THE STRUCTURE OF A MYTH:

"NUCLEAR DETERRENCE HAS PRESERVED PEACE IN EUROPE FOR FORTY YEARS"

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"The nuclear deterrent has preserved peace in Europe for forty years"--a statement frequently made, obviously by the adherents of nuclear deterrece. The question is how this statement stands up in the light of facts, theory, and I might even mention values.

In a certain sense the statement is an almost classical expression of the old fallacy pointed out in any course of philosophy in science as post hoc, ergo propter hoc. "Afterwards, hence because". Nuclear deterrence started in one sense in 1945, in a more bilateral, symmetric sense in 1949 when the Soviet bomb was a fact. There has been peace afterwards, hence because. Obviously this type of reasoning is fallacious. Even if we accept that there has been such a thing as nuclear deterrence, and there has been peace in Europe, "afterwards" may not be "because". It could be because of some other factors. As a matter of fact, it could even be "in spite of", because it might happen that those other factors that have preserved peace are so strong enough to over-ride any influence in the other direction that may have come out of the nuclear deterrence factor. One is reminded of the tale of the patients suffering tuberculosis showing a higher life expectancy than the rest of the population: not that tuberculosis is not a dangerous disease but the cure of tuberculosis, curing them in a sanatorium, also took them effectively out of the other hazards of social life such as traffic accidents, accidents in the home, exposure to other contagious diseases, and so on.

However, instead of just making this general point let us look at the whole matter more closely.

And the first question to ask is obviously: "has there really been peace in Europe in this period"? The answer is no. here have been five wars, even of some significance. There was the extremely bloody and disruptive war in Greece 1944-46 with Greek communists and anti-fascists in general fighting Greek fascists, government troops joined by the British and the Americans, and the Americans practicing such techniques as napalm bombing of villages. As is well known by now, but in general not believed until recently: the Soviet Union in general, and Stalin in particular, did not support General Markos, the communist leader. Stalin stuck to the agreement between him and Churchill at the Moscow Conference dividing Europe according to the famous percentage formula. It may be argued, however, that when this war nevertheless took place it was before 1949, Europe was not yet crystallized in the pattern of the two treaties. Bilateral nuclear deterrence was not established. But, however this argument would run, peace there was not.

And the same obviously applies to the two Soviet invasions during our period: Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968. But here it may even be argued that the causal relation flows the other way: the Soviets invaded not only to support a Moscow faithful regime and to prevent a Moscow unfaithful regime from coming into being, but also to secure geo-politically their defenses, precisely because the United

States looked and indeed was, so strong. Nuclear deterrence would make geo-political security regions more, not less, necessary.

Then there have been two other wars: over Cyprus, and over Ulster, Northern Ireland. Both of them had to do with the peculiar exercise of British statecraft: entering an area, drawing lines, resettling, then withdrawing wholly or partly and leaving the mess to the inhabitants. (Palestine and South Africa, Rhodesia and the Falkand Islands being other examples. Fiji and Trinidad could also be mentioned in this context.) But for either case it can be argued that these wars would probably have taken place in any case, with or without nuclear deterrence.

Hence, the record is not so clearly peaceful as those who pronounce this slogan would have it. But, admittedly: there has not been that big cataclysmic war, the proverbial war where the Soviet Union unleashes its conventional forces, invades all of Western Europe, takes it in one gulp. If it had not been for the fact that the nuclear deterrence prevents them from doing so. And we have no proof they ever intended to do so, in short no proof that there ever was anything to deter.

At this point the methodological difficulty is obvious: we cannot rerun European post-Second World War history without the presence on nuclear arms. We do not have that type of social laboratory available. But we can do something else that admittedly is a second best, but nevertheless is important in the name of intellectual honesty, and as an effort to explore the structure of this myth. We can look at history and simply ask the question:

what kind of experience do we have from the past of warfare in the European theater. Then, using extrapolation (which admittedly is a method with difficulties) we could draw some conclusions from the historical picture before 1945 about what, in general, would have been expected after 1945?

The historical picture in a sense is simple: there have been three types of war in Europe if we divide Europe in east and west, and use as a dividing line the division between the Germanic and Latin peoples to the west and the south and the Slavic peoples to the east (we would then include, as is traditionally done, Hungary and Rumania in the eastern part, but not Greece). The historical picture is this: there have been three types of war in recent (meaning the last centuries) European history: intra-west, intra-east and west attacking east. What we have not had is east attacking west. The Soviet Army pursuing the Nazi invaders in 1944-45 with the distinct goal of routing them is no exception: nobody would say that this attack was unprovoked. To the contrary, going backwards we have had Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union 22 June 1941, the interventionists wars after the Russian Revolution in 1917, the German attack on Russia in 1914, and, indeed, Napoleon's attack on the east, to Moscow but not beyond, in 1812. (And before that a high number of Swedish and German attacks of various types. The Turks. The Mongols. The Vikings.).

So, what would be the relationship between nuclear deterrence on the one hand and these three patterns of possible warfare if we

take them to be indicative of inclinations in the European construction, fault lines in the earthquake sense of that word, so to speak?

To start with the intra-west case: it is possible that we would have had a war between Greece and Turkey, and not only over Cyprus, if it had not been for the presence of the US in the European construction. These are both allies of the US and it is obviously not in the US interest that the structure of the alliance is revealed as less than cohesive through a major war between two of its members. Hence, the argument can be made that US presence has had a dampening effect. But the argument cannot be made that this is due to nuclear deterrence. If due to anything it would be some type of pax americana, which could be exercised politically and with conventional forces, in no need of nuclear deterrence. The US may have been afraid of an escalation, but fear of nuclear consequences is no proof of a nuclear cause.

And the same argument can be made about the intra-east possibility: a war between Rumania and Hungary is not at all impossible, over the Hungarian plight inside Rumania, and again the same argument can be made. This was avoided, not because of nuclear deterrence but because the Soviet Union would not permit two of its allies to get at each other's throats. In other words, the argument may be made that the pax sovietica has been operating, and effectively so. The Soviet Union may have been afraid of an escalation, but fear of nuclear consequences is no proof of a nuclear cause.

However, at most what has been said so far could be taken to support the idea that Europeans are not good enough at making peace with themselves and for that reason need, in the western part, a big brother and in the eastern part a bolshoi brat' to keep some order. The hegemonial concept of peace, in other words, dear to both super powers and to most powers capable of exercising hegemonial influence, with the obvious contra-argument that even if it works it deprives the lesser powers of the right and duty to come to grips with their own predicament.

To this the super-powers add an argument: not so much that we are concerned with you and that you should not get at each others throats. The problem is that you may do damage not only to yourselves, but through escalation to the rest of Europe, including us, the super powers. And thus the setting is made for any Michael, international relations expert in the United States and Mikhail, international relations expert in the Soviet Union to come to terms and agree with each other, even to the point of becoming Mike and Misha to each other. I say that with some of the bitterness of a citizen of a small European country, but also fully realizing that here are problems that any person who thinks seriously of a post-super power Europe will have to come to grips with. The point in this connection, however, is only that at no point do we come to the conclusion that nuclear deterrence was a necessary or sufficient cause. And that a real or imagined threat of escalation is used as a domination technique.

We then have the third possibility: west attacking east. There is only one part of the west that might conceivably have both the capability and the motivation to do so: Western Germany. The argument can be made that even if the motivation were present in the form of revanchism (which can be disputed because that would only be a minor part of the West German population), the capability is not present because the German military power is kept within bounds. More particularly, Germany is by the 1954 agreement prevented from having nuclear arms of their own (the Pershing I has a nuclear warhead administered by the Americans, even if the rocket is administered by the Germans--as one example of a structure that hardly convinces the Soviet Union).

Of course, the argument may be made that if there was a sufficient German revanchist push, so strong that western political cohesion would be insufficient to contain it, the push may nevertheless be deterred by nuclear weapons. But those nuclear weapons would in that case be Soviet nuclear arms, assuming that the United States would not have a credible deterrence since the US probably would not "nuke" German revanchists. The scenario in general does not sound very convincing: it is hard to imagine the conditions under which the Germans would do this alone. In addition, just as for the Soviet attack on Western Europe, we have absolutely no evidence that anything of the type was ever contemplated. Neither the Western, nor the Eastern nightmare has any basis in fact--but the argument might be "because it was deterred".

A more convincing scenario would be that they managed to get western allies on their side, particularly the US, in some kind of roll-back operation, to liberate the peoples of Eastern Europe in general and, more likely, Eastern Germany in particular. But the conditions for this scenario to unfold belong more to past than present. There was some kind of mutiny in 1953 in East Berlin, whatever was behind it. What we seem to know is that any effort to obtain for Germany an Austrian solution, meaning reunification in exchange for neutrality, was effectively killed if not on the western side (where it probably had been killed already from the very beginning), also on the eastern side. This may or may not give some hint as to the forces behind the rebellion, which was not only in East Berlin June 1953.

However, regardless of how that may be, there was no effort to intervene from the western side in general and Western Germany/ United States in particular. Nor was there any such effort in 1956 in connection with Hungary, or 1968 in connection with Czechoslovakia. NATO is a treaty predicting intervention in case an ally is attacked, and NATO as an organization tries to make that prediction credible. How credible will always remain an open question unless tested: are we really to believe that the United States will risk millions of her citizens and cities to come to the rescue of, say, some province in Eastern Turkey? What is sure is that NATO is not a prediction of intervention in case a Soviet ally is attacked, not even a prediction in case a neutral country is attacked. And the same goes for the other, WTO, side.

Conclusion: the scenario was tested, nothing in the west deterred the Soviet Union from intervening, nor was there any reason to assume so. Nuclear deterrence, whatever that is, did not maintain peace in these cases either. Which does not mean it was irrelevant: by increasing tension it may have been a contributing factor.

But, the objection would be: have you not left out the fourth and major possibility that nevertheless is, or at least was, or possibly will be, a Soviet plan to attack Western Europe, which has been effectively deterred by nuclear deterrents? The answer would be that the preceding pages are efforts to show how unlikely it is that nuclear deterrence has had any positive peace building influence in connection with the other three types of war in Europe. The fact that there has been no such Soviet attack is compatible with the idea that western nuclear power has had a deterring effect. But we are then back to the point of departure: the absence of a Soviet attack may be due to other reasons--to be more specific, four of them.

And those possible reasons are not difficult to understand. First, there is the problem of motivation. The Soviet theory is, at least to some extent, marxist theory. Marxist theory has a dim view of capitalist society and sees a coming socialist society, of which there may be many varieties, as inevitable. But that is a theory for every individual European society, not a theory of Soviet hegemony. Soviet hegemony might enter the picture in two ways: either as a mid-wife to secure the birth of a socialist

society under appropriate conditions, which might constitute a factor that could trigger an invasion provided the coming of socialism was sufficiently close. A condition for that again would be a possible communist party takeover, like in Czechoslovakia (which did not take place under Red Army cover; that came later). However, no Western European society seems to be on the brink of a communist party takeover; and very much less so the Western Europe an region as a whole. It may be argued that Greece was, and that the "problem" was removed by Anglo-American interventionism and precisely for that reason. If Italy ever was this was counteracted by Stalin's insistence (to Togliatti) that Italian partisans, mainly communists, fighting effectively the Nazis, should be demobilized after the war--in accordance with western wishes.

The second condition for Soviet intervention would be geopolitical considerations: to secure the borders of the Soviet Union by exercising control over their neighbors so as to have a possible next world war outside the Soviet Union, in a security belt of countries. And then a security-belt to secure that belt, etc. Abominable, regardless of super-power. The fact is, however, that with the exception of Norway and Turkey Soviet European neighbors are in Eastern Europe so the interventions (in Hungary and Czechoslovakia) would be cases of intra-east warfare and not be relevant for the theory of nuclear deterrence. Rather, they are relevant for the old theory that it is dangerous to be protected, and in this particular case that the major danger to Eastern European countries comes from its self-appointed protector, not from the west. There

is something corresponding to this on the western side: the US would definitely intervene one way or the other if a classical communist party came to power in Italy (plans were already drawn up for that purpose, like for Greece, and Turkey).

Then there is also a third factor affecting the likelihood that the Soviet Union will strike westwards, all the time assuming that strikes will be limited to its geo-political security area: that a country is not capable of defending itself. Hungary and Czechoslovakia came out of the Second World War with a bad reputation in that regard. Other countries came out with a very positive reputation: Finland, Poland, Yugoslavia and Albania. However much the Soviet Union was provoked there was never a military intervention during these forty years of these four countries, which leads to the fourth factor: does the Soviet Union really have the capability to keep several hostile countries occupied at the same time?

Hence, I am left with the conclusion that nuclear deterrence has not deterred, because there was nothing to deter. The other conflicts took place either because nuclear deterrence was irrelevant, or in spite of nuclear deterrence, or simply because of nuclear deterrence, in order to secure regions. When the Soviet Union has not attacked Western Europe it may be because the motivation was not strong enough, and also because the capability was insufficient throughout this period to conquer some or all of the Western European countries, and then to keep them occuppied for some kind of social, political and/or economic benefit/profit. This, incidentally, may also be the factor that deterred a US attack on the Soviet Union in the period 1945–49. Credible occupation defense, hence, becomes crucial.

We are left with, essentially, pax americana in the west, pax sovietica in the east and the effort to contain Western Germany in the middle. Granting that both of these super power systems may have had some war-avoiding influence does not mean it was due to nuclear deterrence. It could be due to conventional deterrence combined with political influence, even normative influence and economically guided persuasion. It is very hard to believe that any country in the west, or in the east, with a bone to pick with its neighbor is deterred from that by the super-power on the other side threatening a nuclear war, or one's own super-power threatening something similar.

The case of Germany is somewhat more complicated. But here the point would have to be to fight revanchism, making it clear to the German people that they have no cause, that they brought this upon themselves, and that neighboring countries have a very legitimate argument: never more! No problem with the right to cross the intra-German border, uniting the nations to to speak. But uniting the German states: no. Any push eastwards: no.

And this is exactly the issue inside Germany herself. As is well known, the parties vigorously opposing revanchism are the Greens and the Social Democrats, possibly with some exceptions towards the right wing of the Social Democrats. And the parties that never can come out with clear statements against a revanchist policy are the right wing parties, particularly the Bavarian CSU.

Hence, if the real problem is to deter any war in Europe US policy should be to support the parties most vigorously opposed to any such adventure. But what the US is known to do in Germany is exactly the opposite: support the parties that cannot be said to oppose any revanchist option. To preserve peace in Europe the factors making for war will have to be eliminated; to prevent war remove the causes of war. Revanchism is one of them.

Nevertheless, in spite of all that has been said above: there has been some type of peace in Europe since 1945. Nuclear deterrence has probably not contributed to the state of peace, pax americana/pax sovetica may have contributed. But in that case the contribution has taken the form of putting a lid over the cauldron of conflicts, tightening the lid, maintaining the status quo. There is one great exception to this: the European Community. In this area, comprising about 300 million human beings, a peace region has been created through symbiosis and equity. War inside that area seems today highly unlikely, as unlikely as in the area that preceded the European Community as a peace region: the Nordic region. But neither one, nor the other, can be said to have been the results of nuclear deterrence. And the major protagonist of nuclear deterrence, the US, cannot be said to have created the European Community although Marshall Aid was instrumental in providing some of the basis for that construction.

However, we may have to look in another direction, outside Europe, to understand better the conditions for peace in Europe.

Some people have compared the peace in Europe the last forty years with the peace in Europe between the Napoleonic Wars and the end of the century. There is some validity to this comparison. During the 19th century conflicts in Europe were regulated. Seen in retrospect the countries were remarkably similar, and the similarity in this case provided the basis for a deeper understanding of common interests, and for their joint enactment.

But what were these common interests? One of them was capitalism and suppression of the working class; another one was colonialism and suppression of colored peoples. There were culminating events such as the general content among the ruling elites when the Paris commune was suppressed and general participation in the scramble for Africa, for instance at the conference in Berlin 1884. It is easy to maintain peace when greed, including the greed for belligerence itself can be satisfied elsewhere, at the expense of the underdog, in Europe and the colonies.

Europe had somewhere else to turn to: the Third World. In the first years after the Second World War they concentrated their energies on fighting liberation movements in "their" "colonies" (Indo-China, "French" Africa, Malaysia, Kenya, "Dutch" East Indies, "Portuguese" Africa, etc.). In the next period they were busy establishing neo-colonialism, using "development assistance" as the entry ticket. In short, nineteenth century in a newversion; including about 150 "local" and very hot wars--in the Third World--most of them clearly related to the cold war of "peace in Europe."[4]

Peace? Certainly not. Peace in Europe? To some extent, yes. Because of nuclear deterrence? No.