

David Garnham

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The Politics of  
European Defense  
Cooperation

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Germany, France,  
Britain, and America



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and America

David Garnham

BALLINGER PUBLISHING COMPANY  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
A Subsidiary of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

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lisher.

International Standard Book Number: 0-88730-302-1

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 88-19314

Printed in the United States of America

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Garnham, David, 1942-

The Politics of European defense cooperation.

Includes bibliographies and index.

1. Europe—Defenses. 2. European cooperation.  
3. North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I. Title.

UA646.G39 1988 355'.03304 88-19314

ISBN 0-88730-302-1

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	avion de combat européen
ALCM	air-launched cruise missile
ASMP	air-sol à moyenne portée (French ALCM)
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine
Benelux	Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg
CCFR	Chicago Council on Foreign Relations
CDU	Christian Democratic Union (FRG)
CNAD	Conference of National Armaments Directors
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSI	Cours supérieur interarmées
CSU	Christian Social Union (FRG)
DGA	Délégation générale pour l'armement
DoD	Department of Defense (United States)
EC	European Community
EDC	European Defense Community
EEC	European Economic Community (Common Market)
EFA	European Fighter Aircraft
EPC	European Political Cooperation
ESA	European Space Agency
FAR	Force d'action rapide
FDP	Free Democratic Party (FRG)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FY	Fiscal Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product (GNP minus net income from abroad)

<b>GDR</b>	<b>German Democratic Republic</b>
<b>GLCM</b>	<b>ground-launched cruise missile</b>
<b>GNP</b>	<b>Gross National Product</b>
<b>IEPG</b>	<b>Independent European Programme Group</b>
<b>IHEDN</b>	<b>Institut des hautes études de défense nationale</b>
<b>IISS</b>	<b>International Institute for Strategic Studies (London)</b>
<b>INF</b>	<b>intermediate nuclear forces</b>
<b>IRBM</b>	<b>intermediate range ballistic missile</b>
<b>MBFR</b>	<b>Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks</b>
<b>MoD</b>	<b>Ministry of Defence (United Kingdom)</b>
<b>NASA</b>	<b>National Aeronautics and Space Administration</b>
<b>NPT</b>	<b>Non-Proliferation Treaty</b>
<b>PS</b>	<b>Parti Socialiste (France)</b>
<b>RAF</b>	<b>Royal Air Force (United Kingdom)</b>
<b>RPR</b>	<b>Rassemblement pour la République (France)</b>
<b>RUSI</b>	<b>Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies</b>
<b>SACEUR</b>	<b>Supreme Allied Commander Europe</b>
<b>SDI</b>	<b>Strategic Defense Initiative</b>
<b>SDP</b>	<b>Social Democratic Party (United Kingdom)</b>
<b>SLBM</b>	<b>submarine-launched ballistic missile</b>
<b>SPD</b>	<b>Social Democratic Party (FRG)</b>
<b>UDF</b>	<b>Union pour la Démocratie Française (France)</b>
<b>UK</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>
<b>WEU</b>	<b>Western European Union</b>
<b>WTO</b>	<b>Warsaw Treaty Organization</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I began this book during a sabbatical leave provided by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Many people assisted its completion. Anne Flohr helped greatly to locate and translate German language literature and to organize my interview schedule in the Federal Republic. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen was also extremely helpful in arranging interviews in Bonn. Parts of the manuscript profited from comments by Arthur Cyr, Karen Greenstreet, Joseph Leppgold, Reinhardt Rummel, Peter Schmidt, Stanley Sloan, and Steve Smith. Meredith Watts generously shared his knowledge of German politics. My major debt is to Carla Gamham who read the entire manuscript with her usual skepticism and provided writing time by excusing me from dishwashing for many months.

My thanks to the staff of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library and the staffs of the following libraries in the United States and Europe: the British Library, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Les Instituts Français (Bonn and London), International Institute for Strategic Studies, Library of Congress, Marquette University, Milwaukee Public Library, Royal United Services Institute, University of California-Berkeley, University of California-Santa Barbara, University of Reading, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Earlier versions of portions of this book appeared in *International Security*; C.E. Baumann, ed., *Europe in NATO: Deterrence, Defense, and Arms Control*; and R. Rummel, ed., *West European Self-Assertiveness: Fact or Fiction*.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1945, Europe has experienced one of the longest periods of peace in modern history. After two devastating twentieth century wars, Europeans are determined to preserve this peace, which most attribute to nuclear deterrence and America's commitment to European defense. Until recently, most Europeans looked primarily to the Atlantic Alliance to preserve peace, rather than to national or regional defense arrangements. Only the French, who emphasized their national deterrent force, chose a different option.

Now Europeans are beginning to question the American defense commitment, and this concern fuels renewed interest in European defense cooperation, a concept which became moribund when France's National Assembly defeated the European Defense Community (EDC) proposal in August 1954. This book will examine the politics of military cooperation among the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)-European states and especially the likelihood that a viable "European pillar" could evolve to reduce or replace America's postwar role as the ultimate guarantor of Western European security.

This study emphasizes relations among the three most powerful Western European states (the Federal Republic of Germany or West Germany, France, and Great Britain) which in 1985 accounted for over 60 percent of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of non-North American NATO members.<sup>1</sup> Compared to these three, the remaining European countries are substantially less influential: none possesses nuclear

Table 1-1. Capabilities of Selected NATO-European Countries.

		<i>Number of Males 18-30 years (millions)</i>	<i>GDP 1985 (in billions)</i>	<i>1986 Defense Budget (in billions)</i>	<i>Military Personnel</i>
Belgium		1.0	\$80	\$2.4	91,428
Denmark		0.5	\$57	\$1.5	29,525
France	x	5.6	\$511	\$22.3	463,320 *
Italy		5.7	\$361	\$14.1	387,800
Netherlands		1.6	\$124	\$5.5	105,134
Norway		0.4	\$58	\$2.1	37,300
Spain		4.1	\$169	\$5.6	320,000
United Kingdom	x	5.7	\$481	\$24.9	323,800
West Germany		6.5	\$622	\$22.5	485,800

Source: *The Military Balance 1986-1987* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1986), pp. 56-76.

\*Not including Gendarmerie (constabulary) (85,708) and Service de Santé (health service) (8,465).

weapons, and the largest (Italy and Spain) are isolated geographically. Furthermore, Spain is outside both the Western European Union (WEU) and NATO's integrated military structure. The Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) countries are geographically central and active members of the WEU and NATO, but their size precludes a substantial impact on European defense.

## WEST GERMANY

Geography makes West Germany the keystone of Western European defense and the most vulnerable member of NATO. Among the NATO countries that border the Eastern bloc (Norway, Greece, and Turkey), only the FRG has 30 percent of its population and 25 percent of its industrial capacity located within sixty miles of the East-West frontier. This proximity, and the absence of a national nuclear deterrent capability, makes the Federal Republic the most exposed member of the Atlantic Alliance.

The Federal Republic is also the most populous Western European country (57 million inhabitants in an area the size of Oregon), the largest Western European economy (see Table 1-1), and the fourth largest global

economy. In 1986, the FRG overtook the United States to become the world's principal exporting country.<sup>2</sup>

The world wars were disastrous and left Germany defeated and divided. This experience, combined with feelings of guilt for Nazi atrocities, convinced many Germans that warfare was immoral, ineffective, and dangerous.<sup>3</sup> Article 26 of Bonn's constitution prohibits "Activities tending and undertaken with the intent to disturb peaceful relations between nations, especially to prepare for aggressive war. . . ." This dovish inclination is reinforced by Germany's precarious position as the likely battleground for any European war. By comparison, France, and especially Britain and the United States, enjoy more favorable geopolitical positions. Moreover, only diplomacy—not force of arms—can advance the goals of *Deutschlandpolitik*, because the Soviet Union can effectively block improved inter-German relations as General Secretary Chernenko demonstrated by preventing East German leader Erich Honecker's proposed visit to the Federal Republic in 1984.<sup>4</sup>

Following World War II, West Germans renounced aspirations to great power status and rejected strategic concepts based on *Realpolitik* and Vegetius' maxim "Let him who desires peace, prepare for war."<sup>5</sup> Contemporary German thinking is influenced more by notions of "common security," which Egon Bahr, a leading member of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), defined as an awareness that "the security of the potential enemy is my own, and vice versa. Both sides will survive together, or be destroyed together."<sup>6</sup> Or, as one Bonn foreign policy specialist expressed it, "We cannot sleep very well if our Eastern neighbor is afraid of us."

The philosophy of common security dominates the Left, but its influence extends across the political spectrum. There is a broad consensus among German elites that ultimate security cannot come from military preparedness; it must be based on arms control and other diplomatic approaches which recognize the East's legitimate security concerns. This prompted an American diplomat to remark that "these people have simply had power politics bred out of them,"<sup>7</sup> and a recently retired Bundeswehr (German-armed forces) officer exaggerated only slightly in stating, "I do not think there are any hawks in this country."

## FRANCE

Compared to the Federal Republic, France enjoys a preferable security situation in two major respects: the West German buffer shields French

territory from direct exposure to Warsaw Pact aggression, and France possesses its own nuclear deterrent force. France's policy of "deterrence by the weak of the strong" (*la dissuasion du faible au fort*) presumes that the Soviets will be deterred if the damage that France can credibly threaten to inflict on Soviet territory exceeds Soviet benefits from defeating France.<sup>8</sup> French military forces consist of strategic nuclear forces, tactical nuclear weapons, conventional forces, and the more recently created Force d'action rapide (FAR), which is a highly mobile intervention force of 47,000 soldiers intended for use in Europe or the Third World. Except for the FAR, all of these forces have deterrence rather than fighting a war as their principal or sole mission.

French military thought differentiates three strategic circles: the first circle (French national territory, often called the Hexagon), the second circle (Europe), and the third circle (the rest of the world).<sup>9</sup> Strategic nuclear policy pertains to the first circle, but since the mid-1970s when French President Giscard d'Estaing and General Méry introduced the concept of "enlarged sanctuary," the consensus has progressively embraced a more expansive definition of French interests to include some portion of the second circle.<sup>10</sup> At least rhetorically, the enlarged sanctuary is now endorsed by the three principal political groupings: Parti Socialiste (PS), or the Socialist Party; Rassemblement pour la République (RPR), or Rally for the Republic; and Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF), or Union for French Democracy.<sup>11</sup> However, specifications of French vital interests remain enigmatic and are left ultimately for the president to interpret in extremis. According to French specialists, nuclear weapons "would be employed for the defense of the 'vital interests' of the country and . . . it is for the president of the republic to define them when the moment comes."<sup>12</sup>

In addition, although West Germany's defense consensus unraveled in recent years, the Gaullist doctrine for autonomous defense of French territory with nuclear weapons is embraced with various nuances by all major French political parties.<sup>13</sup> The consensus runs so deeply that French defense policy is insulated from electoral shifts such as those from Giscard to Mitterrand in 1981 and to *cohabitation* (with the right controlling the parliament and the Socialists the presidency) between March 1986 and June 1988. It is notable that the Socialists abstained (rather than oppose) when the 1987 and 1988 defense budgets passed the National Assembly, and they supported the new five-year military plan (*loi de programme militaire* 1987-91) drafted by the Chirac government (albeit

with a substantial input from President Mitterrand) when it passed in April 1987.<sup>14</sup>

## UNITED KINGDOM

Britain's military has four principal missions: the independent nuclear deterrent; conventional defense of the United Kingdom; a continental commitment focused on the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) and the Royal Air Force (RAF) in Germany; and a naval role which emphasizes the Eastern Atlantic and Channel areas. For more than thirty years following World War II, a broad political consensus sustained these missions. They were considered essential to maintain Britain in its rightful position as the first power of the second tier, immediately below the superpowers.

Now, this unity has disintegrated. The nuclear consensus was always fragile, and it crumbled when Labour's left wing captured control of the party in the late 1970s and adopted a policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament for Britain and a non-nuclear defense strategy for NATO.<sup>15</sup> Since 1983, polls have routinely indicated that the public preferred the Conservative Party's defense policy by a margin varying between two-to-one and three-to-one, and this policy may have cost Labour 5 percent of the vote and several dozen seats in the 1987 general election.<sup>16</sup> An October 1987 poll found that overall Labour support had dwindled to only 34 percent of the electorate. Although this indicated that only hard-core Labour partisans remained, 40 percent of self-identified Labour sympathizers still broke with Labour on the defense issue and favored a British nuclear deterrent. Among the total electorate, 65 percent favored either a national nuclear deterrent within NATO (39 percent) or a European nuclear deterrent within NATO (26 percent).<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, Labour reconsidered its defense policy. A policy review group was formed which will report to the 1989 party conference, and there is an apparent retreat from unilateral nuclear disarmament while remaining committed to the eventual goal of non-nuclear defense. In 1987, Labour leader Neil Kinnock outlined a policy of trading Trident for Soviet nuclear reductions. He told the BBC:

I have made it clear many times that the Soviet Union was willing to dismantle a precisely similar weapon system to that of Polaris as a consequence of our doing so. It is conceivable that the same kind of arrangement could be undertaken against the background of strategic arms reductions in the case of Trident.<sup>18</sup>



And Kinnock was more specific in June 1988; he said, "We want to get rid of Trident. But the fact is that it does not have to be something for nothing. The fact is now it can be something for something."<sup>18</sup>

Despite this shift, Kinnock's position remains very ambiguous, and there is considerable residual support for unilateralism among Labour party activists. There is also substantial support for non-nuclear policies among members of the former Liberal party (now part of the Social and Liberal Democratic Party).

Britain allocates 4.9 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to defense spending, a level substantially greater than that of France (4.0 percent) or the Federal Republic (3.0 percent).<sup>19</sup> After adjusting for inflation, British defense expenditures rose 20 percent between 1978-79 and 1985-86, but now the tide has turned, and real defense spending will *decrease* by 2.5 percent in real terms between 1986-87 and 1988-89.<sup>20</sup> Some observers predict a shortfall of 20 percent (£5 billion) in the defense budget,<sup>21</sup> and many now argue that Britain's economy can no longer sustain all four missions. In particular, these budgetary pressures intensified clashes between advocates of Britain's postwar "continental" strategy, which emphasizes forward defense of the Central Front in Germany, and Britain's more traditional "maritime" orientation.

## THE TASK OF EUROPEAN DEFENSE

If deterrence failed, a Warsaw Pact attack on Europe would probably be limited to use of conventional arms. The Soviets would hope to prevail in a blitzkrieg war and to avoid nuclear escalation. Nonetheless, NATO must prepare for possible use of battlefield or longer range nuclear weapons, and Europe requires *both* conventional and nuclear forces to deter the spectrum of possible attacks. Although there is strong minority support for non-nuclear deterrence in both the Federal Republic and Britain (unlike France), a purely conventional deterrent is insufficient. Only the threat of nuclear reprisals can deter nuclear aggression. Furthermore, NATO countries remain unwilling, as in the past, to fund conventional forces sufficient to match those of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO). Especially in the face of conventional inferiority, European deterrence is strengthened if the Soviets must fear European first use of nuclear weapons if its conventional defense is failing. Many observers also argue that European deterrence requires a threat that Soviet aggression will jeopardize major Soviet assets. If the Soviets were confident that no