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9 *The Public and Atlantic Defense*

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Introduction

We stated at the outset that we had both political and intellectual objectives in producing this volume. Given the abuse of public opinion data in current policy debates, our aim was to provide responsible analysis of what can and cannot be said about the evolution of public opinion in the area of national security. The various profiles of national opinion have already given the reader considerable insight into the particular characteristics of the seven countries we have chosen to examine. In this concluding chapter, we will attempt to link the data to some general notions about what has been happening to public attitudes over the past few years.

What follows will focus mostly on the question of what has been happening, not why it may or may not have happened. And even what has or has not been happening is in some cases difficult to determine as will be seen. For continuity, we use the same basic categories that have provided the guidelines for the country profiles. The penultimate section then turns to the analytical questions that require most urgent attention in order to advance our ability to understand public attitudes in the area of national security policy, and the final section to the political implications that flow from the current state of the art and from the information base we have developed. Throughout it must be borne in mind that we are attempting to make no judgements about the merits of specific policies or policy objectives but simply trying to explore the interface between the public and policy in this crucial area.

It should be repeated that the "reality" of public opinion on defense issues that emerges from the work in this book will comfort none of the protagonists in recent debates. As is most frequently the case, it lies somewhere between the exaggerated extremes that have been widely portrayed publicly. Thus, it is difficult to find evidence that the public at large has become a driving force in shaping the security policy alternatives available to decision makers, but it is equally difficult to argue that nothing of significance has happened in public perceptions in the national security area. The following pages attempt to put this into perspective.

The Public Record

PERCEIVED SALIENCE OF NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES

We have chosen to separate the dimension of perceived salience from the four image clusters that follow because we consider it the key to our ability to evaluate the ultimate significance of the wealth of data summarized there. There are two basic reasons for this judgment. First, as mentioned in the introduction, we think that the dimension of salience, or the importance to the individual (as opposed to judgments on importance for the country), is a critical addition to the standard components of attitudes, cognitive, affective, and behavioral. To know how important a subject matter is for individuals can tell us a great deal about two key issues: (1) whether what appears as cognition is in fact merely produced by the affective content of the stimulus, and (2) whether apparent inconsistencies between different cognitions and different evaluations are the outgrowth of a particularly complex image of the world or rather the product of adjusting responses to whatever "feels best" at the moment, without any sensation of being contradictory. In the final analysis, the salience attributed to a subject matter by respondents is a good measure of the extent to which reliable and valid measurement of popular perceptions toward that subject matter is feasible. The closer issues are to people, therefore, the more likely their survey responses will reflect attitudes rather than being nonattitudes.

Second, even though we are still lacking solid social-psychological and political science research on national security and foreign policy related mass attitudes, we think it reasonable to assume that truly behavioral predispositions have much to do with the "closeness" to people of a particular subject matter. As salience and closeness hang together, measures of salience should thus be able to tell us whether associations between cognitions and evaluations on the one hand and dispositions toward behavior on the other hand are to be expected.

In view of the very different survey items that are used in the individual studies in this book to report on the dimension of salience, it is impossible to produce a neatly summarizing table, but there can be little doubt about the general trend. Over the past few years there appears to be a general increase in the absolute and relative importance ascribed to national security issues both for the nation as a whole in the countries analyzed and for individual respondents themselves. Economic problems still by far out-weigh the personal importance of national security concerns for overwhelming majorities of the populations in the seven countries, but personal concern over security-related topics has definitely grown since those periods when it was non-existent.

As is obvious from the studies in this book, however, a description of what exactly has become more important to people is not at all straightforward. The difficulty of interpreting survey data in this field exists even for

this key dimension of salience. Without wanting to preempt the discussion below, the importance of "defense" and of the "armed forces" have, for instance, not increased at all, although concepts like security, defense, military balance, etc. are widely endorsed. Moreover, if one looks at the levels of support for specific measures designed to increase defensive capabilities, one almost always finds, with the possible exception of the United States, that opposition clearly exceeds support. This all would indicate that the putative increase in salience does not stem from an increase in the perceived need to maintain or to improve military capabilities.

But the picture is not really clear. If people are asked to rate not the importance of defense and of the armed forces in general, but of "protection" against external threat or attack, this tends to be judged far more important. Yet one should suspect that defense in general and the armed forces have a lot to do with protection against threat and attack. There thus is a considerable degree of uncertainty even in the extent to which we can ascertain what is important to people and why.

This may, of course, be related to the widespread perception that national security can be taken for granted, that there is no clearly visible and imminent threat to the values that are comprised by this notion. It is not at all unusual that demand for public goods is lowest and they are evaluated as least important when their supply appears satisfactorily guaranteed for a foreseeable span of time.

Increases in the importance ascribed to aspects of national security are most clearly visible when it comes to matters of the preservation of peace, the prevention of war, or to nuclear weapons. Even here, however, it is not clear what these increases in salience readings actually mean. First, they are compatible with any substantive orientation toward these problems. If people believe the preservation of peace to have become more important for themselves, they can opt for stronger defense as well as for alternative security arrangements or neutralism. If people rate nuclear weapons as more important than they did earlier, this can reflect either a desire for Western unilateralism in the field of nuclear arms control or, on the contrary, increased concern over Soviet missiles. Second, according to the studies contained in this book, there is little to demonstrate that the levels of information and interest or the feelings of competence to judge these matters have grown. This may suggest that the heightened salience readings are not due to genuine personal concern—which normally should lead to more information seeking and higher interest—but to a kind of "bandwagon" effect. Some people may judge these matters as more important because they are being presented all around them as more important than earlier.

Third, we cannot be sure what this means in terms of disposition toward action. In the field of security-related attitudes we face the particular problem that the important actors are frequently not the individuals themselves, but their governments or the Alliance. When this

is the case, for example in the area of Western negotiating strategies on arms control, how are we to look at the interrelationship between salience and predispositions toward action? Moreover, even when the dimension of salience is tapped by investigating directly individuals' own inclination to become active, there are many unresolved problems. This is obvious, for example, if one compares what people say they feel should be done about the introduction of new nuclear missiles into Europe, and what they would be willing to do themselves if they disagree with deployment.

One final aspect of the salience dimension deserves mention. There seems to be an intimate connection between the extent to which these things are rated as important at the mass level, particularly the antinuclear aspect of this problem, and the direction and intensity of elite debates, particularly conflict between competing political parties. In at least three of the countries surveyed here (Britain, Germany, and the Netherlands) the increase in the salience attributed to nuclear issues grew apace with the extent to which the social democratic and labor parties of these countries more or less outspokenly adopted anti-INF positions. This is a variation, of course, on the bandwagon effect and interferes with our assessments of how important people really think issues to be. If you are the person in the street, and you have seldom reflected about an issue, how can you say it is not so important if everybody else, including those political elites you trust, claims it is of utmost importance?

More will be said about the relationship between attitudes and political preferences below. The point to be made here is narrower and related only to our consideration of salience: an increase of partisan activities may not actually bring a behavior-determining rise in the salience of security issues for mass publics. This is best illustrated by a look at the German and British elections of 1983. The impact of the security and missile issues was quite different in the two cases. The chapter on Britain shows that voting behavior was indeed heavily influenced by these issues, which made a major contribution to the Labor party's defeat. The chapter on Germany argues that the impact of the nuclear weapons issue on the outcome of the country's most recent election was only marginal. Thus what one might interpret as a measure of increased salience did not prove in the German case to be behavior-determining and hence may not be a measure of increased salience at all. In the British case, the issue was obviously salient enough to determine voting patterns.

This illustrates clearly how imperfect our knowledge of what determines salience and behavior really is. All we can say about the past few years is that we can observe an apparent rise in the salience of national security issues but that existing data and methods do not allow us to determine exactly what has increased in importance or why. What is certain is that the relative salience of these issues generally remains low and one therefore confronts the double difficulty of, on the one hand, greater uncertainty in how accurately we can measure public attitudes and, on the other, even when we can be relatively certain of our measure-

ments, to determine how significant these are for political decision making because of their presumed minimal effect on behavior. This in no way is meant to deny the relevance of public opinion data in the area of national security policy but to voice a sharp word of caution about its over-interpretation. In spite of these constraints, there are a good number of things one can say about the evolution of public attitudes in this area and some of these do have important implications for policy.

THE SOVIET UNION: A MORE NORMAL ADVERSARY

Analyzing public attitudes toward the Soviet Union is perhaps the most straightforward of the summarizing tasks in this final chapter. While the data are certainly not uniform in quantity or quality across the Allied countries studied here, there is a relatively clear picture that emerges. And the picture is at considerable variance with many current notions about how people see the Soviets.

There are three basic dimensions to popular perceptions of the Soviet Union that must be distinguished in order for one to grasp fully how these may affect attitudes toward Western policy alternatives. In each there have seemingly been important changes from earlier parts of the postwar period, seemingly because in some cases we have the data to trace the changes and in other cases we are reduced to an educated guess as to what the earlier data would have looked like.

The first dimension of perceptions concerns general attitudes toward the Soviet Union as an international actor. There is no ambiguity. The Soviet Union is clearly perceived as an adversary and not as a benign adversary. Since the early 1970s, attitudes in all Western countries have deteriorated markedly. Anti-Soviet feelings are strong and widespread. Levels of trust in Soviet goodwill are minimal. Moreover, to preempt somewhat the discussion below, there is absolutely no comparison between the judgments made of the Soviet Union and the questioning of U.S. policy that has occurred. The larger public does not yet consider the two superpowers as cut from the same cloth. In other words, the evidence, at least at this general level, does not support the contention that if only people understood the nature of Soviet objectives they would in turn support more actively and uniformly efforts to strengthen Western defenses.

The second dimension concerns the surprising absence of a link between perceptions of the Soviet Union and domestic political preference. To be sure, there is some variance in attitudes expressed as one moves from left to right across the political spectrum in each of our countries. But this is simply not of the same order as it must have been in previous periods. While the data are not available to prove this, what one can demonstrate is that there are virtually no remaining pockets of opinion that consider the Soviet Union to be an alternative model of society, and this even includes Communists and leftist intellectuals for many of whom

this would have been the case some two decades ago. The final blow undoubtedly occurred at different moments in our various countries, but involved in one form or another what the chapter on France refers to as the Gulag effect. This change is in many ways more important than the first as it indicates that there is no longer the same link between attitudes toward the Soviet Union and attitudes toward domestic political order. Basic attitudes toward the Soviet Union transcend domestic politics and the Soviet Union is viewed as largely irrelevant to the underlying problems of Western industrial society.

Finally, there is the fact that growing scepticism about the Soviet Union does not translate into the perception of a greater direct threat to Western security. The growth of Soviet military power is widely acknowledged, as is the incompatibility of many Soviet and Western security objectives. But this has not resulted in the perception of increased threat. The evidence would indicate that this has less to do with perceptions of the Soviet Union than with perceptions of what it is that can threaten Western security. A threat implies something immediate, and it is precisely this immediacy that is absent in popular perceptions of a Soviet menace. The Soviet military buildup or Soviet behavior is seen to be the primary source of international tensions in most countries but this simply does not get equated with an immediate, tangible threat. And this too is an apparent change from earlier periods. A far-less-powerful Soviet Union was once more widely perceived, or so one can surmise, as a more direct threat to the West than the global superpower that has now achieved equivalent status with the United States.

What seems to have transpired, if one puts these three dimensions together, is that for Western publics, the Soviet Union has become a more normal power; an international actor more like others. This was caused or made possible by the break in the link to domestic political strife. In turn, it seems to have changed entirely the context in which Western security policy must be legitimized.

Perceptions of the Soviet Union no longer appear to be the primary determinant of support for Western policy toward the Soviet Union. Rather it appears to be attitudes toward military power, Soviet or Western, that are the key factor. This will be discussed further but the point to be borne in mind is that popular attitudes toward the meaning of Soviet military power do not seem to stem from attitudes toward the Soviet Union itself and this would appear to be new. As a result, policies to deal with the growth of Soviet military power will have to be justified in terms that go beyond simply evoking a negative image of the Soviet system or Soviet objectives. These already exist.

One of the most critical foci of current policy disputes within the Alliance concerns the most appropriate Western political strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union now that it has become a truly global superpower. As should be eminently clear from the above, this is not simply a continuation of old disputes from earlier times, even though it

may frequently appear so. It is revealing that the intensity of debate among policy elites stands in contrast to a considerable multipartisan consensus that our data would indicate exists in the population at large. People are widely convinced that the West will have to live with the Soviet adversary, rather than isolate it or "defeat it," for the foreseeable future, and this is not an issue that distinguishes Europeans from Americans. While one enters much more slippery terrain in trying to measure popular attitudes on specific policy alternatives, it is nevertheless clear that Allied policy toward the East must embody active attempts to regulate East-West competition in order to command the popular support indispensable to its viability.

SECURITY: MORE MAY MEAN LESS

While we have only sparse data for earlier periods, one can say with confidence that the concept of security that we assume dominated the early postwar years—primarily military, primarily East-West—no longer exists. The problem is, it has not been replaced by something concrete but rather by something as yet in constant flux. One is thus reduced to describing specific elements of continuity and elements of change.

A frequently asserted proposition today is that Western societies have grown incapable of defending themselves. The growth of the welfare state has supposedly undermined populations' willingness to spend what is necessary to counter a relentless Soviet military buildup. It is perplexing that anyone should believe there is anything new in popular preferences for spending money on things other than defense. Moreover, the data collected in our country profiles yield a far more nuanced picture of popular attitudes than that implied by the oversimplified premises so frequently heard today.

To begin with, popular majorities do not reject the concept of defense. On the contrary, strong majorities favor the principle of armed resistance if attacked. Military institutions obtain widespread support in most of the countries studied here. And there is broad acceptance of the need to maintain a balance of power between East and West as a basic prerequisite of Western security.

These are key general principles upon which Allied security is based and they all receive substantial popular endorsement. The problem is that public attitudes in this area are characterized by ambivalence: support for the general concept is tempered by scepticism about the consequences that flow from this support, in this case the need to have the means to defend oneself against attack or to maintain a balance of power. Interpreting this ambivalence runs into two interrelated difficulties. First, this illustrates perfectly an area where asking respondents for judgments on specific policy alternatives easily overtaxes their detailed knowledge; their responses will thus most likely be determined by affective considerations. And second, precisely because the affective content of most hypothetical

futures in this area are unpleasant (spending more money, fighting wars, and so on), one is likely to heighten the automatic opposition. Where is the reality, in the general support or in the rejection of the specific?

We will never be able to determine through survey research what the responses of populations would be in a real crisis situation. One could hypothesize that the levels of support as reflected in opinion polls for such things as defense spending are actually quite irrelevant to the requirements of a nation if a war were truly to occur. Unless these attitudes were to become so salient that they determined voting patterns of large numbers of people, something which appears unlikely given previous experience, then it is unlikely that declared popular opposition to defense spending will determine the capacity of Western nations to defend themselves should it prove to be necessary. Arguments about guns vs. butter not only seem to misrepresent the considerations that are operative in determining popular attitudes toward defense issues but may simply be missing the point entirely, at least for Western populations at large.

The data gathered in this book would indicate that the point probably does lie elsewhere, and not in a willingness or unwillingness to spend for defense or to defend oneself. The scepticism about spending on defense appears to be linked to two other major considerations, each of which may not actually be all that new but certainly is present today. Both concern the relevance of military power in dealing with today's security problems.

The two considerations are actually the obverse of each other. The first is a general belief, a belief that has become pervasive, that more military power does not mean more security. In Europe particularly the contribution of increased military power to increasing security is widely questioned. The feasibility of defense is not generally considered to be evident. Moreover, the growth of military power is often considered to be the "primary threat to security." More arms make conflict more likely. This is something perceived as more immediate and more concrete than "the Soviet threat." Soviet military power seems to be perceived in terms similar to that of the West: dangerous but no more usable. Military power and the logic that drives its acquisition are being questioned, especially in the nuclear age where it is considered more destructive and less usable than ever. The requirements of security are thus frequently perceived as getting in the way of peace, a concept that has reached the pinnacle in the hierarchy of values. People tend to focus more on how Western policy may threaten peace and less on the military requirements for maintaining security.

The other side of the coin is the belief that increased security can best be achieved by reducing the role of military confrontation in providing that security. Open-ended military competition with the East finds no support whatsoever despite support for general principles such as the balance of power. There seems to be a conviction, and this is obviously an extrapolation from the data, that the system that has provided security remains simultaneously both necessary and, in and of itself, a possible source of insecurity. Hence the system must be improved. The result is a strong

preference for arms control measures over defense improvements in all countries surveyed, including the United States. One can surmise that this must stem from something like a desire to control both the enemy and oneself more efficiently.

One thus has support for the general principles of Western defense combined with conviction that matters must be better managed. What is interesting is the multipartisan nature of the belief in both of these points. To be sure, there exist differences in the attitudes of those who support Socialist and Social Democratic parties from the supporters of Conservatives or Christian Democrats. But these differences are greatest in response to specific questions on policy alternatives, in other words, in areas where we are least sure of what exactly we are measuring. The range of support for the more general considerations just discussed is in fact surprisingly broad.

DETERRENCE: THE FALLOUT IS NUCLEAR UNCERTAINTY

Issues of nuclear weapons and deterrence are the primary reason for the increased interest over the past few years in public perceptions of Western security policies. Ironically, this area may in some ways be the least revealing of the four thematic clusters treated in this book. As in the previous section, one finds the dichotomy of support for the general and rejection of the specific. But as in the case of Soviet military power, one is frequently measuring attitudes that are almost certainly determined by factors other than nuclear. And it is unlikely that one has recently been witnessing a profound change in attitudes about nuclear weapons; more likely one has seen attitudes coming to the surface that long existed but have ceased to be latent because of changes in context.

A primary thesis of the protest movements has been that populations are no longer willing to accept the basic premises that have underpinned Western deterrent strategy during the postwar period. Despite the passions that nuclear issues evoke today, the available evidence indicates that this generally is not the case, not yet at least; only in rather well-defined strata in one or two countries (Norway and the Netherlands but not, for instance, in the Federal Republic) does one find deep-seated nuclear rejectionism. To be sure, there are few people who like nuclear weapons, and few people feel comfortable with the idea of more nuclear weapons. But this is probably not new and such general predispositions translate more into a generalized fear and confusion than into well-articulated opposition to Western strategy.

The data indicate that peoples' attitudes toward nuclear deterrence are probably composed of four distinct components. The first emerges as strong support for the general concept. This is not surprising, as deterrence implies avoiding war. Our data are uneven, but this appears to be the state of opinion across the political spectrum for all countries surveyed.

The second component is that the logic of deterrence is seemingly

rejected, that is, that a weapon must be usable in order to deter. People tend to believe that nuclear weapons themselves have made war impossible, at least as a "rational" extension of political conflict. The new or renewed confrontation with the nuclear paradox—if a weapon can never be used, the adversary has nothing to fear—has heightened the fear that something may go wrong—if a weapon is usable, it may be used. There is widespread rejection of nuclear weapons as instruments of war fighting.

Which is linked to the third component: that people appear to make no distinction among nuclear weapons. For populations at large, there is only one nuclear threshold to be crossed. Thus, the relentless progress of technology that has unleashed major debates among experts about the meaning of the increased precision of ballistic missiles has as yet not had a similar impact on the attitudes of populations at large. If anything, the expert debate may have reinforced peoples' tendency to treat all nuclear weapons as equal.

The final component is that, in those places where data are available, people continue to believe that they have insufficient expertise to make judgments about issues of military strategy. They regularly look to their governments to make responsible policy in this area. This declared preference is clearly substantiated by the extent to which peoples' attitudes can be influenced on nuclear issues by the way in which survey questions are worded. For instance, depending on whether the need for new INF in Europe is linked to Soviet behavior or the need for balance on the one hand, or to the alternative of an arms control solution on the other, one gets a totally different set of responses. This is normally the mark of relatively low salience and probably indicates that the affective content of the question (Soviet Union, balance, arms control) overrides the specific nuclear considerations.

Nuclear weapons thus are not liked but appear to be accepted as a necessary evil for majorities of populations in most of the countries profiled in this book. Even in Norway the distaste for nuclear weapons seems to be overriden by attachment to the Alliance. Nevertheless, there is growing concern about Western strategy as people have become sensitized by the political debates over the past two years. But most people, even if they have opinions, do not feel particularly strongly about the nuclear issue, at least not strongly enough to influence voting behavior. Most importantly attitudes toward nuclear weapons are for many people clearly a function of other beliefs, the most important of which would seem to be those described in the last section. Nuclear weapons themselves seem to be the effect, not the cause.

ALLIES: WHAT BURDEN? WHICH PROFILE?

It is frequently asserted that the Allies are drifting apart at the grass roots. Conflicts over policies toward the Soviet Union are supposed to reflect the growth of deep-seated neutralist or pacifist tendencies in Western Europe;

the counterpart is seen to be growing American weariness with the frustrations of Alliance engagement, and particularly those pusillanimous Europeans. Moreover, anti-Americanism is also frequently claimed to be on the rise in Western Europe.

Much of this is obviously true for specific segments of elite opinion in the various member states of the Alliance. But the evidence indicates that the grass roots have not yet been affected as dramatically as the above would indicate. Populations at large retain a strong attachment to the Atlantic Alliance, with support for the Alliance actually increasing slightly over the past few years in most countries. Most Western Europeans consider NATO to be essential to their security. Support for alternative arrangements is in fact surprisingly low in all West European countries except Italy, seemingly indicating a rather strong preference for the Alliance rather than simply a resignation to its necessity. Nor has support for NATO diminished in the United States. Moreover, there are even indications that European fears of being abandoned by the United States in a crisis with the Soviets—in other words, the traditional fear that the Alliance won't work—have been on the wane in recent years.

But, as has already been seen in the cases of defense and deterrence, support for the general concept does not always translate into support for specific policies. There remains a belief that NATO is the best way to organize security, but not necessarily that current Alliance efforts are the best way to pursue that security. The best examples of this have already been discussed in the two previous sections: the considerable opposition to spending more on defense, despite the fact that there has been a specific Alliance decision calling for an annual three percent increase in spending; and the equally considerable distaste for the deployment of new nuclear weapons as a part of the December 1979 double-track decision. In both cases, we have argued that these opinions seem to be conditioned by another factor, in fact the same factor: attitudes toward the relevance of military power in dealing with today's security problems. By themselves they do not seem to be salient enough to determine political preferences for more than a handful of people. This may also indicate that at this level, the support for the Alliance is unlikely to be affected by the distaste for these issues.

But there is a different dimension to the conflict between the general and the specific, a dimension that is by no means new but the characteristics of which may be. The stable or increasing attachment to the Alliance on both sides of the Atlantic has been accompanied by a rather dramatic mutual loss of confidence of each side in the other.

Traditionally, Americans have felt that Europeans were bearing far too little of the burden for their own security. The new version of the problem for political leaders in Washington is the "cocoon mentality" they find in European capitals in the face of an expanded Western security problem that touches all corners of the globe. For the moment, it does not appear that these new frustrations of American political elites have significantly

penetrated the population at large but the more traditional concern with spending too much to defend the Europeans is real and substantial. Over the last three decades this has been a periodically resurgent concern that has never yet resulted in a sharp drop in support for the Alliance, but then again in earlier periods the United States had an unchallenged military and economic supremacy. It would thus be foolish to predict the future only on the basis of the past record; the concern about equitable sharing of the defense burden may grow rather than dissipate.

The other side of the coin is the seemingly sharper contradiction between European belief in the Alliance and the sharp drop of confidence in the United States. At the level of the mass public, this cannot yet be interpreted as true anti-Americanism, for while there has been a visible decline in respect for the United States, positive opinions regularly outweigh the negative by a factor of two to one. Nor is there evidence to support the contention that the two superpowers are seen in the same terms. Criticism of U.S. policy is not accompanied by the same disavowal of the system as in the Soviet case and America is still considered to be essential to European security.

But there exists a profound concern about the United States and levels of trust seem to have dropped to the lowest point since the Second World War. Unfortunately this is another case in which earlier data are sparse and it is impossible to know whether the figures are really more dramatic or whether it just seems as if they must be. What one can say, however, is that this time it is less U.S. reliability and more U.S. political judgment that is being called into question. This coincides with and perhaps is the source of substantial willingness to see European governments pursue policies different from those of the United States if European and American "interests" are deemed in conflict with one another. While differences in attitude do exist according to political preference on this issue, majorities of all parties are on the same side of the issue. In a sense, one is tempted to argue that for Europeans, the United States has become a more normal ally just as the Soviet Union has become a more normal adversary. If this is in fact the correct interpretation of what has been happening, then policy conflict with the United States is unlikely to spill over into diminishing support for the Alliance but simply into a greater desire to pursue policies, independently if necessary, that are more in tune with perceived European interests. At the same time, common sense would indicate that support for the Alliance will be sorely tested by perpetual policy conflicts that reinforce the perception of different or diverging interests rather than focus on issues where interests remain convergent.

There may in fact be no life-threatening contradiction between strong support for the Alliance and distaste for some of its policies. But this will remain true only under one condition: that the policies disliked are not assumed to reflect a general orientation of the Alliance in an unacceptable direction. And this is where the current risk comes in if we are correct in our analysis that the opposition to increased defense spending or to new

nuclear systems is primarily based on deeper concerns about the posture of the Alliance toward the role of military power in dealing with today's security dilemmas.

Popular commitment to the Atlantic Alliance is to a defensive Alliance with no aggressive content. It is hard to believe that overwhelming support for the Alliance will continue to exist if the Alliance is increasingly perceived to stand for the perpetuation of conditions which are the source of widespread popular concern, namely an open-ended arms race and permanent confrontation with the Soviet Union. If the West is incapable of formulating a coherent strategy to shape a less dangerous long-term relationship between East and West, not only Alliance policies, but the Alliance itself may become a source of controversy. If it is successful in conducting such a strategy, the opposition to spending on defense or to necessary modernization efforts is likely to diminish substantially if not disappear. Support for the Alliance will depend on what it stands for.

CORRELATES OF PUBLIC OPINION ON NATIONAL SECURITY

The previous discussion has attempted to draw some general conclusions about what may actually have changed over the past few years in public opinion on national security and what the significance of these changes may be. By its nature, the discussion has concentrated on those factors that are relevant across national boundaries and that are relevant across a broad spectrum of opinion within each of the countries studied. At the same time, we consider it important to give at least a brief review of factors that generally are assumed to explain variations of opinion within countries, even if these variations are less important for the specific points that have been raised in the previous discussion.

Age. Many people believe that generational change is a major factor determining problems the Western Alliance currently faces regarding popular acceptance of its policies. The new generations born after the Second World War, who have little direct experience of foreign threat, supposedly hold views on national security that are dramatically different from those previous generations that built the Alliance. The analogy often used is that of people living along a river that long ago ceased to be threatening because of the construction of solid dams, and who start to ask whether these oversized dams are really required.

There is some evidence to support the view that it is this "successor generation" that most intensely challenges established Western security policy. But if the community of activists tends to be relatively young, the young do not necessarily tend to be activist. The core groups of current defense-related protest can be defined more precisely in terms of the young with a high level of education. The problem, however, is that this is not at all new or exciting: the younger and better-educated have long been a driving force of protest, at least since student unrest in the sixties, be it directed against nuclear power, imperialism, pollution and destruction of

the environment, inequality, or established ways and means for attempting to provide national security.

To the extent that the studies contained in this book report breakdowns of opinions by age, the "selective recruitment" of the young "elite" into political activism is not repeated at the mass level. It is certainly true that attitudinal distinctions between age groups exist. The younger people are, the more likely they are in all of the surveyed nations to view the Eastern bloc as less threatening or superior, the less they believe in military defense and deterrence as prerequisites for peace and security, the less favorable they are toward the United States and the Atlantic Alliance, and finally, the more pessimistic they are about the prospects of maintaining peace and of their own physical survival. However, these differences across age groups are not really dramatic, certainly not as significant as across other background variables, such as sex, and they may even not be new at all. If one compares the data with the apocalyptic visions of the successor generation willing to abandon everything that has been sacrosanct in the field of national security, the differences according to age reported in the previous studies are really rather small. As none of our authors had extended time series data available, we are unable to conclude with any certainty whether observable distinctions are due to cohort effects or to life-cycle effects, whether they will persist into the future or mellow as people get older. But the phenomenon of the successor generation may be no more or less than it always has been, and certainly it is more an issue of emerging elites rather than of the population at large, as with so many of the issues described in this book.

Partisan Affiliation. In discussing the problems of measuring salience, we have already mentioned that there is a direct relationship between the levels of opposition to established national security policy from a major party and apparent increases in the importance ascribed to these matters in public opinion, but that this does not automatically translate into increases in popular activism. Clearly there is need for a greater understanding of the interrelationship between political affiliation and the development of opinion. Yet, as with so many of the issues raised in this chapter, we do not have the possibility to do more than indicate those factors that deserve to be explored more systematically.

From the studies in this book it has become overwhelmingly clear that of all the background variables by which opinions on national security have been broken down (e.g., sex, age, social class, education), party preference has by far the most discriminating power. This is not at all surprising, and it should be expected for at least two reasons. First, if people feel very strongly about an issue, if this issue dominates their political outlooks, they will tend to prefer the party that is closest to them on this issue. This shift of voter preference clearly increases the association between party preferences and issue positions. Second, it is part of parties' everyday business to clarify their positions and policies on the issues of the day. People who care less intensely about particular issues will thus also

receive information about how "their" party—that they prefer for very different reasons—views these problems. If they have not held any opinions on this issue before, or have held conflicting attitudes, they can be "educated" to a certain extent; people who already have believed what they now hear is their party's position have their opinions reinforced. Political parties are institutions that mobilize politically and structure public opinion, and they have the machinery to do so.

This interaction between public opinion and partisan politics can also run the other way: if public opinion is seen as shifting without being led by a major party, one or more parties will be likely to adapt to what they see as a shift in opinion away from previous party positions. In market terminology, this can be regarded as adaption to changes in the structure of demand. In the particular field of protest against established national security policy, such adaptation of partisan positions to perceived changes in public opinion may be an attempt to capitalize electorally on issues of popular emotion, or to avoid the political consequences of failing to satisfy that demand. Preservation of the market, integration of those challenging the system, may in fact be more important than the revenue from satisfying a particular demand. More often than not, all these processes will be at work at once so that in the end it becomes extremely difficult to establish whether the chicken or the egg, changes in public opinion or in parties' positions, started the whole feedback loop. Resolving this problem is not important here, anyway. What matters is that there are clear and indisputable reasons for high covariation between public opinion on national security and party preference.

The differences in defense-related opinions across adherents of different political parties are quite considerable in almost all the countries investigated in this volume. France and the United States, on the whole, exhibit the lowest partisan polarization of defense attitudes, the most important reason probably being that in these countries there have been no parties trying to lead or to capitalize on protest. With all due consideration given to important differences, the situation in France now is somewhat parallel to conditions in Germany before the change in government in fall 1982. With Socialists or Social Democrats in government and carrying the responsibility for official security policy and with bourgeois parties forming the opposition, there are no focal points beyond sectarian groups around which protest and opposition could crystallize.

The differences in defense-related attitudes between followers of different parties in the seven nations investigated here generally are of the same order of magnitude, and they generally follow a neat left-right division. The majority position on a particular issue is frequently reversed for adherents of different parties, with followers of the more right-wing party favoring and with supporters of the more left-wing party opposing specific programs or positions favorable to the Western Alliance or its policies. However, these differences are far from representing complete polarization.

On some issues the majorities of each party are on the same side of an issue. Many of those just discussed fall into this category. Moreover, opinions are seldom expressed in purely black and white terms. Nor do attitudes completely coincide with preferences for the major parties. Even though differences reported in this book for adherents of competing parties sometimes exceed 30 or even 40 percent, substantial proportions of party followers on both sides obviously do not toe the party line. Such "dissidents" can even be majorities among those intending to vote for a particular party. In Germany, the percentages in the summer 1983 of self-professed Green voters who held NATO indispensable as well as of Christian Democratic voters who preferred continuing arms control negotiations to the deployment of new nuclear missiles in Europe were both around 60 percent.

There is only one reasonable interpretation for this. This disagreement with the proclaimed position of the preferred party must be compensated for by other, more salient considerations where one finds oneself in agreement with one's party. Thus, while partisan affiliation is strongly related to opinions on defense matters, more strongly than any of the other background variables investigated in this book, the causation can run either way and considerable shares of the populations manage to live with opinions on defense that they do not share with the party they prefer. In the context of issues raised earlier, this may again be evidence of limited personal importance of these matters.

The Analytical Agenda

We warned readers in the introduction to this book that even the most complete inventory of public opinion data would inevitably provide an imperfect analytic structure or theoretical framework for explaining what has happened in the field of public opinion on national security over the past couple of years, let alone for predicting future developments. We have tried in this book to provide a rather complete overview of existing data, and indeed there are a considerable number of important things one can say about changes in public opinion, although these are not necessarily those things that one has been hearing so often over the past several years. But the task of filling the gaps in our theoretical knowledge must remain for another volume. What one can do on the basis of the work collected here is to demonstrate why one must be extremely careful in interpreting the kind of data presented and to point to those areas where further research is likely to provide key additional insights.

The scope for further research is vast. Perhaps the key area to be explored concerns how people acquire interest in or particular views on foreign policy or national security. We know too little about why people, and what kind of people, become attentive to these issue areas after not having been so for some time. We do not know how attitudes of this kind are structured nor how they depend upon other sets of political or non-

political attitudes. We have insufficient understanding of what causes issues of this kind to become the focus of political debate at the elite or mass levels.

It appears that much of what we have observed over the past couple of years, particularly the debates on nuclear issues, may come to be regarded as a classical example of mass-elite interactions in the realm of political opinion formation, but our intellectual grasp of these processes is far from being complete. Political and social elites clearly stimulate the type of debates and activities we have witnessed recently, but we need to be able to disentangle this from other factors that cause shifts in popular concern. The role of the media also deserves close attention in this context.

The list of desiderata is thus long. Unfortunately even very detailed future research will probably not be able to explain definitively one of the key issues considered in this book: whether public response to security questions in recent years signals a genuine departure from previous public images or attitudes. The discrepancy between the abundance of current and the scarcity of earlier comparable data cannot be overcome. We can only submit, on the basis of the contributions to this volume, that many security-related attitudes currently being marketed as novel are really not that different from those observed in earlier years. For many of the more specific attitudes that are being polled today, all we can do is speculate that results would not have been much different had one polled the same items ten, 20 or 30 years ago. This lack of historically comparable data is not exclusively due to negligence or lack of interest in continuous observation on the part of survey researchers but also to the winds of change: as the issues of the day move on, so does the focus of survey research.

Perhaps the most urgent task for future research is the construction of a more adequate conceptual breakdown of the types of attitudes we are dealing with in this issue area. In a study like this, one is dealing with hundreds and thousands of tiny pieces of information that reflect how individuals respond to a wide variety of survey items. The problem for the researcher as well as for the political decision maker is to make sense out of such a multitude of isolated observations. These observations taken by themselves deliver an extremely complex impression, but it should be remembered that at the individual level there are most likely attitudinal structures and a few basic attitudinal dimensions that underlie these confusing myriads of recorded opinions. What needs to be done, then, is to identify these underlying dimensions in order to reduce the complexity of observations by means of an adequate conceptual and theoretical model. Such a conceptual clarification would have to take into account the substantive content of attitudes, not only the basic analytic categories used in social psychology for classifying attitudes. Only in this way would it be possible, in the long run, to arrive at a more useful theoretical representation of this sector of public opinion.

This reduction of many scattered measurements to a small number of basic attitudinal dimensions (e.g., optimism vs. pessimism, aggression,

salience) is required not only to get a better notion of the structure of attitudes but also to be better aware of the message the data convey. The studies in this volume make it clear that survey responses on national security items should not carelessly be taken at face value. It is, for instance, mentioned again and again that results, for instance, may have been influenced by question wording. One can assume that this occurs most frequently when people are polled about problems where they have little information or feel personally not very involved. In a more abstract sense, to say that a survey instrument has an impact upon responses implies nothing more than that the particular attitude you want to measure using that particular instrument is wiped out or "overpowered" by another attitudinal dimension that the survey item taps. As we have to expect this to happen quite frequently in our issue area, only a clear conceptual and theoretical framework can make us realize what dimensions of defense-related attitudes can be assessed empirically more or less reliably and validly.

One could speculate, as we have on several occasions, that the one dimension that probably can be measured with some degree of confidence is the *affective* one: How do people feel about actors? What national stereotypes do they have? How do they value overall national goals such as peace, independence, security, etc? The problems seem to begin as soon as we hit the cognitive and behavioral components of attitudes, as happens when one asks the respondent to evaluate policy alternatives. On the basis of the information collected in this volume, we would hypothesize, at a very abstract level, that the more remote cognitions are from individuals and the more remote the behavioral side of the attitude is, (for example, individuals believe that their nation, as opposed to themselves, should do this or that), the more the affective component of the attitude will "overpower" the cognitive and behavioral components.

Without the kind of theoretical and conceptual framework we are calling for, one can do little but report attitudinal inconsistencies and call for further investigation. It must be remembered, to repeat a previous point, that in almost all the nations studied in this book the same type of contradiction could be observed: deterrence, military defense, and the Atlantic Alliance are accepted by majorities of respondents as very general and abstract principles, but specific strategies pursued by nations to further these goals find little enthusiasm (e.g., defense spending, or particular weapons systems). The problem then becomes what is the true measure, consent to the general goals or rejection of instruments to further them? Depending on one's political position, one will seize upon the one or the other. The result is the abuse of public opinion data to which we have already become so accustomed that we almost forget to consider it an abuse.

We have attempted to give some plausible explanations for the apparent inconsistency between acceptance of overall goals and rejection of instruments to implement them. And naturally this is not at all confined to the sector of national security. The same pattern of attitudes can be found, for

example, regarding environmental protection, where consensus on the overall goal can coexist with widespread unwillingness to sacrifice personally. However, as the issue of personal sacrifice usually is not at stake in the field of national security, uncertainty over what is really being assessed is much greater here. Perhaps the general answer is straightforward: general political goals that commonly bear positive affective evaluation are endorsed, while everything that would have to be done to promote these goals of deterrence, defense, independence, and so on, carries unpleasant affective connotations (military spending, weapons, war) and therefore is rejected. Most of our arguments above are based on the assumption that it is indeed the affective content that is the determinant. However this may be, only theoretical and conceptual progress is going to help us to sort out the various possible interpretations and to subject them to empirical investigation.

A final point is a word of warning. The difficulties that have been described suggest that the scope for—conscious or unconscious—distortion or manipulation of public opinion data on national security should not be underestimated. The further we move away from the cognitive, everyday experience of individuals and from their own behavioral inventory, the more it is likely that their survey responses will be dominated by a few basic affective attitudinal dimensions. It would be exaggerating to claim that an appropriate choice of question wording can produce almost any survey results at the level of mass public opinion on national security. But the range of findings that already are available for some topics, or that could in all likelihood be produced in the future, is very wide indeed.

The best example is the issue of INF deployment in Western Europe. One could let respondents choose between negotiations and deployment; one could ask them whether the West should refrain from deployment even if SS-20 missiles continued to be targeted on Western Europe; one could tie missile deployment to the notion of a "military balance" (or its re-establishment); one could connect it to the need to evoke compromises from the East during negotiations; one could imply that not deploying means abandoning NATO. Depending on the choice of the stimulus, one receives substantial majorities in favor of deployment or in opposition. It is the business of political decision makers and their administrative, partisan, or consulting foot soldiers to hit each other over the head with these types of data, but it is the job of the serious scholar to find out *why* one observes such different majorities with these different instruments. Much has been said in the chapters of this book concerning these problems in an ad-hoc fashion. What is now needed is a firm theoretical base for the more or less informed speculation we have laid out.

The Political Challenge

The agenda for future research is substantial. But the analyses presented in this volume already advance considerably our ability to identify some important implications for the conduct of policy within the Alliance.

The general question with which we have to deal, of course, is whether popular consensus over national security policies has actually broken down and what this might mean in terms of the leeway political decision makers have for specific policies. Disregarding a number of important national particularities and necessary qualifications, we can say that across the sample of nations studied here, the changes that have occurred at the mass level over the past couple of years in either the salience or the acceptance of established national security policy are far less dramatic than one would have suspected on the basis of the intensity and direction of disagreement among political elites. Restrictions on the range of national security options open to decision makers are far more strongly imposed by the positions taken and articulated by political and social elites and counterelites than by public opinion at large. In terms of popular acceptance, the decision latitude for policy makers still appears to be rather wide.

To project how limitations on national security policy will look during the coming period would thus primarily require predictions about the further development of partisan rivalries over these issues and of the peace movements and their future impact. This is obviously beyond the scope of this study. Moreover, one can only speculate about what is going to happen to these groups of activists and their supporters in important social and political strata once the primary issue around which they have been formed, the deployment of new INF in Europe, has been resolved one way or the other.

That political decision makers enjoy considerable leeway in the field of national security policy in terms of its acceptance by publics at large is certainly bound to displease highly motivated and committed followers of peace movements as this contradicts their notion, employed as a political weapon, that there is a "revolt of the masses" against established national security policy. All we can say is that, judging from the data compiled in this book, such a revolt is not taking place. To be sure, there has been widespread opposition against the deployment of new American nuclear missiles in Europe, but as should have become abundantly clear, this is not surprising, and probably not even new. Very few people are really enthusiastic about nuclear weapons. Moreover, many other aspects of military preparations, for example military spending, are viewed almost equally critically. However, for great majorities of populations at large these sentiments are not personally salient enough to create the urgent desire to express intense disagreement or to oppose actively these components of military preparations for deterrence and defense. There is little indication that most of those who engaged in anti-INF activities over the past few months would not be willing to abide by the rules of the political game.

At the same time, this is not to imply that the public at large places no constraints on Western policy makers. To begin with, relying on a "silent majority" in support of such policies is not a viable long-term strategy.

Politics is not conducted by the body politic, but by political and social elites. A permanent challenge to major components of one's political positions is most likely not endurable. True, public opinion in general tends to be largely permissive on national security issues and, at least initially, passive in the process. But people tend to form their opinions in this area with reference to positions taken by parties with whom they have chosen to identify themselves or whom they at least vote for on the basis of other, usually economic and social considerations. Popular consensus is to a great extent a function of political consensus. Thus, in the longer run, sustained and well-articulated dissent by opinion leaders and publicized groups over key elements of national security policy will almost inevitably show certain effects on public opinion as a whole.

If political views polarize over the conduct of security policy, the public is likely to follow, at least to a point. The public may not be the main wellspring of dissent in foreign and defense policy, but neither is it simply a passive observer. There are thresholds of public tolerance, and if these thresholds are crossed, issues can become salient enough to influence political choice. Even foreign and security policy can thus influence voting patterns for more than small groups of people, as we witnessed in the June 1983 British election.

As yet we do not know precisely what causes this to happen, and the record shows that during the post-war period it is not a frequent occurrence. But in principle it applies equally to those formulating policy and those protesting policy. Those who seek to justify policy decisions and to discount the arguments of protesters risk losing public support as quickly as their opponents if they portray policy requirements in terms which fall outside the framework of public acceptance. Thus, just as it is important not to exaggerate the impact of protest on the public at large, so it is critical to avoid taking Western populations for granted.

A considerable number of good reasons for this are to be found in the earlier description of the four clusters of attitudes. It is impossible to say what it would take for any of these considerations to become salient enough to affect the behavior or choice of large segments of the population. But clearly there are a number of demands populations are placing on Western security policy that if left unsatisfied have the potential for undermining the popular consensus that still does underpin Western Alliance arrangements. Above all, despite its general commitment to deterrence, defense and the Alliance, the public is demanding reassurance—reassurance that Western policies designed to provide security are not also a primary source of insecurity.

There are several guidelines for policy makers that flow from the analyses presented in this book that, if observed, will go a good distance toward providing the necessary reassurance. First of all, Western defense policy choices cannot be justified only or even primarily in terms of a Soviet threat. The reason is that peoples' perceptions of the Soviet Union do not appear to be the key to their perceptions of threat. Rather, the

relevance of growing Soviet military power and of the political benefits that are to grow from it must be explained differently if people are to accept that they have a military security problem. In the absence of this, portraying a Soviet threat in terms that are not perceived by the public is not likely to alter their perception of that threat nor increase support for Western policy, and is likely to have the opposite consequences. As long as the Soviets are not the primary security concern of populations at large, it will in fact continue to be possible for Western policies to scare our populations more than the Soviets do.

Moreover, it is going to be virtually impossible to override these considerations by mobilizing rank and file support. In earlier periods, doubts about policy could be compensated for as long as adherence to the party line could be commanded on the basis of internal political considerations. But the old link between policy toward the Soviets and domestic political preferences has been broken. As a consequence, invoking images of either nirvana or the evil empire are likely to be counterproductive.

Given the widely perceived excess of military power in the world, support for many elements of Western defense policy will remain problematic unless policy makers are more skilled at demonstrating not only the relevance of growing Soviet military power but that additional Western arms will help to preserve peace. Above all, military competition between East and West cannot be presented as an open-ended proposition. Support for the maintenance of a balance of power, which does exist in the abstract, will only be present to the extent that efforts to control military confrontation are plausible.

Regarding nuclear weapons, populations are unlikely to force NATO governments to try to escape from the dilemmas of deterrence. But they will have to be convinced that everything is being done to minimize the likelihood of deterrence failing if this issue is not to grow in importance. They currently are not convinced of this. Moreover, the fastest way to increase nuclear rejection will be to ignore that nuclear strategy poses simultaneously major operational and existential issues. If governments focus only on the former, they will leave the moral high ground to those who would wish away the dilemmas of the nuclear age.

Fourth, evidence shows that the Atlantic Alliance is widely supported but that Alliance policies will be supported by public opinion only if they are regarded as basically defensive. This image has suffered recently, particularly with the harder line American rhetoric that came with the Reagan administration, and is at variance with many Europeans' images of the purposes of the Alliance. There are those who argue that this was only meant for internal U.S. consumption anyway, and that the bark has been harsher than the bite. However, words obviously do make a difference, and Western populations, Americans included, will continue to demand that policies be designed to shape a less dangerous long-term relationship between East and West.

Moreover, there is another lesson in the above: domestic politics cannot be separated from external policies in today's world, not just the reverse. The transmission of information and the conduct of intra-Allied debate over policy is less and less confined to diplomatic channels and communication among top political leaders. The speed with which information is available to all Western publics simultaneously creates new and more direct interactions between the different political cultures existing in Alliance member states. Leaders can no longer afford the luxury of statements for purely "domestic" consumption. Allied decision makers have yet to understand fully how this modifies their flexibility in conducting domestic debates and international negotiations.

Fifth, there is a clear preference within most Western publics for arms control over armaments or new weapons. This does not mean that public opinion at large would be unwilling to tolerate increases of Western arms or new weapon systems in general. However, little such support survives if arms control is allowed to be considered a direct substitute for one's defense policy or if the obstacles to successful arms control agreements are seen as much on one's own side as on the other. Arms control and defense policy must be presented as two sides of the same coin, not as alternative policy tracks. Certain security objectives can only be achieved by controlling East-West military confrontation, others only by defense modernization. Treating the two as trade-offs for one another simply widens the scope for political dispute and fragile consensus.

Finally, Western security requirements must be publicly presented and legitimized in terms of their contribution to the preservation of peace. Only Western governments are to blame if those who protest current policies are successful in creating the image that they have a monopoly on the desire for peace. It may well be true that "the first round of the war for peace will probably be won by those who think the balance of terror is less terrifying than an imbalance of terror" (*The Economist* 8 October 1983). But the task for governments will be to take some of the terror out of the balance.

The catalogue of constraints on policy that stem from existing public attitudes is thus significant. One cannot guarantee that a failure to heed these guidelines will cause the popular consensus underpinning Alliance arrangements to disintegrate but the attitudes described appear firm enough to warrant attention. The constraint is more in the form of a requirement to avoid defining or pursuing Western policy in a way that serves to crystallize political dissent in these areas because the dissent is likely to find a positive resonance in the echo chamber of public opinion.

At the same time, there clearly is leeway for decision makers in the area of public tolerance of new weapons and increases in Western military might. But the implementation of the December 1979 decision demonstrates the limits to that leeway. In the absence of widespread enthusiasm for deployment, the idea that the West could threaten deployment of

weapons over four years ignored totally the differences between political and social systems in the East and the West. Without the enthusiasm, one ends up threatening Western populations more than the adversary.

Whether the Alliance continues to be perceived as peaceful, whether it is perceived to give sufficient emphasis to controlling military competition, whether people are convinced that particular weapons systems are required and that it really is the other side that is to blame for Western responses—these all interact with one another. They determine the way essential elements of military strategy are understood by people and interpreted in internal political debates and in exchanges between partners of the Alliance. In order to secure consensus and majority acceptance of Allied policies security issues cannot be allowed to serve as crystallizing points for minority protest. To a considerable degree it has been elite failures that have turned these topics into a focus of such protest. Whether the currently available high level of popular consensus over national security issues at the mass level can be maintained in Western nations into the future will crucially depend upon the extent to which decision makers will be able to heed the constraints imposed upon them by the popular attitudes described at length in this book.