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ANNEX

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THE POLITICO-STRATEGIC BACKGROUND

1. This Annex considers possible politico-strategic developments looking to the 1990s and beyond which might affect the case for and against, and the character of, our strategic deterrent.

The States to be deterred

2. Our existing strategic nuclear force has the unique purpose of deterring the Soviet Union. We have considered whether we should allow for any future requirement to deter other NWS. In the case of existing NWS, we believe that there will be insufficient interaction between British and Chinese interests to make it necessary to consider in the context of this paper a major Chinese military threat to our interests; and that if our Commonwealth partners needed the support of a nuclear power against a future expansionist China, they would have to look to the United States rather than to us. It is possible that there will be a significant increase in the number of NWS, given the spread of nuclear technology and of sophisticated military equipment. But we think it unlikely that any of the States which might plausibly become NWS would be likely to judge it advantageous to pose a direct nuclear threat against the United Kingdom itself, or that we would become engaged in defence of our assets outside Europe in a dispute of such intensity that it might escalate to a nuclear level. It is possible to conceive of regional conflicts outside Europe (eg the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent) in which the opponents might threaten the use of nuclear weapons and in which Western interests could be sufficiently engaged to justify political intervention backed by a nuclear sanction. But we have long since relinquished the role of world policeman to the United States, and while we would be expected to give political backing to the United States in such a crisis, a British nuclear contribution would not be required.

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3. We believe that this general conclusion, that the Soviet Union is the only state which may pose a nuclear threat to the United Kingdom, would remain valid in the light of any progress towards a higher degree of unity within the European Community and an increasing interventionist role for the Community in world affairs.

Relations with the Soviet Union

4. There are two major factors which might influence the Soviet Union towards maintaining, and even possibly extending, a relationship with the West on the lines of the present phase of detente. First, the scale of the problems involved in effectively governing the Soviet Union itself and maintaining control in Eastern Europe are such that the primary Soviet interest in Europe may be to maintain stability. Secondly, the threat from China could encourage co-operation to safeguard the Soviet Union's Western flank. On the other hand, these factors have not in the past had a noticeable moderating effect on Soviet behaviour. And it is clear that the Soviet Union will have the economic basis for continued growth in military power and could have the confidence to attempt to exploit this power. In view of these conflicting possibilities, we believe that we should base our calculations on much the same adversary relationship as we have with the Soviet Union today.

Relations within NATO

5. We believe that the interdependence between the United States and Western Europe in economic and other terms is such that the close institutional links, including that in the North Atlantic Alliance, are very unlikely to be broken. On this assumption, a British strategic force would not need to make a more significant numerical contribution to the nuclear force levels of the Alliance than at present. But we do not believe that it can safely be assumed that the threat by the United States to use its nuclear weapons in defence of European interests

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will be credible to the Soviet Union in all circumstances when such support may be needed.

6. We see the principal risk to this assumption of continued transatlantic co-operation arising from possible developments within Western European States and within the European Community as an institution. For example, it is possible to postulate scenarios of major political change within European States (particularly Italy and possibly France) and, at the other extreme, of a dramatic movement towards European integration, which could prove incompatible with a defence arrangement on existing lines. While there may be increased defence collaboration and co-operation, we have assumed this will stop short of integration of defence forces under a single command; and it would, therefore, be appropriate to maintain any further deterrent under sole national control. But the possibility of major political change could have more far-reaching consequences if it appeared to threaten European and transatlantic solidarity. It could lead to strong pressures for new departures in West German policy, including the acquisition of an independent nuclear capability.

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