CONCLUSIONS
An alliance comes into being as a response to a perceived threat. Formation of alliance may take place to pre-empt the future shocks even in the absence of an immediate overpowering enemy with its clear-cut policy marked by imperialist ambitions. How real was the Soviet threat just after the World War II is a matter of speculation. Though it won the War (rather, victory came from combined efforts of the Allied forces) it was badly damaged and perhaps did not have the required strength to overrun Western Europe. However, the threat of smaller European powers falling prey to Communist subversive designs was real and Communist ideology heralding inevitability of socialism as a historical process and support for socialist revolution worldwide seemed to make the threat credible. Leadership provided by a man like Stain only worsened the situation and NATO came into being to stop further "communization" of Europe. Economic restoration received priority attention and American nuclear power was thought to be a deterrent against any possible Soviet aggression.

In 1955, when West Germany was integrated into NATO force structure, the Soviet Union formalized the prevailing arrangement it enjoyed in the Eastern part of Europe by establishing its own alliance. Fear of German revanchism backed by NATO (particularly the possibility of a forceful attempt to wrest East Germany from the Soviet hold) was the apparent reason and it was an attempt by the Soviet Union to balance a threatening bloc by forming a counter bloc. Practically, sooner or later, formation of an alliance is
sought to be balanced by formation of a counter-alliance when a multiplicity of states are involved. The fact that it took six years (almost) for the Soviet Union to form its own formal alliance is amazing; but in the meantime it tried hard to get the US out of Europe through diplomatic efforts (though in vain) and inclusion of West Germany in NATO perhaps made them realize the futility of their wishful thinking. However, in the absence of a strategic nuclear force at command, the Soviet Union preferred to keep West Europe hostage to a conventional threat to prevent American nuclear blackmail.

By 1955 both the alliances were essentially defensive seeking to strike a balance of military effectiveness within the prevailing framework. It is interesting to note that countries like Austria or Yugoslavia could maintain their sovereignty by remaining out of both the blocs in Europe. It is a pointer to the fact that much of the threat gradually became political and not merely military. Formation of the alliances, at one stroke, stabilized the trend of politics. Europe was balanced. Each alliance was aware of its respective area of operations.

The primary function of an alliance is to establish balance, which is inconstant and unstable, but still, a realistic goal. However, progress of science and technology presupposes that there will be new weapons-systems which will continue to destabilize balance established at a certain level. Invention of nuclear weapons qualitatively changed the nature of war. These weapons make war more risky, uncertain and very damaging. Nevertheless, balance
is sought to be achieved by increasing quantity and improving quality of nuclear weapons repeatedly at higher levels.

Almost the certainty of national extinction resulting from a massive nuclear exchange ensures that men would refrain from using nuclear weapons as a means of solving disputes. Massive nuclear exchange amounts to mutual suicide and no nation normally would take the grave risk by initiating a nuclear war. Though many argue that victory is possible in a nuclear war that is short, swift and limited, it is doubtful whether a nuclear war can in reality be limited. Every nation wants to avoid armageddon. All these assumptions are logical; what is illogical in this context is a threat of nuclear first use. But NATO thrived on such a threat. If the massive retaliation doctrine was a bluff, so was the threat of nuclear first-use, especially after the late 1960s when the Soviet Union acquired strategic nuclear strength. If the nuclear weapons are for actual use in war, a rough balance was established between the US and the Soviet Union (and therefore between NATO and the Warsaw Pact) and recognized by the SALT agreement and the consequent era of detente.

But this illogical policy was governed by a confusing rationale deriving from the intent of leaving something to chance, to a dangerous uncertainty that can never be guessed, apprehended or understood in advance. A baffling paradox kept peace in Europe for the last 40 years or so. And to make the nuclear-first-use theory credible, Western strategists and scholars thought out various war-fighting strategies and not to be outwitted in this
respect Soviet strategists responded in the same fashion. As nuclear war-fighting theories could not be tested, a number of people felt free to advocate unbelievable alternatives and sometimes fancy went beyond rational choice or options. This trend continued till the Reagan-Gorbachev summit at Geneva in 1985, when both the leaders agreed that a nuclear war can never be won and therefore should never be fought. In the context of such war-fighting scenarios, establishing balance at different levels (operational, tactical and strategic) among ICBMs, SLBMs and the strategic bombers - qualitatively and quantitatively - not ignoring the conventional aspects, became important.

The very nature of alliance politics, despite the change brought in by the advent of nuclear age, necessitated such efforts. The competition to acquire new technology in order to improve the capability of the weapons systems as well as the self-defence systems and thereby to increase the credibility of threat takes the form of a latent war between the antagonistic alliances. Thus even though a rough balance is achieved through acquiring the weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, this balance is repeatedly reestablished at higher levels which required massive economic spending. Any alliance which finds it difficult to keep pace with this race of relentless improvement in offensive/defensive weapons and forces at a certain point eventually capitulates. Its economy comes under heavy strains and it finds its military strength dwindling in the absence of required economic provisions. Then the alliance feels obliged to come out of
the race and initiates unilateral arms control measures to derive as much political gains it can from a crumbling state of affairs. In such a case the other alliance can be said to have won the latent war without being engaged in an actual full-fledged war. This is what happened in the case of NATO and Warsaw Pact. In the effort to keep up with NATO in the race for continuous upgradation of weapons and forces the Pact gradually felt serious economic pressure and by late-1980s Gorbachev began to initiate unilateral arms cuts and force withdrawals. Under the circumstances, the Pact could not progress further (or augment its strength) and consequently it was dissolved. NATO can be said to have won the war without firing a single shot at the adversary. In this context, the quest for balance, in effect, became a quest for superiority. Quest for balance is perhaps a misnomer. It is actually the quest for superiority that dictates the alliance relations under the veil of a quest for balance. In the process, at certain points of time balance may be established or destroyed.

From one angle, the whole process may seem quite futile and useless. Many would argue, once the minimum deterrent capability was achieved, there was no point in augmenting such capability further. Vested interests (from the military-industrial complex and armed services) persuade the governments to spend more and more on defence which is unnecessary and impractical. In the ultimate analysis based on ethics, morality and universal fraternity, perhaps they do have a valid point. Unfortunately, international politics has its own rules of the game in which, the hawks play a
predominant role who believe that only projection of superior strength can deter the aggressive designs of an adversary. Thus, superiority was sought to be achieved on every aspect one could think of. If accuracy of missiles mattered, so did the payload capability and even there was a view of 'imbalance of will' which meant being a liberal, democratic organization NATO was a defensive bloc, while being a cluster of dictatorial, regimented nations the Warsaw Pact was essentially an offensive bloc. We cannot permit us to stretch our imagination to such extremes but we agree that competition for augmentation of strength is an essential feature of alliance politics, it is inescapable, and despite its uselessness in terms of moral rationality, it is useful in keeping peace for years as it did during the last forty-five years. To refuse to acknowledge this awkward truth would amount to create a new category of nuclear birds (apart from the hawks and the doves) - the ostriches who bury their heads in sand at times of danger and feel they are safe.

We have found in this work that none of the alliances were free from internal tensions and this lack of cohesion had an adverse effect upon their peacetime preparedness for war. The Pact seemed to be slightly weaker alliance than NATO in terms of reliability of partners in actual hostilities. In respect of conventional weapons and forces, NATO fell short numerically but had a higher combat effectiveness achieved through quality-enhancement. In the 1980s the Pact could no longer claim unquestioned supremacy in a purely conventional conflict and it is
doubtful whether it had such capability even before that, if we consider its deliberate efforts to bloat figures. Nuclear weapons, differences in numbers and quality notwithstanding, all along provided ultimate insurance to fall back upon when necessary. And INF forces deployment, in the ultimate analysis, was a futile exercise as it was shortlived and did not achieve much militarily. Arms control was the least effective measure in striking a balance of military power between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Despite theoretical promises, arms control followed other political/military developments but could not unilaterally decide the course of events. NATO and the Warsaw Pact in their quest for superiority, created a stalemate along the way (we may call this a balance of military effectiveness) but when this stalemate was broken NATO came out as the clear-cut victor.

The crumbling economic structures of the Soviet Union that were increasingly becoming a threat to the Soviet existence and viability as a nation, perhaps assumed greater credibility than the military threat posed by NATO in the early 1980s. Consequently, the Soviet Union was compelled to withdraw from the arms race in order to divert its economic resources to more productive economic benefits conducive to industrial development. Thus, perestroika or restructuring became the motto of the new Soviet leadership - initiated by Andropov and brought to the fore by Gorbachev - in the mid-1980s. To initiate reforms at home, Gorbachev needed tranquility abroad. The problem for him was how to retreat without exposing the Soviet weaknesses. Arms control provided a way out. It
soon became a component of perestroika and Gorbachev came to be equated with a messiah devoted to world peace who believed that ensuring security was essentially a political task. Even after Gorbachev’s departure the Russian leadership in the 1990s willy-nilly had to trade arms control for increased economic relations (read assistance) with the West. No wonder, right from the INF Treaty to the START II Agreements, the same story of the Soviet Union (or its successor state Russia) accepting asymmetric cuts had been repeated.

The advent of nuclear weapons has brought in a basic change in alliance relations and perhaps the history of last forty-five years is unique in this respect only. Superiority of alliances shall no longer be decided by head-on collision or actual conflict but by perceived superiority (through balance-assessments) of a particular group of nations - economically and militarily. This balance-assessment will be difficult to achieve unless there is a perceptible gap in military/economic capabilities of the two alliances. And to avoid defeat by default or negligence, it can be safely advised that alliances should always strive to augment their strength in whichever way they can. Only such competition can ensure a certain amount of stability and balance in international politics which otherwise is in a perpetual state of flux. The division of the world into multiplicity of alliances, in this context, would not be such an inappropriate option.

In the post-World War II era, bipolarity created a well-structured form of international politics. In a multi-polar world,
however, alliances may be formed but to effect a balance of military strength of multiple alliances proliferation of strategic nuclear weapons and their delivery systems would be necessary. These multiple alliances would have to be economically strong too. Though it is difficult to predict the future alliance-regions but one can safely say that new alliances will be repeatedly formed and dissolved until further progress in communication and economic links undermines the validity of the nation state system and integrates the whole world into one single composite unit.
Postscript: The aftermath of the Quest

In 1989 major events of lasting significance began to crowd political notebooks indicating the dawn of a revolutionary decade in the offing. In February, the Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Afghanistan; in March, new arms control negotiations opened on reductions in conventional forces between NATO and the Warsaw Pact; in May, NATO summit meeting set forth a broad agenda of East-West cooperation and to top it all, in November, the symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall brought an end to the division of Europe. Reforms of political and economic systems in the Eastern bloc gathered momentum in 1990 which created upheavals, instability and chaos. NATO during these years became primarily a consultative body, coordinating the policies of its member-states to tackle the new situation.

NATO summit meeting in London in July 1990 heralded the end of cold war as it recognized that the Western and Eastern bloc nations were no longer adversaries and called for a new relationship based on cooperation. On 30 October 1990 the unification of the two German states became a reality and in November the CFE Treaty was signed along with a declaration and commitment to non-aggression. Soon after, the Warsaw Pact was dissolved. The support of the Soviet Union to the West during the Gulf Crisis which resulted from Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait demonstrated the change in US-Soviet relations. But the Soviet Union was itself in turmoil and in late 1991 it ceased to exist as a united entity, disintegrated only to be reorganized in the early 1992 as the Commonwealth of Independent
States (CIS). The Czech and Slovak Republics (which earlier comprised Czechoslovakia) effected a 'velvet divorce' to become independent entities and joined the NATO members along with Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the three Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) to form the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in December 1991. In 1992, former Soviet Republics were admitted as additional members. Setting up of the NACC was formally proposed in the declaration on Peace and Cooperation issued at the Rome NATO Summit in November 1991.

NATO's military machine, however, came to be used much later and that too in an erstwhile non-aligned country. Break-up of the Yugoslav Federation created serious ethnic conflicts among the Serbs and the Croats and half-hearted NATO air attacks sought to check the Serb onslaught much to the disliking of the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, there was no effective protest from Russia indicating its shrinking sphere of influence. Practically, under the state of destabilizing economic and political chaos, the fall of Soviet Union has perhaps reached its nadir, in spite of the desperate attempts of the leadership to halt the process.

In the late 1980s, when the myth of the Soviet might was not quite exposed, any unilateral cuts initiated by Gorbachev had earned him prestige and popularity, but Yeltsin's peace proposals indicated a further fall in Russia's strength and international prestige. The US and NATO, negotiating from the so-called 'position of strength', could repeatedly impose conditions suitable to their preferences. Arms control initiatives taken by the US President in
September 1991 and again in January 1992 calling for reciprocal cuts in tactical and strategic nuclear forces not only evoked extremely positive response from the Russian leadership but also received additional proposals. Though both the US (and NATO) and Russia possess still a substantial amount of nuclear warheads and delivery systems, elimination of nuclear warheads for ground-launched short-range weapon systems (SNFs) and of land-based multiple warhead ICBMs and reducing in general the strategic nuclear forces are certainly welcome steps. Still controversies reign. That the CFE Treaty was a capitulative move by the Soviet Union became apparent with Russia demanding a revision of the agreement in September 1994. Russian Defence Minister Pavel Gratshov reportedly said that the limits imposed did not correspond to the country’s security interests and the ceiling for armoured vehicles, tanks and artillery systems were negative and unacceptable.¹

In 1989 itself, the Soviet Union admitted that the arms race it got into was a mistake from the very beginning. One commentator observed

Our mistake was that we were inconsistent in adhering to our own military doctrine in its defensive, political essence. We fell victim to the schemes intended to provoke us into trying to match the other side’s military technological programmes. We tried to counter the challenges from the USA and NATO by symmetric military measures. Forgetting that alternative measures were available to meet NATO’s challenges, we naively relied on the mass scale of our military replies to the West.²

¹ "Russia for Revision of Treaty on Disarmament", Indian Express, September 7, 1994.

However, being a military alliance the Warsaw Pact did what was only logical to do in its formative years. The later realization is but a lesson which could not be properly apprehended in the initial stages.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union created a proliferation problem as apart from Russia three other states with nuclear weapons (Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Belarus) emerged. However, by the Lisbon Protocol of May 1992 these states committed themselves to joint implementation of the START proposals and the latter three in addition, finally agreed to be parties of the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states.\(^3\)

Willy Claes became the new secretary-general of NATO-eighth in line - in October 1994 and unlike his predecessors he said that cooperation with the countries of Eastern Europe and an expansion of NATO were historic obligations and he regarded their realisation as the main aims of his term as secretary-general.\(^4\) But it was under the guidance of the former secretary general of NATO Manfred Wöerner that in January 1994 the Partnership for Peace invitation was issued by the North Atlantic Council to "expand and intensify political and military cooperation throughout Europe, increase stability, diminish threats to peace and build strengthened relationships by promoting the spirit of practical cooperation and

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\(^4\) The Observer of Business and Politics, October 18, 1994, p.16.
commitment to democratic principles". The erstwhile Warsaw Pact members seemed only too eager to join NATO. Former Soviet republics too secured their membership in NATO. Interestingly, the Central Asian Republics also became partners of NATO, and after a few futile attempts to extract special concessions as conditions for becoming NATO partner, even Russia signed the partnership accord on June 22, 1994. However, on the very same day communists and ultranationalists failed only by nine votes to pass a resolution in the Russian Parliament invalidating Russia's imminent signature of NATO partnership accord. At any rate, inclusion of Russia would have 'one decisive adverse effect', as Ruehl observed, it would mean 'a loss of identity and cohesion for the alliance, since European Russia will not let itself be integrated.'

NATO's identity crisis began soon after the London summit in July 1990. With the evaporation of a credible military threat the very raison d'être of NATO was gone. But according to Lübkemeier, NATO stayed in business for reasons which included providing insurance against Eastern instability, promoting security cooperation, guaranteeing a US presence in Europe and containing

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6 'Russia signs landmark accord with NATO", The Indian Express, June 23, 1994, p.11.

the growing power of United Germany. The reasons are valid but they all add up to further uncertainty and incoherence for NATO which is increasingly becoming a political organization. Full-fledged membership for the new partners would, however, not be an immediate possibility as The Economist argues, "if NATO is to make genuine mutual defence promises under Article 5 of its founding treaty, as it must if the alliance is to mean anything, it will take time to bring even the most advanced of former Warsaw Pact countries to anywhere near NATO military standards". Incidentally, the first and historic joint military exercises of some 600 troops from six NATO and seven PFP countries took place in Poland in September 1994. Russians, however, did not take part in these exercises, codenamed Cooperative Bridge 94.

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9 "Partners for What?" The Economist, September 24, 1994, p.47.