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A Shift of Western Mentalities: Thinking about War and the Nuclear Age

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ABSTRACT

As Europe witnesses its first major war since World War II, this article examines whether contemporary thinking about war and warfare has fundamentally shifted from pre-nuclear times. The concept of "collective mentalities," stemming from the "cultural turn" in social sciences, is explored to understand how shared historical narratives and habitual ways of thinking influence national attitudes toward war and nuclear strategy. The article presents the distinct approaches of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the United States, highlighting how each nation's specific historical experiences have shaped their nuclear policies and public opinions. The study underscores that multiple interacting forces—economic conditions, political systems, cultural shifts, and especially the narratives of historical experiences—collectively influence attitudes toward war and nuclear weapons. Despite a general aversion to war in the West since 1945, national variations persist due to these distinct experiences and mentalities. The article concludes that understanding these collective mentalities is crucial for analyzing international relations and predicting future shifts in attitudes toward warfare and nuclear armament.

Keywords: Collective mentalities, nuclear age, national narratives, nuclear deterrence, United Kingdom, France, Germany, United States.

Introduction

As the first major war has erupted on European soil since the Second World War, one can ask whether thinking about war and warfare is still different today from what it was in the pre-nuclear millennia for which we have – more or less spotty - evidence for how people thought. An unequivocal affirmation to this question has been made by many scholars such as Martin van Creveld, ascribing it above all to one factor: nuclear weapons.[2] Clearly, nuclear weapons had an impact, at least on how many authors writing about strategy thought about war. Other authors more carefully identified an incremental shift even before 1945 in the attitudes of prosperous, mature liberal democracies

[1] The author would like to thank the editors, Matthew Evangelista and Scott Sagan for their insightful comments and suggestions for revisions.

[2] To cite just one, Martin van Creveld: *The Rise and Decline of the State* (Cambridge: 1999), p.337.

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regarding major war. This argument points to a multitude of factors that have come together to create this shift; its proponents trace it to the 19th century, but then have to explain away – or with even more complex reasoning allow for –the two world wars, and perhaps even the Franco-Prussian and the American Civil wars.[3]

Here are the confluent factors they evoke. Most dismiss monocausal answers (in particular the "democratic peace theory"). Poverty and distress on the one hand, wealth and comfort on the other do play a role. There is nothing as persuasive as drought, famine, poverty, persecution and war to make whole communities migrate to better lands. In turn, this often leads to pushback from those to whose lands the refugees try to get: comfort and affluence are worth defending. Thus it tends to take prosperity on all sides to make it a factor for stability.

Azar Gat, like Norman Angell before him, has pointed to industrialisation and ensuing global trade as mitigating against war.[4] Yet these were not enough to prevent the First World War (during which, admittedly, international trade declined sharply, not reaching the same degree of globalization again until the end of the Cold War).

Then Gat, like Stephen Pinker after him, added to the list of causes a growing repulsion in the West for physical punishment, women's emancipation and growing allowances made for homosexuals, all of which undermined the traditional predominance in Western societies of the assertive, domineering, bearded, bellicose, brawny male. Also linked both to women's emancipation and a virtuous cycle of prosperity, declining birth rates left fewer "spare" males in prosperous liberal societies whom their families and society in general were willing to sacrifice in war.[5] By contrast, in the societies of Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia excess births, and where societies that set more store by male than by female offspring, a deficit of female births due to abortion of female foetuses, are identified as factors favouring the recourse to war.[6] Writing at the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War, I am also reluctant to attribute too much verity to the claim that armed conflict is declining worldwide[7], and am more inclined to side with the critics of this theory.[8]

But before we take excessive pride in the pacific disposition of most European civilisations since 1945 we should remind ourselves of the extreme swings in attitudes that they have undergone, especially the previous half-century or so witnessing in absolute numbers the worst atrocities in human history. Peacefulness clearly has not been a linear development; Matthew Evangelista warns of "backsliding" into previous modes of thinking and operating.

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[3] Azar Gat: *War and Human Civilisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 574-621, Stephen Pinker: *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011).

[4] Gat: *War and Human Civilisation,* pp.574-609.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Henrik Urdal: "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence" *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 50 No. 3 (Sept 2006), pp. 607-629; Valerie Hudson and Andrea den Boer: *Bar Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004).

[7] See also Joshua S. Goldstein: *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide* (New York: Dutton, 2011).

[8] Michael Mann: "Have wars and violence declined?" *Theory and Society*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (February 2018), pp. 37-60; and for a critique of n+1 predictions in such a complex field, see Nassim Nicholas Taleb: *The black swan: the impact of the highly improbable* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2008).

In short, everything suggests that multiple forces are at work to influence attitudes to war.[9] Such conglomerates of interacting factors making for bellicosity or pacific dispositions are both product of cultures and feed into cultures. Among the many factors influencing the equation, especially the variables of cultures and mentalities require further explanation.

Culture and Mentalities

The "cultural turn" in the Social Sciences arguably took off in France in the 1960s, but under a different heading: *mentalité,* as used by the *Annales* journal and the school of historians referred to as the *Annalistes*. In the 1970s, French scholars began to apply some of their approaches to International Relations, focusing particularly on what they called "*mentalités collectives*", collective mentalities. These can be defined as the aggregate of habitual ways of thinking and reasoning, and psychological and moral dispositions that are characteristic of and shared by a collectivity.[10] Collective mentality is sometimes used interchangeably with "culture" or "civilisation", even though these are generally taken to mean something slightly different. To use the influential definition of 1871 by one of the founders of the discipline of "Cultural Anthropology", Sir Edward Burnett Tyler, "Culture or Civilisation" – he used these terms synonymously –"taken in its wider ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."[11] "Collective mentality" has a more active sense, i.e. it describes the *habitual approach* which a collectivity would have, the mental disposition, with which to tackle old and new issues.

The interesting aspect for those studying International Relations is that there is some predictive quality in the analysis of "collective mentality". It complements and does not claim to replace the many other factors influencing attitudes towards war and other forms of collective violence identified by listed above, from demography to economy and political system. Nor does it deny the long-term factors (the *longue durée* of the *Annalistes*) such as geography, or locations of important raw materials. But it does draw attention to the many different cultural attitudes that can be found, differentiating superficially similar nations, or even groups within nations. Such attitudes are not set in stone: they can change, sometimes in a revolutionary fashion with the catalytic impact of some major event. More often change comes slowly, in an evolutionary fashion, which allows for some degree of prediction.

There is a huge amount of variety within what has been described as a broadly "Western" culture: Europe, and its scions across the seas, produced multiple traditions of thinking about key subjects, particularly issues concerning the polity, politics, and its

[9] For an overview of such factors that have been identified, see Beatrice Heuser: *War: A Genealogy of Western Ideas and Practices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 127-149.

[10] Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, https://www.cnrtl.fr/lexicographie/mentalit%C3%A9#:~:text=%E2%88%92%20Ensemble%20des%20mani%C3%A8res%20habituelles%20de,'une%20%C3%A9poque%3B%20mentalit%C3%A9%20archa%C3%AFque., accessed on 18 X 2024.

[11] Edward Burnett Tyler: *Primitive Culture*. Vol. I (London: J. Murray, 1871), ch. 1.

tools, among them warfare. Some of these traditions can be pinned on particular countries[12] or nations.[13]

Yet depending on the detail into which one wishes to delve, and on issues of war, peace, and nuclear weapons, "national" attitudes can normally be broken down into two or more subcultures. One can go down the analytical path that ends up with so many subcultures or sub-sets that no meaningful picture emerges. Broadly speaking, for the purpose of the study of International Relations, it is the most useful exercise to focus on "national" mentalities and very few sub-sets. In the Cold War, the latter mapped roughly onto major political parties or parts of the political spectrum. Such sub-sets can represent long-standing currents of thinking that are in competition with one another, underlying the eternal variations produced in each election. Like election results, the currents themselves are subject to infinite shifts and variations; like political parties, they may even merge with others or disappear altogether.

Without denying or precluding major shifts, some enduring patterns in collective views common to a political nation, or to important sub-cultures can be distinguished over the long term, *la longue durée*. Different nations have distinctive approaches that cannot be explained merely in terms of varying dates of industrialisation, maturity of democracy, degree of prosperity, social security, individual rights and so on, all of which they might share. Another explanation must be factored in: the particular narrative of the individual nation's – or its sub-culture's – history, crucial to its particular collective mentality.[14]

One particular sub-culture within each state is usually that of the military, with its "strategic culture", which Jack Snyder defined in 1977 as applying to the USSR's "strategic community". That he defined as the "strategy-making elite and those writing about strategy".[15] Other scholars have dwelt exclusively on the culture of the military as that of a particular sub-set within a nation.[16] The focus here, however, will be on the larger culture(s) of nations, the collective mentalities.[17]

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[12] "Country" is a helpful term here to dodge the use of "nation" with its different definitions. Defined politically – in the sense in which France with the Revolution defined its citizens collectively as a nation and as sovereign – then this fits our purpose as describing the population of a particular State. But as it is more often meant in an ethnic-linguistic sense, almost everywhere in Europe, it conflicts with borders as languages do not map one-to-one onto existing State borders.

[13] Used here in the sense political of the population of one State, as it is the State that constantly reinforces the collective points of reference: in democracies, its government, its legislation and actions are in the focus of public scrutiny, and the stuff that news is made of, both in "national", State-wide as in regional media. Its elections, its actions in foreign affairs, or the actions of others affecting it will be subject of public discussion throughout that State.

[14] Beatrice Heuser: 'Historical "lessons" and discourse on defence in France, Germany, 1945-1990', *Rethinking History* Vol. 3 (July 1998), pp.199-237.

[15] Jack L. Snyder: *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Options* RAND Research Paper R-2154-AF (September 1977), p.9.

[16] James Burk: "Military culture", in Lester Kurtz (ed): *Encyclopedia of violence, peace and conflict* (New York: Academic Press, 1999), pp. 447-462; Joseph L. Soeters, Donna J. Winslow, and Alise Weibull: "Military culture", in Giuseppe Caforio (ed): *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military* (Boston, MA: Springer, 2006), pp. 237-254; Peter H. Wilson: "Defining military culture", *The Journal of Military History* Vol. 72 No.1 (2008), pp. 11-41.

[17] Jean-Baptiste Duroselle: "Opinion, attitude, mentalité, mythe, idéologie: essai de clarification *Relations internationales* No. 2 (1974), pp. 3-23.

Attitudes to War

Before delving into the attitudes of different national mentalities towards nuclear weapons, we must consider their attitudes to war in general. In this matter, too, Europe has produced multiple traditions, ranging from pacifism to a just war tradition, and to claiming for their State the right of the sovereign to decide to go to war whenever it suited its *raison d' Etat* or "national interest". This of course blossomed particularly in the 19th century, fuelled by nationalist militarism and Social Darwinism.

Yet pacifism survived, as did a humanitarian tradition. In the second half of the 19th century, with the support of individuals ranging from the Russian Tsars Alexander III and Nicholas II to Henri Dunant, a Swiss businessman, international lawyers turned the tradition of self-limiting ordinances adopted by individual States into international treaty obligations. The various conventions regulating and limiting the conduct of war signed in St Petersburg, The Hague and elsewhere were the outcome of this. The Socialist International with leading figures such as August Bebel in Germany, Jean Jaurès in France, and Bertha von Suttner in Austria, campaigned against militarism and for international conciliation where quarrels, especially over territorial possession, existed. In short, while pressure to abolish war came only from a minority of public figures – albeit one supported by such great and internationally known ones such as Victor Hugo and Tolstoy – the dread and rejection of war existed alongside its adulation by nationalists and militarists.

In Britain and France, the First World War tipped the balance of opinion towards more co-operative approaches to inter-State relations. While America reverted back into isolationism (another variant of the dislike of war that was on the ascendant in the West), the American Secretary of State Frank Kellogg and the French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand in 1928 initiated a pact renouncing the recourse to war that was subsequently signed by 31 countries. While most signatories such as the German government, represented by Gustav Stresemann, were probably sincere at the time of signing the treaty, this was not always the case for their successors, particularly in Japan and Germany, while Mussolini in Italy clearly only did the fashionable thing when by signing he ensured Italy's place in the family of "civilised nations".[18]

The Briand-Kellogg Pact is probably the most important indicator of a shift in collective attitudes towards war in many European democracies. No doubt *Boys' Own* magazines continued to sell the trope of martial heroics to their hundreds of thousands of readers, but most adults in the United States, Britain, and France were no longer prey to these delusions. War weariness serves to explain the reluctance of the Western liberal democracies to check expansionist National-Socialist Germany, Fascist Italy, and racist Japan in the 1930s. Britain, France, and the USA appeased the dictators or at least looked the other way when these made their respective first expansionist moves. It was only when a pattern of expansionism became undeniable (and in the case of America, when Japan and Germany actually went to war with America) that they abandoned this position.

[18] Oona Hathaway and Scott Shapiro: *The Internationalists and Their Plans to Outlaw War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2018).

Meanwhile Fascism, National-Socialism, and authoritarian dictatorships kept that other European tradition of militarism alive in several other countries, from the Iberian Peninsula to Poland. They laid the ground for war-time regimes (usually under former-military-officers-turned-statesmen from Pétain to Mannerheim) that would collaborate with Fascist occupation. Aiming to spare their (narrowly-defined) nationals as much of the sufferings of war as possible, they generally passed it on to undefended minorities whom they sacrificed to the murderous German Moloch.

It takes more explaining why Germans (and Austrians) in the 1930s bought into the adulation of war and martial glory. German militarism had taken a significant dent in the First World War; Germany, too, produced anti-war sentiments, and anti-war songs. War veterans, many horrendously mutilated, war widows and old maids marked German society as much as those of many other European states. Pacific internationalist feelings were strong enough in the 1920s for the German Social Democrat and centre-right governments to pursue a foreign policy of peace that would in 1926 earn German foreign minister Gustav Stresemann the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with – Aristide Briand in France! Nevertheless, the stab-in-the-back legend that had brought down a German army that had been "undefeated in the field" (*Im Felde unbesiegt*), the trope of German dishonour at Versailles, and hurt price were mobilised by Hitler to side-line these pacifist feelings. Until the Wall Street Crash of 1929 brought social misery, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that militarism and revanchism would win out in Germany, and that Germans would support Hitler's military expansionism. It took another world war for militarism to become eradicated in Germany.

Britain, France, and the USA emerged from the Second World War confirmed in the view that war could be seen in terms of Good and Evil, and that they had been on the side of the Forces of Light fighting the Forces of Darkness. Plunged soon into another ideological struggle against yet another totalitarian regime, the governments of all three States determined to oppose Stalin more resolutely than they had opposed Hitler and Mussolini. "No more Appeasement" was the unspoken watchword in everybody's mind. Yet particularly the two European countries, along with their neighbours, also knew that they would not be able to bear another major war.

This time their adversary was Soviet Communism, an ideology claiming universal applicability. Both Britain and France espoused the view that Stalin's perceived expansionism was best kept in check and major war was best avoided by banking on nuclear deterrence which carried within itself the paradox that to work, it needed to be credible, and to be credible, one had to have all the means and processes in place to fight a nuclear war.

The USA had an equally troubled and complex burden of history. The wounds of the Civil War had healed by the time America was dragged into the First World War, but the scars continued to itch and hurt. Both world wars were experienced by the US as a fight of Good against Evil – in both cases, war had been imposed on the US by its enemies, thus there was the just cause of self-defence. The Allied Nations' victory was both a physical and metaphysical triumph of the forces of Good over the forces of Evil. This self-righteousness inspired US Presidents as they took up a new cause, one they had ignored in the inter-war period: the defence of democracy world-wide against the insidious, subversive expansionism of Soviet-led world Communism.

Attitudes to enemy casualties

Attitudes towards war and attitudes towards casualties should be divided into two distinct categories: those springing from an acute concern for the survival and wellbeing of one's own group, and those driven by a wider concern for humanity, including even the enemy's population. The link between the former and the latter is much weaker than one might assume.

Pre-Modern Europe had not been strong on compassion. It was only in the late 15th century that the notion crept in that enemy civilians should generally be spared. Even then, all bets were off if an enemy city or town resisted a siege and had been offered good conditions for surrender: in that case, all forms of bombardment were seen as legitimate, and if the place was taken by force, murder, rape, and looting were the norm.[19] Even in the Second World War, the Rape of Nanking, or the Siege of Leningrad stood firmly in this tradition. As did the city bombing practised by both sides in Europe: the Second World War famously elevated it to a major tool of strategy, co-equal with land invasion. Objections were raised by a small number of people both in the United Kingdom and the USA, the two powers that carried out such bombing raids, but they were overruled by the much more widely shared consideration that from 1940 until D-Day in 1944, there was little else Britain could do to affect Germany's war effort directly.

The distinction between targeting Germany's industry and key transport nodes, and targeting civilians living in the cities where such industry and key transport nodes were located, was moot. Given the huge losses suffered by low-flying bombers due to German FLAK when they attempted to hit targets with greater precision to avoid collateral damage, British and soon also American bombers felt forced to fly at higher altitudes, and at night. Consequently, they could only identify and hit large, immobile targets: cities, and in the context of protective blackouts, workers' residential quarters (invariably located near factories) and industrial complexes could hardly be distinguished.

Understandably, as the Luftwaffe flattened Coventry and hit cities from Glasgow to Brighton, this did not meet with great qualms on the part of the British or American populations in general. There were individual voices of dissent even during the Second World War, for example from Bishop George Bell of Chichester, the Catholic philosopher and later Oxford don G.E.M. Anscombe, and the political activist Vera Brittain.[20] After the end of the war, however, when the full story of the Holocaust and of German war crimes became known, such self-critical voices were not much listened to. The argument that the workers in the German war industry – which could be interpreted widely – were contributing to Germany's war effort as much as the soldiers in the front line and were thus a legitimate target seemed persuasive to many.[21] Even at the very end of the 20th century, former bomber crews were still fond enough of their former commander,

[19] Beatrice Heuser: "Ordinances and Articles of War before the Lieber Code, 866-1863: the long pre-history of International Humanitarian Law", in *Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law* Vol. 21 (2018), pp. 139-164.

[20] John D. Alexander: "Justice in warfare: the ethical debate over British area bombing of German cities in World War II", MS PhD Boston University 2014, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/142063659.pdf accessed on 18 X 2024.

[21] Neville Jones: *The Beginnings of Strategic Air Power: A History of the British Bomber Forces, 1923-39* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), pp. 39-42.

Marshal of the RAF Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris to effect the construction of a monument to him in the middle of London.[22] But by then, important scholarly publications had criticised the conduct of allied air campaigns in the Second World War.[23]

The parallel to American critiques of US Air Force bombing in the Vietnam War is obvious: the nonsense of the famous statement by a US officer in 1968 that his armed forces had to destroy a Vietnamese village to save it had struck home. The conviction that America was leading a worldwide righteous fight against the evil forces of worldwide Communism seemed to justify an ever-growing military engagement in Indochina and support for militarist dictators in Latin America.

Only, America did not emerge as triumphant victor from the Vietnam War. Indeed, here for the first time, American governments stood accused by their own population of having done more harm than good. The sacrifices made by Americans had been in vain. In the process, they had slaughtered also around 3 million of Vietnamese, 2/3 of them civilians. Increasingly, US public opinion was confronted in this televised war with the effects on Vietnamese civilians of a war purportedly fought at least in part for their sake. A shift of collective mentality ensued, even if it took decades to reach into America's strategic culture, the thinking among its strategic community.[24] This shift, driven by televised evidence of the effects of non-nuclear bombing, spread to other countries, or revived their bleak memories of the bombing of the Second World War.

In International Law, this shift is reflected in the Additional Protocols of 1977 of the Geneva Convention which imposed severe limitations on the legality of air bombardment of civilian targets, that would in future be subject to tests of military necessity and discrimination.[25] In practice, there was a move away from the body count of the Vietnam War to refusing to keep any tally of enemy military or indeed civilian casualties in the First Gulf War that followed the end of the Cold War. Counterfactually, it is worth pondering whether this shift of thinking might have occurred also without the introduction of nuclear weapons into the equation. If so, there can be no doubt that nuclear weapons intensified it, even if it took a while.

Cold War Attitudes to nuclear weapons

Meanwhile, technological deficiencies making precision bombing difficult or impossible still haunted American air power strategies in the Korean and Vietnam wars. And early nuclear strategy was air power strategy: atomic bombs would have been dropped from planes just as the "conventional" ordnance of the Second World War's bombing raids were dropped from planes. Only the 1960s saw the introduction of missiles with a range capable of hitting adversarial territory if fired from the soil of NATO countries, and then, their circular error probably remained very high until precision-

[22] For a case made for the statue, see e.g. Ginny Hill Wood: an oral history recorded in 1991, http://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/media/4910482/boots-bikes-bombers-chapter-4-why-bomber-harris-should-have-his-statue.pdf accessed on 10 VI 2024.

[23] See e.g. Stephen Garrett: *Ethics and Airpower in World War II* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993) and later Richard Overy: *The bombing war: Europe 1939-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2013).

[24] Neta Crawford, "Targeting Civilians and US Strategic Bombing Norms: Plusça change, plus c' est la même chose?" in Matthew Evangelista & Henry Shue (eds): *The American Way of Bombing: Changing Ethical and Legal Norms, from Flying Fortresses to Drones* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

[25] Additional Protocol I Art 48.

guided weapons were deployed in the 1980s. In other words, strategic nuclear targeting was just as blunt and city-focused as conventional strategic bombing had been in the Second World War. In the case of Britain and France, with small strategic arsenals, the assumption was that for deterrence to work, they had to be able to hold the USSR's key cities at risk. In the case of the USA, despite a series of top-down initiatives to calibrate nuclear responses, an all-out response option was retained and, it seems, favoured by the military. Until at least the 1980s, plans were retained to release every strategic nuclear weapon America had in case an early limited use of nuclear weapons in or only just beyond the main battle area between NATO and WTO forces did not stop an invasion of NATO territory from the East in its tracks.[26]

Early American reactions to the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki showed little sympathy with the victims (see Fig. 1).

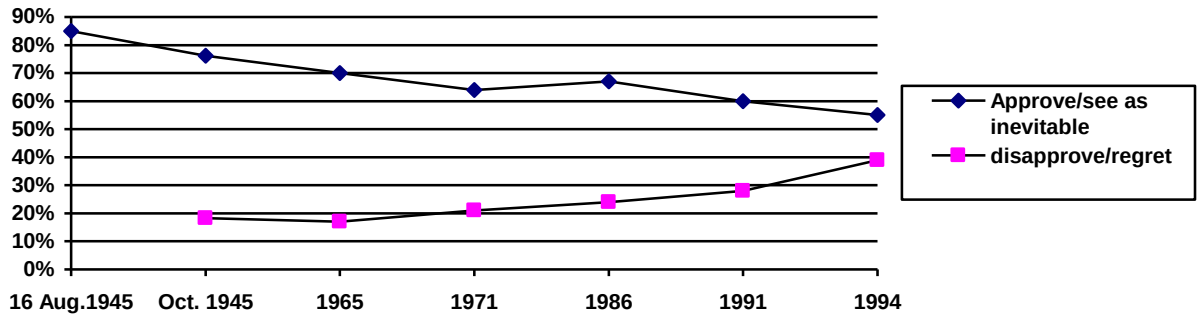

Figure 1: **US views on the use of the nuclear weapon on Japan in 1945.**[27]

Early post-war nuclear tests were greeted with an innocence bordering on the inane; tests in the Bikini Atoll were heralded by the naming of the two-part bathing suit after it; cakes in the form of a nuclear mushroom cloud would be served up at celebratory events, "Atomic Café" would become a popular name for diners just as previously, Electric Avenue would have been a street name affirming faith in progress.[28]

But by and by, the United States sprouted multiple anti-nuclear campaign groups, even if they never turned into a co-ordinated movement and thus had much less impact on federal politics than their British and German counterparts that we will discuss below. Within the strategic community, however, there were influential voices of dissent pushing for major changes in US nuclear targeting priorities, as precision-guided missile technology began to open alternatives to strategic city targeting. At the end of the 1970s, the Anglo-American strategist Colin S. Gray and his American colleague Keith

[26] Desmond Ball: "The Development of the SIOP, 1960-1983", in Desmond Ball & Jeffrey Richelson (eds.): *Strategic Nuclear Targeting* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986), pp. 57-83; Desmond Ball: "U.S. Strategic Forces. How Would They Be Used?", *International Security* Vol. 7 No. 3, Winter (1982/1983), pp. 31-60; David S. Yost: "France's new nuclear doctrine", *International Affairs* Vol. 82 No. 4 (2006), pp. 701-721; Michael Codner, Gavin Ireland and Lee Willett: *The United Kingdom's Independent Strategic Nuclear Deterrent* Whitehall Report 1-2007 (RUSI, 2007).

[27] Sadao Asada, 'The Mushroom Cloud and National Psyches', in Laura Hein and Mark Selden eds., *Living with the Bomb* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), pp. 177-179.

[28] Nor were such phenomena exclusive to America – even in the late 1990s, a café in Lille, France, was still serving a cake called "atom bomb", in the honour of Lille's son Charles de Gaulle who had given France her nuclear weapons.

Payne began to push the US administration a few years earlier to move away from targeting Russia's big cities and industrial centres.[29] As Gray put it: he had "difficulty seeing merit (let alone moral justification) in executing the post-humous [i.e. retaliatory] punishment of an adversary's society possibly to a genocidal level of catastrophic damage" once American cities and their inhabitants had been obliterated.[30] It is unclear, however, how far they translated into American nuclear targeting planning.

Such thinking was widespread among defence-academics, and war games – table top exercises – conducted in military academies or in NATO contexts in the Cold War suggest that American "players" were quite reluctant to cross the nuclear threshold.[31]This intermittently lead to concerns among their European allies that they might do so too late, thus reinforcing the conviction among European strategic communities – military leaders, government officials, and small numbers of defence academics – that to have deterrent credibility, additional centres of decision-making on nuclear use were needed, in the form of nuclear weapons owned by Britain and France, without an American finger on the safety-catch. There was a widespread feeling that Europeans would be ready sooner than Americans to push the nuclear button; they had had their fill of "conventional" war on their soil, and did not see it as much preferable to nuclear war. This doctrine that deterrence was actually enhanced, not undermined, by such additional decision-making centres was even adopted by NATO at the Ottawa Summit in 1974.[32]

Yet European attitudes to nuclear weapons had their own complexities.[33]

The United Kingdom[34]

The British Labour Party had a long history of fighting against the Communist International; the very decision to build a British nuclear bomb was taken by a Labour Government under Clement Attlee as Prime Minister and the formidable Ernest Bevin as Defence Secretary immediately after the end of the Second World War. Their government guided Anglo-American thinking into perceiving the existence and dangers of a Cold War. Bevin and Attlee, jointly with their French, Dutch, Belgian and Luxembourg counterparts, created the Western Union as a West European collective defence pact and then persuaded the US Administration under Truman to sign up to it in the form of the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949.

Yet the Left Wing of the Labour Party always contained a vocal anti-nuclear group who asked for Britain's unilateral nuclear disarmament. Its members were usually also members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the oldest anti-nuclear movement in Europe; when in opposition, they repeatedly dominated the entire Labour

[29] Colin S. Gray: "Nuclear Strategy: the Case for a Theory of Victory", *International Security* Vol. 4 No. 1 (Summer 1979), pp. 54-87; Colin S. Gray and Keith Payne: "Victory is possible", *Foreign Policy* Vol. 39 No. 1 (1980), pp. 14-27.

[30] Gray: "Nuclear Strategy: the Case for a Theory of Victory", p.55.

[31] Reid Pauly: "Would U.S. Leaders Push the Button? Wargames and he Sources of Nuclear Restraint", *International Security* Vol. 43 No. 2 (Fall 2018), pp 151-192.

[32] https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c740618b.htm, accessed on 10 VI 2024.

[33] The following is based on a very large study based on public pronouncements on nuclear weapons – from statements in parliaments to publications – made in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany between 1945 and the end of the Cold War, with all detailed quotations and references found in my publication *Nuclear Mentalities? Strategies and Beliefs in Britain, France and the FRG* (London: Macmillan, 1998)

[34] Heuser: *Nuclear Mentalities?*, pp. 3-74.

line on defence.[35] British anti-nuclear sentiments were always strongest when the East-West relations were at their worst, with a danger of Britain being hit by pre-emptive or retaliatory Soviet nuclear strikes the greatest. In other words, at least in the UK, as fluctuating membership numbers suggest, most CND members were ultimately less concerned about the morality of nuclear use than about their own survival, once it became widely that Soviet targeting focused primarily on nuclear weapons stationed in Western Europe;[36] when threat levels decreased, so did membership. This is what James March and Johan Olsen have referred to as motivations of consequence rather than of ethical "appropriateness".[37]

During the Cold War, British attitudes towards nuclear weapons roughly formed two sub-cultures, largely but not entirely mapping onto the political parties. Pro-nuclear opinions were found mainly on the Right of the political spectrum but encompassed a part of the Left. Nuclear disarmers were found mainly on the Left. With Britain emancipating most of its colonies, by the late 1970s it withdrew completely from East of Suez and concentrated almost all its forces on the defence of Europe. Probably unbeknownst to the larger public, a key reason for a strong Continental commitment of the British armed forces (and the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons) was to prevent any perceived need for German nuclear weapons. This was largely a British misinterpretation of continental initiatives to create a European nuclear force independent of a US veto, in support of further European integration.[38]

Where the general public is concerned, a number of patterns emerge. Even though the British Empire was disappearing, particularly Conservative Britons continued to see their country as a great power with great responsibilities, as a gallant "Sir Galahad" with the duty to defend the free world, a sort of special British "white man's burden". Whitehall translated that into a duty not only to acquire nuclear weapons but also to extend their protection to neighbouring countries, which at the same time was seen as a necessary reason to be given why Britain could own nuclear weapons while denying them to others: Britain was strongly opposed to nuclear proliferation.

An altogether curious phenomenon for which I can see no parallel in history is the relative grace with which Britain handed over the leadership of the free world to the USA, extrapolating from the two world wars that Britain could rely on America for its protection.[39] With very few exceptions, British governments have aligned with the USA on most matters of security policy of concern to both. Nevertheless, this has not gone so far as to be willing to rely on Washington exclusively for protection through nuclear deterrence, partly a function of sovereigntism, partly the function of doubts about America's readiness to risk the destruction of its cities to protect Western Europe. This in turn casts doubts about Britain's oft-proclaimed claim that allies and friends can rely upon

[35] Len Scott: "Labour and the bomb: the first 80 years", *International Affairs* Vol. 82 No. 4 (2006), pp. 685-700.
[36] Philip Sabin: *The Third World War Scare in Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986).
[37] James March and Johan Olsen: *Rediscovering Institutions: the Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1989), p.160 ff.
[38] Beatrice Heuser: 'The European Dream of Franz Josef Strauss', in *Journal of European Integration History,* Vol. 3 No. 1 (Spring 1998), pp.75-103.
[39] Beatrice Heuser: 'Britain, France and the Bomb: the Parting of Ways between Suez and Nassau', *Storia delle Relazioni Internazionali* Vol. XIII No. 3 (Autumn 1997), pp.75-94.

the British deterrent and need not acquire their own.[40] The tension between these two facts has been the subject of much massaging and complicated statements by government statements.[41] Meanwhile, the relationship with what should be Britain's closest ally (given the common history in the two world wars and the common democratic and human rights values), France, has always been marred by a congenital distrust and sibling rivalry.[42] And while Whitehall and military elites got on well, it seems, with their Bonn and Bundeswehr counterparts, the majority public aversion to and rivalry with Germany, rooted in the experience of the 1890s-1945, was never overcome.[43]

An interesting social phenomenon was repeatedly exposed by debates about nuclear weapons, namely an equally ingrained distrust by the Left of the Right – cast in terms of the lower classes vs the ruling elite – which in turn was strongly reciprocated. With roots going back to the Peasants' Revolt of the late 14th century, the Tudor Rebellions of the 16th, the 17th-century Civil War, Jacobite uprisings, Anti-Corn Law Revolts of the 19th century, general strikes and miners' strikes of the 20th century, there is a distrust of one's own population that can be demonstrated in the British scenarios of nuclear war exercises throughout the Cold War. These assumed that significant groups – dockers, miners, trades unions, even individual bishops or archbishops of the Anglican Church – would obstruct British defence efforts, and were to be treated as a Soviet Fifth Column.

Until well after the end of the Cold War, the split between support for nuclear weapons ownership and demand for nuclear disarmament ran through the Labour Party.[44] Most recently this was the case when Jeremy Corbyn was Labour leader (2015-20), who combined a strong anti-nuclear stance with tacit support for Britain's exit from the EU, sympathy with the Palestinians coupled with anti-Semitism, and with sympathy with Putin's authoritarian Russia. The Conservative Party has always been solidly in favour of Britain's retention of its nuclear force as long as other states are nuclear powers. Much the same applied to the Liberal Party, later reformed as Liberal Democrats.

One smaller local party deserves mentioning, the Scottish National Party (SNP), which since the end of the Cold War has come to dominate devolved Scotland's politics, and campaigns for independence from the rest of the United Kingdom. Having usurped the place in Scottish politics traditionally held by Labour, it is also heir to Labour's anti-nuclear wing. This is significant because all the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons are now concentrated at the Royal Navy's submarine base on the Clyde near Glasgow in Scotland, when they are not at sea on one of Britain's four nuclear-weapons-bearing

[40] Beatrice Heuser and Kristan Stoddart: 'Großbritannien zwischen Doppelbeschluss und Anti-Kernwaffen-Protestbewegung', in Philip Gassert, Tim Geiger, Hermann Wentker (eds.): *Zweiter Kalter Krieg und Friedensbewegung* (München: Oldenbourg, 2011), pp. 305-324.

[41] Beatrice Heuser: 'The Special Relationship, Nuclear Strategy and Nuclear Weapons', in Ursula Lehmkuhl & Gustav Schmidt (eds.): *From Enmity to Friendship: Anglo-American Relations in the 19th and 20th centuries* (Augsburg: Wißner, 2005), pp.131-152.

[42] Beatrice Heuser: 'Of Sibling Rivalry and Lovers Spurned: Franco-American Relations over Two Centuries', in David G. Haglund (ed.): *The France-US Leadership Race: Closely Watched Allies,* special issue of *Queen's Quarterly* (Kingston, Ont., 2000), pp. 43-61.

[43] Beatrice Heuser: 'Britain and the FRG in NATO, 1955-1990', in Jeremy Noakes, Peter Wende & Jonathan Wright (eds): *Britain and Germany in Europe, 1949-1990* (London: German Historical Institute, 2001), pp. 141-162.

[44] Len Scott: 'Labout and the bomb: the first 80 Years', *International Affairs* Vol. 82 No. 4 (2006), pp. 685-700.

submarines. The Party's leadership currently has a more pragmatic approach, seemingly willing to take a longer-term view about phasing out UK nuclear weapons from the Clyde area in case of Scottish independence.

France[45]

For France, the lessons of the two world wars and of the Suez Crisis of 1956 were the opposite of the lessons drawn by Britain: for France, American aid came too late to prevent the occupation of extensive parts of France in both world wars, and in the case of Suez. This confirmed de Gaulle and many French opinion leaders that dependence on Washington's decisions was unacceptable.[46] Where Britain was willing to settle for a high degree of interdependence with (or actually, dependence on) the USA, France wrote independence as an absolute necessity on her banner. For de Gaulle himself and those across the political spectrum who bought into his reasoning on defence, the answer was the independent nuclear force. It promised independence not only from allies, but also from any reliance on France's conscript army which in 1940 had proved less than dependable, bringing on a "strange defeat", as the memorable title of Marc Bloch's account of the debacle suggested.[47] France's nuclear force has been equated to the magic potion that empowered Asterix and Obelix to keep the Romans at bay: no more strange defeat as nobody would dare attack France once she was a nuclear power. It was a French speciality that the enemy to be kept at bay was not named: France's strategic posture until the 1980s was one of refusing to designate the USSR as the potential adversary in a nuclear contest, and instead to claim that France could be friends (and trade) with all sides while her deterrence was directed to all parts of the globe – *à tous azimuts*. A considerable degree of anti-Americanism reverberated in this, as French collective mentality sees France as rival of America when it comes to world leadership in democracy and human rights (and quite superior in cultural terms). While there is an acknowledgement that, shorn of most of her colonial empire, what remains is now smaller and weaker than the USA, nuclear weapons still give France (like Britain) a place on the top table, as nuclear power is the great equaliser – an idea imported by France from Britain.

Nuclear weapons also gave French Presidents independence from the military after the putsch of some officers and units had tried to forestall French withdrawal from Algeria in the early 1960s, creating suspicions of the military leadership which took decades to subside. In symbolic fashions also, *le nucléaire* lent itself to strengthening the presidency of the French Fifth Republic. Replacing sceptre and sword, the ritual introduction of any newly elected French president to the secrets of nuclear control from the Elysée's underground nuclear control centre, significantly called *Jupiter*, is televised until the inner sanctuary is reached, and gives the president a sacral and semi-divine role that perfectly matches *l'imaginaire* of this presidential democracy.

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[45] Heuser: *Nuclear Mentalities?,* pp. 75-178.

[46] Heuser: 'Britain, France and the Bomb'; idem: 'Dunkirk, Dien Bien Phu, and Suez, or why France doesn't trust allies and has learned to love the bomb', in Beatrice Heuser and Cyril Buffet (eds.): *Haunted by History: Myths in International Relations* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 157-174.

[47] Marc Bloch: *L'étrange défaite* (Paris: Société des Éditions Franc-Tireur, 1946).

While the 1960s still saw strong opinions expressed in France in opposition to nuclear weapons in general and their stationing on French soil let alone their acquisition by France, an amazing degree of consensus was established in French politics in the 1970s: the Socialist Party espoused the doctrine of nuclear deterrence and has largely held up by the political parties ever since.[48] On all sides of the political spectrum it has since become a matter of faith to state, echoing the title of Jean Giraudoux' play about the Trojan War, that "Nuclear War will not take place", as long as France can deter any aggressor with her nuclear arsenal.

French governments by contrast to Britain did not feel the need to excuse French nuclear ownership by an explicit nuclear protection guarantee issued to neighbours. Indeed, there is a tradition of supporting nuclear proliferation as French Gaullist doctrine held that nuclear possession wards off any aggression. It became French doctrine that extended deterrence had no credibility which is why France built its own nuclear weapons. French governments concluded logically that it would be incompatible with this stance to join the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). France eventually caved in to the pressure of allies on this matter, acceding to the Treaty in 1992, but continuing to hold back on extended deterrence to cover allies and friends.

This posture ran into problems when applied to European neighbours, especially West Germany: France did not want West Germany to have its own nuclear weapons, and the only alternatives – further European defence integration with the acquisition of a jointly controlled European nuclear force, or else a unilateral French nuclear protection guarantee for the FRG – were equally unpalatable for the Gaullists who treasured French sovereignty. Nuclear weapons guaranteed France's superiority in status to the West German republic. To this day, France has difficulties squaring the circle of national sovereignty and European defence integration. The magic applied tends to be, even in recent speeches by President Macron, simply to define France as Europe, so that deterrence on any aggression against France simply means security for Europe (and with one bound, Dick was free).

(West) Germany[49]

In (West) Germany and other European countries, especially the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, vocal segments of the population have since the 1950s objected to all aspects of nuclear power, including the use of nuclear energy. There is a special dimension to this in Germany which somehow relates nuclear weapons (and nuclear energy) with the sinfulness of war in absolute terms, and with the particular curse of German guilt that is its inheritance from the Third Reich. Even though Germany neither used nor was bombed by nuclear weapons, they have assumed a mythical quality for Germans just as they have for the Japanese where they gave birth to the monster Godzilla in popular fiction.[50]

[48] David S. Yost: "The French Defence Debate", *Survival* Vol. 23 No. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1981); David S.Yost: "France's Deterrent Posture and Security in Europe" Part II: "Strategic and Arms Control Implications", *Adelphi Papers* No. 195 (London: IISS, 1984/5); Heuser: *Nuclear Mentalities?*, pp. 75-178.

[49] Heuser: *Nuclear Mentalities?*, pp. 179-259.

[50] Nancy Anisfield: 'Godzilla/Gojiro: Evolution of the nuclear metaphor', *Journal of Popular Culture,* Vol. 29 No.3 (1995), pp. 53-62.

Admittedly, the German experience of city bombing– also carried out by the Luftwaffe, of course – with "conventional" ordinance such as phosphor bombs did not fall much short of the Japanese experiences. This has resulted in a nuclear taboo, that in the Cold War expressed itself both in the fear of becoming targets of enemy – or allied! – nuclear weapons, and in the opposition to the stationing of nuclear weapons on German soil. And as Germany was the NATO member state with most nuclear weapons on its soil: short-range ("battlefield") missiles and intermediate-range missiles, plus free-fall bombs to be loaded onto fighter planes, plus, in the 1960s and into the 1970s, atomic demolition devices that would have been exploded from the ground to obstruct the passage of invading forces, but with the heaviest possible fall-out. Consequently, waves of protests against nuclear weapons were particularly significant in West Germany. As in the UK with the Labour Party, the German Social Democratic Party was in itself torn between those supporting NATO's nuclear posture (with American and British nuclear weapons on West German soil) and an anti-nuclear wing. The German anti-nuclear movement reflected wide-spread feelings of revulsion against war in general, air bombardment, and against the prospect of nuclear weapons use on German soil in particular. A free-floating protest movement of the sort that exists in most free societies attached itself to this issue, with a particular mix of Protestantism: after the Protestant clergy had largely tolerated if not collaborated with the Nazi regime, German Lutheranism edged away from Luther's support for the just war tradition, and towards pacifism. A pacifist opposition to nuclear weapons also became associated with a yearning for redemption and absolution from the crimes of the Third Reich. But well beyond the German left, it seems that the re-education of Germans and their later largely self-driven coming to terms with the German crimes of the past inoculated them against militarism and the temptations of acquiring power through nuclear ownership. Even on the conservative end of the political spectrum, no serious argument was ever made for the acquisition of a national German nuclear force.[51]

The most important wave of protests in Germany took place in the late 1950s – directed more generally against German rearmament and NATO membership – and then again from 1978 until 1984. In the mid-1950s, NATO exercises involving scenarios of nuclear weapons use brought home to Germans that in case of Warsaw Pact aggression, NATO membership would not protect Germany against a worse re-run of the aerial bombing of the Second World War. The latter period of protests first opposed the introduction of "neutron bombs" (enhanced radiation weapons), and then in protest against the deployment of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) that had been agreed by NATO in December 1979.[52] The division within the Social Democratic Party on this issue brought down a Social-Democratic-dominated government in 1982. It was replaced by a Christian-Democrat-led coalition that saw through the deployment promised by its predecessor.

On the West German Right, the Cold War saw a continuity between the anti-Soviet stance of Hitler's regime (except for the treacherous interlude of his collusion with Stalin

[51] Beatrice Heuser: 'Proliferation and/or Alliance? The Federal Republic of Germany', in Leopoldo Nuti and Cyril Buffet (eds.): *Dividing the Atom: Essays on the History of Nuclear Proliferation in Europe*, special issue of Storia delle Relazioni Internazionali (Autumn 1998), .

[52] Andreas Lutsch: "Gleichgewicht vor Westbindung: Die Regierung Schmidt und die Neutronenbombe" (1977/78) –eine Neubewertung", *Historische Zeitschrift* Vol. 310 No.1 (2020), pp. 52-89.

to occupy Poland) and the enmity with the USSR and its satellites that brought NATO into being. For Bonn's allies, this continuity was useful to the defensive posture of NATO. While West Germans by and by confronted their genocidal past with regard to the Jews, this significantly delayed the process of West Germans facing up to the atrocities committed by the Wehrmacht against the Soviet population in the Second World War (East Germans felt no need to, as they simply defined themselves as collectively the heirs of the Communist resistance to the Nazis, thus washing their hands of any guilt).[53]

The intricacies of NATO's nuclear posture and reasoning were only ever known or understood by a small defence elite in (West) Germany, so that there was ample scope for uninformed and often emotional outbursts in the German public debate. Even though a majority of West Germans largely supported NATO and the positioning of US and British nuclear forces in their country, the anti-nuclear movement was very vocal and the debate of the early 1980s acrimonious. Ever since, German governments have been extremely reluctant to risk a public debate on the stationing of nuclear weapons in Germany.

Post-Cold War Postscript: The Catholic Church and the Ban Movement

The end of the Cold War did not coincide with either a caesura in or the completion of a long and gradual transformation of Western attitudes towards war in general and nuclear weapons in particular. Some further milestones and developments need to be mentioned that straddle the divide between the Cold War and the Interglacial Period of 1991 and 2008.

Protestant pacifism of various hues was a strong driver of anti-nuclear movements in the Cold War. Catholic Church also played its role: after coming out against total war and all forms of indiscriminate bombing of civilians, in the early 1980s, it became the focus once more of a campaign to change attitudes towards civilian casualties, now with an express focus on nuclear war. The Catholic Bishops of the USA pronounced (and pushed Pope John Paul II to support them) that the possession of nuclear weapons for the purpose of deterrence was ethically acceptable, but their use (and planning for their use) would not be.[54] Agreeing strongly on the immorality of population targeting, the Anglo-American strategist Colin S. Gray and the leading British defence official Sir Michael Quinlan came back with a somewhat modified approach. Gray and Quinlan explained that it made no sense to approve in principle of nuclear *deterrence* – i.e. the possession of nuclear weapons with the express purpose of checking any other power's use of nuclear weapons by the threat of counter-use – while opposing any planning for their use in war (especially use with a view to restoring deterrence). If it was entirely clear (through lack

[53] Arguably, the belated realisation of the German responsibility for the death of 26 million Soviet citizens conditioned attitudes to Putin's Russia.

[54] Pastoral Letter of the [US] National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response", *Origins, NC Documentary Service* Vol. 13 No 1 (19 May 1983). See also Beatrice Heuser: *The Bomb: Nuclear Weapons in their Historical, Strategic and Ethical Context* (London: Longman's, 1999), ch. 4.

of planning for use) that he West would not use nuclear weapons, then there could be no deterrence.[55]

At least it seems that US strategy was changed. NATO as a whole had already in the mid-1950s abandoned any hope of achieving "victory" in the sense of a total defeat of the Warsaw Pact, even if nuclear planners in the USA lagged far behind on this point.[56] As late as 8 December 1997, a journalist reported that President Clinton's new nuclear instructions aimed "for Deterrence and Not 'Victory'".[57] In reality, the abandonment of the goal of "victory" was hardly new, but over the previous decade, US and British strategic targeting had become more flexible and calibrated in the 1980s, as the *Trident* missiles to be fired from submarines were introduced which with satellite targeting guidance could impressively reduce the circular error probable.

After the end of the Cold War, during the Interglacial period, other prominent US strategists, by then in retirement, came out in favour of a no-first-use posture to follow Soviet and Chinese declarations, sparking a lively debate.[58] In the UK, a handful of well-informed former military officers pleaded for the elimination of nuclear weapons, even contemplating British unilateralism.[59] The alternative to a willingness in principle to resort to first use, however, would be a very significant build-up of conventional defences as studies commissioned in the early 1980s showed.[60] No-one was keen to go down this path, especially not when the Cold War came to a peaceful end and there was the hope that defence expenditure could be reduced to yield a "peace dividend". Nuclear arsenals were cut back, in the case of Britain to "minimum" deterrence, with France and China also retaining only relatively small arsenals. The hope arose on all sides that remaining US and Russian arsenals could provide a sort of "existential deterrence" that merely reminded all sides of the unacceptability of major war.[61]

Already in the last months of the Cold War, with the main nuclear adversary collapsing on itself, the question of the legitimacy of continued ownership of nuclear weapon arose.[62] As the Soviet Union had definitively disappeared, the Western powers tried to find a new compromise between nuclear possession and nuclear divestment.[63] Only few strategists, counting on the self-deterrence power of nuclear weapons and their

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[55] Colin S. Gray: "War-Fighting for Deterrence", *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 7 No. 1 (March 1984), pp.5-28.

[56] Beatrice Heuser: 'Victory in a Nuclear War? A Comparison of NATO and WTO War Aims and Strategies', *Contemporary European History* Vol. 7 Part 3 (November 1998), pp. 311-328.

[57] R. Jeffrey Smith: "Clinton Orders Changes in Nuclear-War Strategy", *International Herald Tribune* (8 Dec. 1997).

[58] George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara, Gerard Smith: "Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance", *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 60 No. 4 (Spring 1982), pp. 753-768.

[59] Field Marshal Lord Carver: "Useless weapons", *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* Vol. 23 No.2 (1998), pp. 135-138; Michael MccGwire: "Comfort Blanket or Weapon of War: what is Trident for?", *International Affairs* Vol. 82 No. 4 (2006), pp. 639-650.

[60] Alternative Defence Commission: *Defence Without the Bomb* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1983); Alternative Defence Commission: *Without the Bomb: Non-Nuclear Defence Policies for Britain* (London: Paladin/Granada, 1985).

[61] See e.g. Michael Quinlan: "The future of United Kingdom nuclear weapons: shaping the debate", *International Affairs* Vol. 82 No. 4 (2006), pp. 627-637.

[62] David S. Yost: "The Delegimization of Nuclear Deterrence?", *Armed Forces & Society* Vol. 16 No. 4 (Summer 1990), pp. 487-508.

[63] Michael Quinlan: "Abolishing Nuclear Armouries: Policy or Pipedream?" *Survival* 49:4, pp. 7-15;

ability to make their owners cautious about war, proposed to unleash nuclear proliferation as the answer to the world's woes.[64] The compromise was to put them "in a Box in the Corner", as Martin A. Smith called it.[65] There was still distrust in the long-term relationship with Russia. Exhortations to "stay on alert" continued from the side of the "hawks".[66] How to link nuclear deterrence to the deterrence of other weapons of mass destruction absent from Western arsenals proved an enduring logical puzzle.[67]

Yet the very legitimacy even of deterrence itself was questioned now by international lawyers. The International Red Cross argued that the use of terror is incompatible with customary International Humanitarian Law. In 1996 the International Court of Justice produced an "Advisory Opinion on the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons". It refused to make a final pronouncement on whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be unlawful in an extreme case, "in which the survival of a State would be at stake", presumably meaning the survival of its population and not merely of the State structures. Nevertheless, the International Court of Justice highlighted that the use of nuclear weapons against populations might be tantamount to genocide, and thus emphatically unlawful.[68]

Anti-nuclear movements that had experienced a significant dip in their membership with the end of the Cold War started up again in the 2000s. Some were old like Greenpeace that merged environmental issues with campaigning for the abolition of nuclear weapons, some were new like the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), founded in 2007.

Against the background of new East-West tensions perceived as such in the West at the latest from Russia's annexation of Ukraine in 2014, in 2017, newly elected Pope Francis relinquished the ambiguous stance of his predecessors who had still considered the *possession* of nuclear weapons for deterrence purposes acceptable. Francis told an international conference in 2017 that "the threat of their use, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned" given the danger that they might be detonated accidentally, or in error.[69] In the same year, the UN convened a conference which adopted a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

In 2018, in surveys conducted by Benoît Pelopidas and Fabricio Fialho with the help of YouGov and IFOP, respondents in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom were asked about their attitudes towards nuclear weapon. In response to the question, "Do nuclear weapons make you feel safe?", just under 70% of respondents said "No". Narrowing down the survey to responses only from France and the United Kingdom, the two European Nuclear Weapons

[64] John J. Mearsheimer: "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War", *International Security* Vol. 15 No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5-56.
[65] Martin A. Smith: "in a Box in the Corner", *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 25 No. 1 (March 2002), pp. 1-20.
[66] "Stay on Alert", *The Wall Street Journal* (20 Jan 1998)
[67] David Ochmanek & Richard Sokolsky: "Employ Nuclear Deterrence: Vague U.S. Policy Dilutes Stance against CBW Threat", *New York Times* (12 Jan 1998)
[68] Stuart Casey-Maslen: "The Status of Nuclear Deterrence and Their Compatibility with International Humanitarian Law: A Primer", in *Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law* (2018), pp. 23-58.
[69] Pope Francis, "Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the International Symposium 'Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament," (Rome, 10 November 2017); http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/november/documents/papa-francesco_20171110_convegno-disarmointegrale.html, accessed on 10 VI 2024.

owning States (NWS), the question was asked, "Are there any circumstances under which the use of nuclear weapons is acceptable?" Just shy of 80% of the respondents said "It is never acceptable" to do so; 20.7% answered that "Under certain circumstances it might be acceptable to use nuclear weapons." Only 3.2% - included in the previous figure – thought such circumstances would arise "if an ally is attacked".[70] What should such allied Non-NWS do, the respondents across all nine nations were asked. The answers (including from the Non-NWS themselves) would have troubled "Realist" theorists of International Relations: almost 60% of respondents thought they should "advocate the abolition of nuclear weapons", 40% thought they should "Receive guarantees that nuclear weapons will never be used against them", while only 17% thought they should turn to their allies for a nuclear guarantee. Fewer than 10% thought their countries should develop their own nuclear weapons.[71] Across all nine countries, 60% of respondents "strongly agreed" that it is desirable to eliminate all nuclear weapons worldwide within the next quarter century, and 50% strongly supported, even then, "an international agreement for eliminating all nuclear weapons",[72] a direct reference to the TPNW or "Ban Treaty". This has come into force on 22 January 2021 with 86 signatories, of whom 51 had ratified the treaty by the time it came into force.[73]

Unsurprisingly, the signatories did not include nuclear-weapons-owning States nor their allies. The Netherlands had sent observers to the 2017 conference but was persuaded by its NATO allies to desist from signing the Ban Treaty. Credible or not, NATO continues to assume that its Non-NWS would benefit from an American nuclear guarantee, and even the UK in its Integrated Review of March 2021 asserted in keeping with its long-standing approach that UK nuclear forces were assigned to the defence of NATO, and that the UK's government "would consider using our nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances of self-defence, including the defence of our NATO Allies."[74]

Then the Russian full/scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 set the world back to Cold War mode. Where in the NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept, the aim of a nuclear-free world came before the commitment to holding on to nuclear weapons in some form as long as there were nuclear weapons in the world, the order was inverted in NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept. It reconfirmed that

> The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capability is to preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance. NATO's goal is a safer world for all; we seek to create the security environment for a world without nuclear weapons.[75]

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[70] Kjølv Egeland and Benoît Pelopidas: "European nuclear weapons? Zombie debates and nuclear realities", *European Security* Vol. 30 No.2 (2021), pp. 246, 248.

[71] Egeland and Pelopidas: "European nuclear weapons?", p. 247.

[72] Ibid, p. 249.

[73] https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/2017/07/20170707%2003-42%20PM/Ch_XXVI_9.pdf,accessed on 11 VI 2024.

[74] UK Government: *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (12 March 2021) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy, accessed on 12 VI 2024.

[75] The 2010 Strategic Concept "Active Engagement, Modern Defence"https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-

While this might seem like a small change, it was followed by a resumption of full-scale nuclear planning and exercises as had last been developed at the end of the Cold War.

Apparently the American public does not quite share the aversion to nuclear weapons that demonstrably exists in Europe, whether or not it has tipped the balance to becoming a majority phenomenon. According to a study conducted before the Russian annexation of Crimea by Daryl Press and others, American citizens generally would have preferred the use of "conventional" forces against an adversary, where such an option existed, but were almost balanced on whether they would approve or disapprove a nuclear strike if that were deemed more useful. Even those who disapproved of nuclear use did so mainly because of the precedent it might set, rather than due to a judgement that it would be unethical to do so.[76]

Nor are the popular anti-nuclear sentiments across Europe captured by the above-cited opinion polls necessarily shared by the strategic communities who have endorsed NATO's nuclear character. And they may not translate into a political force unless catalysed by a crisis or a public political debate on the modernisation or replacement of America's remaining arsenal in Europe. As noted previously, anti-nuclear feelings swell mainly when populations see themselves as potential targets of nuclear weapons. But there is the potential for organised widespread opposition to the modernisation of American forces in Europe, in the absolute condemnation of war widespread among Protestants and now espoused by the Pope, the difficulty of coming to grips with the deterrence paradox, and in the indifference of wide sectors of society to what happens to far-away countries of which they know nothing (to paraphrase Neville Chamberlain's justification of Appeasement). Whether the Russian war on Ukraine will bring a return to greater support for nuclear deterrence remains unclear at the time of writing.

Specific Historical Experiences, Collective Mentalities, and Nuclear Strategy

Against the background of the widely-shared antipathy to war in general in all three European countries on the one hand, and of the Munich syndrome[77] of the United Kingdom and France, a tension between two positions emerges. It is the tension between the fear of major war, especially nuclear war, on the one hand, and the desire to rely on deterrence to keep a major military and ideological enemy, perceived to be set on expansion, in check before it can begin to implement its expansionist programme. Each of the three European nations discussed has produced its own peculiar configuration of views on nuclear weapons, with a huge consensus in the USA and France that the

2010-eng.pdf p. 5, and https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf p.1,accessed on 18X 2024.

[76] Daryl Press, Scott Sagan, Benjamin Valentino: "Experimental Evidence on Taboos, Traditions, and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons", *American Political Science Review* Vol. 107 No. 1 (Feb. 2017), pp. 188-206.

[77] A feeling of guilt over having supported the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938, and an unwarranted belief that somehow the Second World War might have been averted or brought to an end with fewer losses if only Britain and France has stood firm, see David Chuter: "Munich, or the Blood of Others", in Cyril Buffet & Beatrice Heuser (eds): *Haunted by History: Myths in International Relations* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 65-79.

weapons are important to deter another world major, and a split view on the issue in the United Kingdom and Germany.

Other mature liberal democracies that remained Non-NWSeach have their own formative experiences of war (or its absence at certain times), resulting in distinct collective attitudes. They all have similar political systems, and from the 19th to the 21st centuries, have experienced industrialisation, growing prosperity and the establishment of welfare states, shrinking families with fewer sons, increasing rights for women, growing liberal tolerance for minorities of all sorts along with an increase in secularism (*laïcisme*) and a waning of the importance of religious institutions in public affairs. And yet each seems to have a particular attitude towards nuclear weapons (along with other key questions of security, such as alliance membership, degree of military integration with other states, compulsory military service, etc) that cannot be explained purely in terms of their slightly different geographic locations.

In 2011 Gallup published a study of attitudes towards attacks on civilians by State and Non-State Actors (NSA), based on face-to-face interviews with 1000 individuals per country, aged 15 and above, in 131 countries. The study found correlations between tolerance of such attacks ("attacks on civilians are sometimes justified/depends")and "lower human development" (measured by the UN's Development Programme's Human Development Index), societal instability, lower national wealth, and poor governance. It found *no* correlation with liberal social norms, or the country's military spending. Perhaps surprisingly, the study found that "GDP, education spending, and good governance likewise have no influence on public perceptions of military attacks on civilians." It also found that "Predominantly Muslim societies reject violence at least as much as other societies." Confirming what we have postulated about the importance of historical narratives for a country's collective mentality and attitudes, it came to the conclusion that "a country's individual history likely plays a bigger role in shaping views than its level of development or wealth."[78]

This brings us back to collective mentalities as additional explanatory factor. They are dominated by particular "lessons" – whether or not seen as "the right lessons" by neutral observers or scholars – distilled from the past. Collectivities have their own narrative of history, formed in antiquity by poets and the authors of the bible and other religious texts. They tend to be particular to countries, and since the introduction of compulsory public schooling, they have been diffused through school manuals, celebrated by epic poems and later, operas, novels, national holidays and pageantries, films and television, evoked in the national press. These factors come together to configure multiple distinguishable mindsets, collective mentalities. Applied to whole nations, or parts thereof, these collective mentalities can thus be dissected according to particular narratives of past events that are passed on and retold over time.

France's determination never again to allow such a "strange defeat" as that of 1940, Britain's and France's self-perception as world policemen (a heritage from the 19th century when both were great powers with a world-wide colonial empire), the burden of Germany's past, America's messianic sense of mission, notwithstanding an intellectual self-criticism that has grown incrementally since the 1950s – all these peculiar traits of

[78] "Views of Violence: What drives public acceptance and rejection of attacks on civilians 10 years after 9/11", https://news.gallup.com/poll/157067/views-violence.aspx accessed on 10 VI 2024.

collective mentality can only be explained by factoring in the particular lessons taken collectively from the history of each country. And this applies especially to their attitudes to nuclear weapons.

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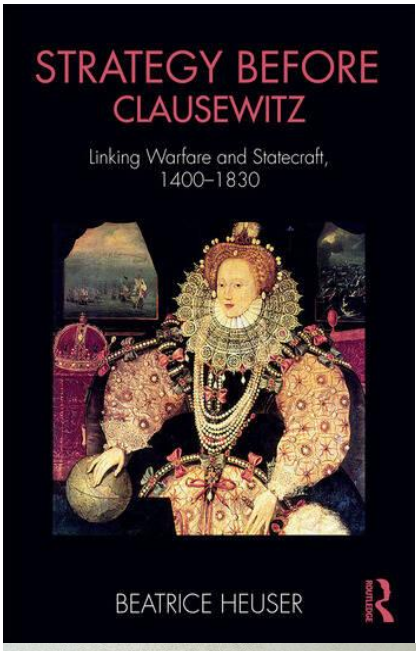
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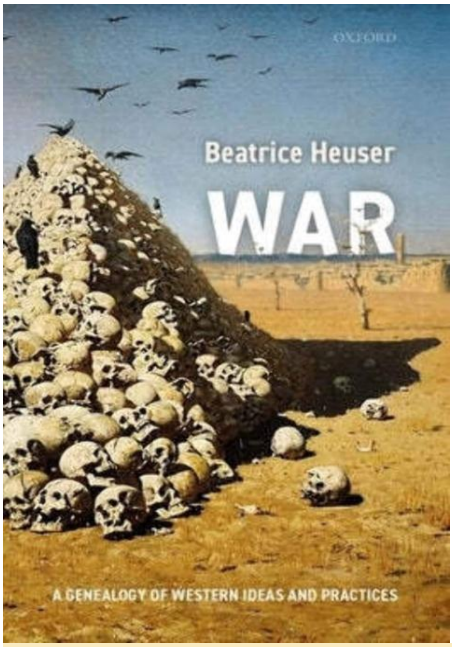
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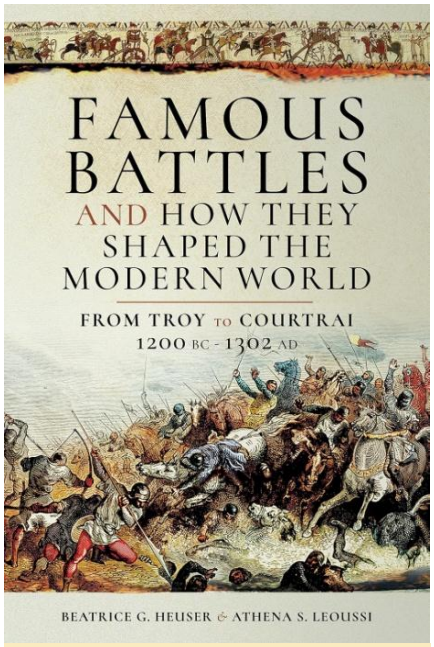
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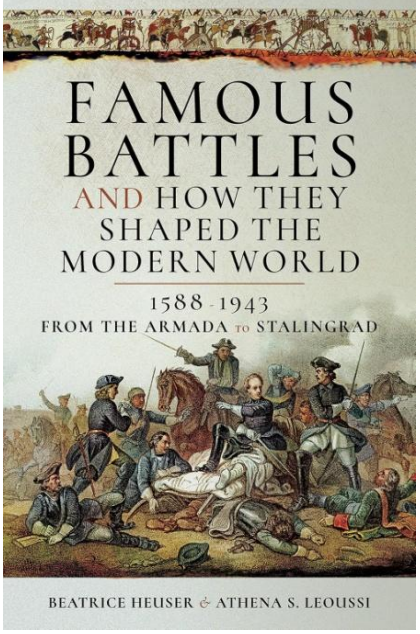
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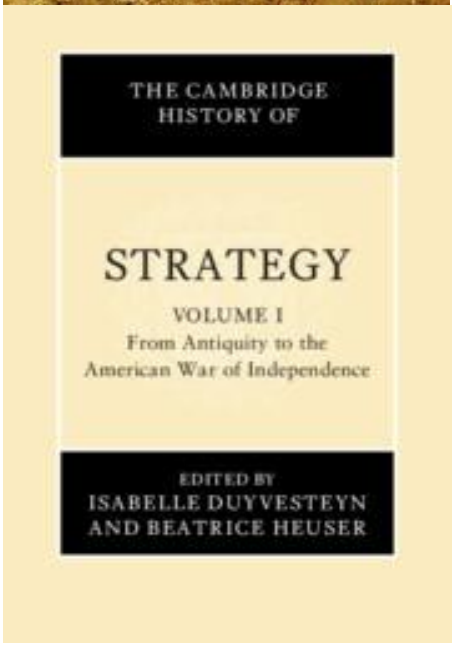
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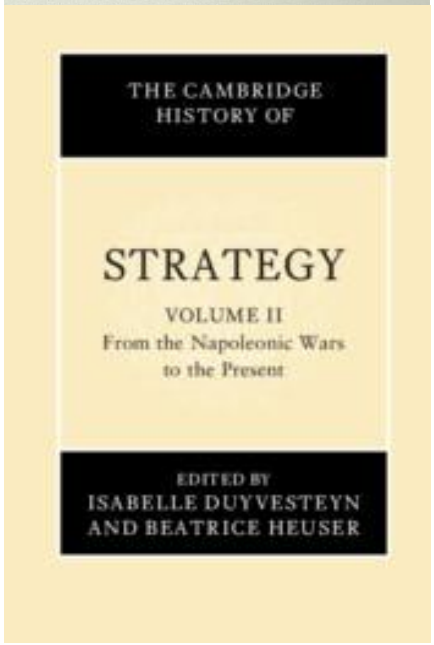
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