russia and China as minority participants in international relations, was a bridge too far for the Russian political classes.

Economically enfeebled, and thus greatly disadvantaged in conventional military forces, the Russians had seen Nato advancing closer and closer to their borders, and establishing joint military exercises with states which formerly belonged to the Soviet Union. Now, with the nullification of the UN Charter, the last international safeguard of the post-war settlement, they embarked upon policies which clearly marked the beginning of a third phase in the nuclear age.

All through the Cold War, Russian leaders had insisted upon a doctrine of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons. The Americans declined to embrace this doctrine on the grounds that the Russians had superior conventional forces, and that they could therefore offer no guarantee that an armed attack of any kind might not be rebuffed by nuclear strikes. But now the Russian conventional forces are the weaker, in a context in which guerrilla insurgencies are already testing their powers. So we have arrived at the Putin doctrine, which specifically rescinds no first use. At the same time, as we have seen, the National Missile Defence, a refinement of the Strategic Defence Initiative once pursued by President Reagan, is again threatening to disrupt, even reverse, progress towards further specific agreements on East-West nuclear disarmament. Clearly the Russians cannot match those American technologies which purport to enable space-based missiles to destroy attacking salvos from wherever they may come. (The Americans themselves are not finding it easy.) So we must expect that the Russians will raise their game elsewhere.

Common sense is nowhere to be seen in this stand-off, which may now generate even more widespread proliferation, and even more random oppositions between the powers. Those who thought Russell's warnings were no longer relevant are clearly, sadly, mistaken. It is time to grease up the walking boots, and refurbish the banners, because the only rational response to this nightmare of opposing weapons is, as it was, nuclear disarmament.

Footnotes

- 1 See the three articles by Zhores Medvedev on the development of nuclear weapons in the USSR, in **The Spokesman**, Nos 67, 68 and 69, 1999/2000.
- 2 **Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare**, p30.
- 3 This episode came to light during the controversy about **Spy Catcher**, the autobiography of Peter Wright, one-time Assistant Director of MI5. The memoirs of other spies are carefully dissected by Stephen Dorril, in **MI6 – Fifty Years of Special Operations**, Fourth Estate, London, pp. 713 et seq.
- 4 Dwight D. Eisenhower: **Mandate for Change**, Vol. 1, New York, Doubleday, pp. 178-81.
- 5 Cited by Daniel Ellsberg: Call to Mutiny, in **Endpapers One**, Spokesman, Nottingham, 1981, p.20.
- 6 Roy Medvedev: **China and the Superpowers**, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986.
- 7 Nikita Khrushchev: **Khrushchev Remembers**, London, Deutsch, 1974, page 262. Strictly speaking, there is not any question about the authenticity of Khrushchev's memoirs. In fact, the full original transcript of the tapes of these memoirs have been published in Moscow in 1999 in four huge volumes of approximately one thousand pages each. Questions of authenticity arise for two reasons. First, Khrushchev's tapes were dictated from memory, since he was deprived of access to official papers. So these volumes represent a formidable power of recall, even though it is inevitable that sometimes the author's memory should fail him. Secondly, the editing of this vast memoir was a gargantuan task, brilliantly performed, since the memoirs are certainly most readable. But the process of editing, at a distance from the author, and from any primary sources, must necessarily pose difficulties.
- It is interesting that Khrushchev embarked on this huge project, after a suggestion from Bertrand Russell.
- 8 Franz Schurmann: **The Logic of World Power**, New York, Pantheon, 1974, p 55.
- 9 Article VI of the Treaty committed the nuclear powers to 'pursue negotiations in good faith . . . under strict and effective international control'.
- 10 Michael Mandelbaum: 'Lessons of the Next Nuclear War', **Foreign Affairs**, March / April 1995.
- 11 Mr. Mandelbaum's nightmare appeared to be approaching reality when, on July 13th 2000, the **Morning Star** reported:
- 'Peace campaigners slammed a call by French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine for a single nuclear weapon for the European Union yesterday as 'backdoor nuclear proliferation'.
- Mr. Vedrine claimed that nuclear weapons were 'an extreme guarantee of survival. 'To assure the credibility of dissuasion, there is a need for a single dissuader.
- "Peace is guaranteed by this mechanism. To transfer this position to a European level there is a need that the dissuader be credible and speak in the name of a single European people", he said.'
- Upon checking, this story was found to be based on a Reuter's report of July 12th, which said:
- 'The French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine said in an interview published on Wednesday that Europe some day may need a single nuclear power to speak as a deterrent force for the whole continent.'
- However, the Reuter report went on to say that Vedrine thought it too early to say what role France and Britain, the European Union's only nuclear powers, would have in a

European deterrent.

Reference to the published version of this interview in **La Repubblica**, shows that even this version of Vedrine's remarks is somewhat misleading. Vedrine was responding to a direct question from the newspaper. Germany had renounced the Mark, and thus their monetary sovereignty. But on the military plane France had not renounced its nuclear weapons, which would have been an equivalent sacrifice to the German monetary gesture. Vedrine's response was 'That is a false symmetry'. He had then gone on to defend the French deterrent, and to argue that a European deterrent would not be possible until European Union had reached the stage in which one could speak of a single European people. 'Today it is not like that'.

That such questions naturally occur to an Italian journalist shows that this idea is current. But Vedrine's answer shows that it is not yet about to become reality. All this will depend on the development of relations between Europe and the United States. It will be a brave person who will insist that these relationships will always continue as they have been.

12 Zbigniew Brzezinski: **The Grand Chessboard**, Basic Books, 1997.

13 The press release of 22nd May 2000 reported that the Non-Proliferation Review Conference 'after marathon last-minute negotiations' had finally agreed on the immediate disarmament priorities for the international community, as the 2000 Review Conference of Parties to Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) concluded its four-week session early Saturday evening.

Capping a 15-year effort to produce a consensus outcome, the 155 NPT States parties present, out of a total of 187, agreed that there should be 'an unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals'.

14 All these missing features could be rectified, but this is unlikely to happen in the absence of massive public agitation and protest.

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