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A RAND NOTE

Laying the Foundations:  
The Evolution of NATO in the 1950s

Richard L. Kugler

June 1990

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## **A RAND NOTE**

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**Laying the Foundations:  
The Evolution of NATO in the 1950s**

**Richard L. Kugler**

**June 1990**

**Supported by  
The Ford Foundation**

**RAND**

## PREFACE

This Note, which addresses NATO's evolution in the 1950s, is part of a larger project on NATO's history that is examining NATO's performance in shaping a sound security policy and defense effort throughout the Cold War. The project is supported by The Ford Foundation and by The RAND Corporation with its own funds. Its goal is to determine whether, and to what degree, NATO's behavior in this area drove the Cold War toward a successful conclusion: the unravelling of the Warsaw Pact in the face of a still-cohesive Western alliance. From this appraisal, lessons can be drawn regarding NATO's security policies in the upcoming post-Cold War era.

This Note examines how NATO's members attempted during the 1950s to surmount internal cleavages and external pressures to fashion coherent policies aimed at preserving alliance unity while keeping the Soviets at bay. Particular attention is paid to the role that NATO's military strategy and forces, especially conventional forces, played in the implementation of overall alliance grand strategy and security policy.

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## SUMMARY

The stunning events of 1989 evidently have brought an end to the Cold War as we have known it. What is striking about the Cold War's end is that it is leaving a rapidly crumbling Soviet bloc facing a still united, prosperous, and secure NATO alliance. A central issue for historical scholarship is this: Was this outcome--not only the Warsaw Pact's collapse but also NATO's residual cohesion--the result of inevitable forces of European politics? Or was it a consciously engineered product of the West's own visions and policies, one that could have turned out differently had the West behaved differently? Where does the balance between these two explanations lie? Was the West a passive recipient of victory or an active participant in it? Where did it perform well, and where poorly? And what do the answers suggest about future Western policy in Europe?

With the aim of answering these questions, this Note is part of a larger research project that is examining NATO's performance in shaping an effective security policy and defense effort throughout the Cold War. This Note examines NATO's evolution in the 1950s. Subsequent Notes will analyze the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The guiding hypothesis for this and later Notes is that the West's success in the Cold War, in fact, was not an accident. The West succeeded not only because it forged an alliance to contest the Soviet Union for control of Europe's destiny, but also because it made NATO work. In essence, NATO's members surmounted the problems facing them sufficiently to forge and then execute a coherent grand strategy, security policy, military strategy, and force posture.

This does not imply that the alliance performed perfectly or that success was achieved overnight. The alliance slowly but surely mastered the difficult act of coalition planning, and as a result, a relatively stable balance of power was maintained in Central Europe. This balance brought security to the western side in ways that enabled it to maintain its unity and to prosper economically. Meanwhile, the Soviet bloc was

denied access to Western resources and was exposed as being politically illegitimate and economically ineffective, thereby contributing to its demise.

In developing this hypothesis, this Note and the entire project are paying close attention to the all-important details of the evolving military balance in Central Europe from the late 1940s to the present day. In particular, they are examining how NATO's conventional forces evolved in relation to their strategy and the Soviet Warsaw Pact threat. Common wisdom holds that irrespective of its successes in other areas, NATO consistently failed to build an adequate conventional deterrent. As a result, whatever degree of military security the West enjoyed in Central Europe was presumably due to NATO's nuclear strength. Perhaps so, but it is hard to understand how NATO was so successful in its basic mission if it, in fact, performed so poorly in the important area of conventional defense. In any event, the entire subject is so buried in complexity, a lack of data, and mythology that the truth is hard to discern. One of this project's goals is to clarify this subject for the entire Cold War period.

## MAIN CONCLUSIONS ABOUT NATO'S PERFORMANCE

NATO's performance in the 1950s broadly conforms to this project's central hypothesis, but in a preliminary way. Perhaps the best way of characterizing the 1950s is that NATO made important but incomplete studies toward becoming a full-fledged, successful alliance. Specifically, it effectively laid a solid foundation for itself. But it fell short of creating the superstructure of a sound defense strategy and strong forces, especially in conventional military strength. This important task was left to subsequent decades.

During the 1950s, NATO performed best when the United States exercised its influence as the coalition's strongest partner by decisively leading the alliance in sound directions, and when the West European nations surmounted their national predilections to follow in responsive ways. Due to these internal dynamics, NATO was most effective when it was confronted by an intense crisis or a heightened

sense of external threat that compelled its members to join together in order to leap upward onto an entirely new plateau of political integration and military capability. When these pressures slackened in periods of reduced tension, both the United States and its West European allies tended to succumb to secondary considerations--including domestic, political, and economic pressures--that led to an erosion in NATO's performance. As a result of this pattern, the alliance performed best when it was compelled in the early 1950s to establish a strategic vision for itself. NATO performed less impressively, in some ways poorly, from 1955 to 1960 when it was faced with the task of transforming its vision into military reality in the face of daunting internal constraints.

Another important factor affecting NATO's performance was its uneven ability to accommodate the interests of individual partners under the rubric of a common security policy and acceptable internal arrangements. NATO was especially successful at bringing the United States into acceptance of an enduring European commitment in the early 1950s and then orchestrating West Germany's entrance into the alliance in the mid-1950s. The political changes associated with these steps, however, proved difficult for France to accept. NATO's inability to find a formula for upgrading French interests in the face of NATO's internally changing distribution of power led France to begin distancing itself from the alliance, especially after de Gaulle took power in 1958. As the 1950s unfolded, NATO increasingly came to be dominated by a U.S.-British axis and a U.S.-West German axis, with France steadily withdrawing to the sidelines. As a result, NATO was able to continue growing in terms of overall political unity and military strength, but not to the degree that would have been possible had France remained a satisfied partner.

For both good and ill, NATO's external behavior in the 1950s reflected these internal dynamics. On balance, the decade was a highly successful one for NATO. Acting together under U.S. leadership, NATO's partners laid a strong foundation by agreeing upon the North Atlantic Treaty, an integrated military organization, Germany's rearmament, an

enduring transatlantic bargain, and a strong nuclear force posture that provided extended deterrence. These developments helped establish the Cold War's basic security architecture on terms that ultimately worked in the West's favor. On the negative side, however, NATO ended the decade with a questionable military strategy that relied too heavily on nuclear weapons, a weak conventional defense posture, and a reputation for being politically incapable of following through on its policy commitments by executing necessary programs. Unfortunately, the solution to these problems required NATO to travel a path that seemed likely to drive one of its original members, France, further from the fold. This situation was to confront the United States and its allies with a number of problems in the 1960s.

#### DETAILS OF NATO'S FIRST DECADE

The details of how NATO's first decade unfolded are instructive. Demobilization after World War II had left the Western allies, in the face of increasingly tense relations with the Soviet Union, lacking any semblance of military strength in Central Europe. Driven by the realization that the policies of containment and economic recovery could not be achieved in absence of a military alliance to protect Western Europe, the United States and its allies signed the North Atlantic Treaty in early 1949. They promptly set about to establish the new alliance as a counterweight to Soviet power in Europe. Due to economic and political constraints, however, this effort was only partially successful. Although NATO's military staffs developed an appropriate set of operational plans and force goals, the alliance's member nations did not initially commit the resources needed to field the required programs. By early 1950, NATO consequently found itself still militarily weak, lacking a formal military structure, and saddled with a strategic concept that primarily entrusted continental defense to West European nations (not yet including West Germany) that were not up to the task. For its part, the United States, overly dependent on a still-small atomic arsenal, itself still had to realize that greater military strength in Europe was needed to protect its security.



All this was to change later that year, especially after the Korean War broke out. Shortly thereafter, the alliance established an integrated military organization, including a supreme military command and an agreed-upon military strategy (MC 14/1) that called for substantial conventional and nuclear defenses. The United States decided to significantly bolster its military presence in Europe, many West European allies followed suit, and NATO set about to create the military infrastructure to accommodate a large posture in Central Europe. Following this, the alliance then agreed on an ambitious set of force goals (the Lisbon goals of 1952) to guide its ongoing buildup.

A stressful, two-year debate on rearmament of West Germany followed, in which the French parliament rejected the agreement to establish a European Defense Community. The affair ended happily, however, with an accord on a substitute plan, the landmark Paris Agreement of October 1954. This Agreement provided for West Germany's sovereignty, its entrance into NATO and rearmament, including creation of the sizable German army needed to make forward defense feasible. The Paris Agreement also sealed the still-existing transatlantic bargain that enabled the United States, West Germany, Britain, France, and other nations to join their forces together in an enduring enterprise to defend Central Europe. As 1954 came to a close, NATO thus found itself pointed in the direction of a strong conventional posture that could hold its own against a major Soviet invasion.

As large numbers of nuclear weapons and delivery systems began to become available over the following years, however, the alliance dramatically switched gears. Motivated by the Eisenhower administration's endorsement of Massive Retaliation and by the belief that nuclear weapons could provide deterrence economically, the alliance in 1957 adopted a new nuclear-oriented strategy (MC 14/2). This strategy entrusted deterrence primarily to the threat of nuclear retaliation and called for early resort to nuclear escalation in the event war occurred. The nuclear buildup that ensued after 1957 successfully established two legs of NATO's military triad: strategic and theater nuclear forces. But accompanying it came a slackening in NATO's conventional defense efforts.

MC 14/2 itself downgraded both the role of conventional defenses and previous planning goals for these forces. Additionally, several NATO nations took advantage of the opportunity to scale back their costly conventional programs below MC 14/2's goals. By 1959, German rearmament, originally intended to augment an already strong NATO posture, had progressed only far enough to replace these losses. As the decade came to an end, the alliance consequently found itself in a precarious situation. It was saddled with a nuclear strategy that, while enjoying internal consensus in some quarters, placed too much faith in the deterrent powers of nuclear weapons and failed to recognize the need for other options, especially in limited war. Meanwhile, NATO's conventional posture was still too small and poorly configured to meet the growing requirements for these forces. This ambiguous legacy left the United States and its allies in the difficult position of having to confront stressful choices regarding NATO's strategy and force posture in the 1960s.

Despite this setback, NATO ended the 1950s in far better shape than it had entered this decade, as Table S.1 suggests. This table displays only immediately available U.S. and allied forces deployed in Central Europe and does not include outside reinforcements that primarily would have come from the continental United States. In 1948, some two Army divisions and 450 aircraft would have been available 45 days after mobilization (M+45). From 1953 onward, U.S. reinforcements would have included 3 to 6 divisions and 550 to 1150 aircraft. In addition, NATO's forces improved qualitatively in the 1950s as better tanks, artillery tubes, aircraft, and other weapons were introduced into the inventory. When all these factors are taken into account, NATO's conventional defense strength grew roughly four-fold in the 1950s.

This increase was not large enough to offset the threat posed by Warsaw Pact forces, which themselves grew in size and capability during the 1950s. Nor was it large enough to meet the requirements posited by NATO's military commanders for countering this threat: 30 divisions for a nuclear strategy and 50 to 60 divisions for a stalwart conventional defense. But it was enough to broaden considerably NATO's conventional

Table S.1

TRENDS IN NATO'S CONVENTIONAL DEFENSES  
IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Force	1948	1953	1956	1959
Manpower (000's)	350	600	602	644
Divisions	6	16	17	19
Brigades	27	47	49	52
Division-equivalents	9.0	15.6	16.3	17.3
Tanks	600	1650	1850	2300
Armored vehicles	1000	2000	2500	4000
Antitank weapons	500	1100	1400	1500
Artillery	500	1150	1500	1800
Aircraft	600	1300	1600	1800

defense options. In particular, NATO's forces in 1959 were able to cover a much larger portion of the Center Region terrain than in 1949, which was a key consideration in establishing a conventional defense. The deployment of four West German divisions and the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) gave NATO forces for protecting the North German Plain, while the U.S. presence of five divisions provided defense of the key Frankfurt basin to the south.

Had a purely conventional war been fought in 1949, Soviet forces almost certainly would have quickly swept to victory with minimum losses, crossed the Rhine, and reached the English Channel within a few days. In 1959, the task confronting them was a more difficult and problematic one. NATO still did not have sufficient forces to erect a frontal defense along the inter-German border. But it would have been capable of conducting a mobile defense, thereby delaying the Warsaw Pact advance and extracting a far higher toll. Although the Soviets would probably still have been able to breach the Rhine, their capacity to do so was now less certain than in 1949. Had U.S. reinforcements arrived in time, it is possible that NATO could have established a Rhine defense, thereby protecting France and the Lowlands, and providing NATO a foothold from which to build up and later counterattack. Thus, by 1959 NATO's forces had begun to become a factor in the deterrent

equation. Equally important, they were now large enough to place NATO within striking range of a forward defense of West Germany. The impending deployment of an additional eight West German divisions promised to bring NATO closer still. This important development was to set the stage for the campaign that the United States launched in the 1960s to revise NATO's military strategy by upgrading the importance of conventional defenses.

Above all, the West emerged from the 1950s with its security intact and with NATO now established as a solid, if sometimes troubled, alliance. By carrying a good thing too far, the alliance erred in adopting MC 14/2 to the point where it temporarily lost sight of its enduring need for a strong conventional posture and multiple defense options. But at least it had learned a lesson from the experience. Also on the bright side, the alliance successfully strengthened NATO's organizational structure, incorporated West Germany, and otherwise behaved in a manner that enabled the transatlantic bargain to deepen and take hold. In 1949, NATO had been a fledgling and fragile alliance. In 1959, it was firmly established and capable of surviving stressful debates over strategy and policy.

Overall, the 1950s were a political success for NATO. During this decade, the West successfully launched containment and deterrence. Equally important, it also made major progress on building a community of prosperous democratic nations bound together by similar interests, common values, and growing economic ties. Due to these achievements, the alliance successfully pursued the far-sighted grand strategy that it had embarked upon in the late 1940s. Although the West European allies played an important role, the United States, as NATO's strongest partner, deserves much of the credit for this success. Its performance by no means was perfect. It was primarily responsible for NATO's nuclear interlude. Also, it occasionally behaved in an inconsistent, insensitive fashion that strained relations with West Germany, France, and even its close ally, Britain. But on whole, it showed vision, purpose, and constancy. A primary lesson of the 1950s is that the North Atlantic alliance depends heavily on wise American leadership. When the

United States stumbled, the alliance faltered. But when the United States led well, the alliance grew stronger and Europe became more stable.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The stunning events of 1989, led by Gorbachev's reforms in the USSR and by the wave of revolutions that toppled communist rule in Eastern Europe, evidently have brought an end to the Cold War as we have known it. Precisely where the Soviet bloc's internal collapse will lead remains to be seen. Possibly Europe will settle into an era of harmony, democracy, and prosperity. Or possibly the old order will be replaced by a new European security system that has fault lines of its own, perhaps reflecting traditional patterns of an earlier era. But one thing does seem certain. Not only has the Cold War come to an unexpectedly sudden end, but the West apparently has "won" it to a degree that did not seem possible only a few years ago.

Now that the end is in sight, it is time to begin writing the history of the "Cold War"--defined here as the East-West confrontation at the inter-German border from 1947 to 1989--that explains the West's dramatic success. Without question, a historical appraisal is desirable for its own sake. But it is also necessary for another, more practical purpose. If the West is to chart an intelligent course for the future that helps guide Europe's evolution in safe directions, it will need to deal with, and profit from, its own performance over the past 40 years. The lessons of the past, of course, cannot be simplistically grafted onto the future, especially if the new order turns out to be considerably different from the old. But neither can they be forgotten. As the old saying goes, he who ignores the past is condemned, for good or ill, to repeat it.

What is striking about the Cold War's end is that it is leaving a rapidly crumbling Warsaw Pact facing a still-united, prosperous, and secure NATO alliance. This outcome by no means was obvious when the Cold War began, nor was it forecasted by many observers along the way. Although war was always a possibility in Europe, throughout the Cold War the two sides carried out their competition primarily in political terms, albeit in ways that were influenced heavily by their relative



military power. As their competition unfolded, the outcome seemed likely to be determined by whether one side would collapse politically from within, thereby allowing the other side to pick up the pieces. While it was widely recognized that the Soviet bloc suffered from serious internal contradictions and weaknesses that left it vulnerable, many observers felt that the Western alliance would be the first to unravel due to the disruptive influence of external pressures on its internal cleavages. Yet precisely the opposite has happened.

Both aspects of the Cold War's end game--not only the Warsaw Pact's collapse but also NATO's residual cohesion--demand explanation. A central issue for historical scholarship is this: Was this outcome the result of inevitable forces of European politics? Or was it a consciously engineered product of the West's own visions and policies, one that could have turned out differently had the West behaved differently? Where does the balance between these two explanations lie? Was the West a passive recipient of victory or an active participant in it? Where did it perform well and where did it behave poorly? And what do the answers suggest about future Western policy in Europe?

With the aim of answering these questions, this Note is part of a larger research effort that is examining NATO's performance in shaping an effective security policy and defense effort throughout the Cold War. This effort's underlying premise is that a historical inquiry can hope to account convincingly for NATO's continuing unity and strength, while possibly shedding some insight on how NATO's performance contributed to the Warsaw Pact's undoing. Employing this premise, this Note examines NATO's performance in the 1950s, the alliance's formative decade. Subsequent Notes will examine the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

The guiding hypothesis for this and later Notes is that the West's success in the Cold War, in fact, was no accident. The West succeeded not only because it forged the NATO alliance to contest the Soviet Union for control of Europe's destiny, but also because it made NATO work. In essence, NATO's members overcame the internal barriers and external pressures facing them. As a result, they were able to cooperate together in ways that enabled them to forge--and then execute through

sustained programmatic action--a coherent grand strategy, security policy, military strategy, and force posture. This hypothesis does not imply that NATO performed perfectly in these areas or that success was achieved overnight. The alliance slowly but surely mastered the difficult art of coalition planning, and thereby steadily improved as the years passed by. As a result of NATO's steadily growing strength, a relatively stable balance of power was maintained in Central Europe. This balance brought security to the Western side in ways that enabled it to maintain its unity and to prosper economically. Meanwhile, the Soviet bloc was denied access to Western resources and was exposed as being politically illegitimate and economically ineffective, thereby contributing to its demise.

In developing this hypothesis, this study is paying close attention to the all-important details of the evolving military balance in Central Europe from the late 1940s to the present day. In particular, it is examining how NATO's conventional forces evolved in relation to their strategy and the Soviet/Warsaw Pact threat. Common wisdom holds that irrespective of its successes in other areas, NATO consistently failed to build a conventional deterrent. As a result, whatever degree of military security the West enjoyed in Central Europe was presumably due to NATO's nuclear strength. Perhaps so, but it is hard to understand how NATO could have been so successful in its basic mission if, in fact, it performed so poorly in the important area of conventional defense. In any event, the entire subject is so buried in complexity, a lack of data, and mythology that the truth is hard to discern. One of this study's main goals is to clarify this subject for the entire Cold War period.

This Note's central conclusion is that NATO's performance in the 1950s conformed neither to a model of pure goal-oriented rational behavior nor to a model of internal stalemate and strategic aimlessness. That is to say, while NATO was not fully successful, it was far from a complete failure. Perhaps the best way of characterizing NATO's performance in the 1950s is that the alliance made important but incomplete strides toward learning coalition planning. In essence, it

successfully laid the foundations of an effective alliance, but fell short of creating the superstructure of a sound defense strategy and strong forces, especially in conventional military strength.

During this decade, NATO performed best when the United States exercised its influence as the coalition's strongest partner by decisively leading the alliance in sound directions, and when the West European nations surmounted their national predilections to follow in responsive ways. Due to these internal dynamics, NATO was most effective when it was confronted by an intense crisis or a heightened sense of external threat that compelled its members to join together in order to leap upward onto an entirely new plateau of political integration and military capability. When these pressures slackened in periods of reduced tension, both the United States and its West European allies tended to succumb to secondary considerations--including domestic political and economic pressures--that led to an erosion in NATO's performance. As a result of this pattern, the alliance performed best when it was compelled in the early 1950s to establish a strategic vision for itself. NATO performed less impressively, in some ways poorly, from 1955 to 1960 when it was faced with the task of transforming its vision into military reality in the face of daunting internal constraints.

Another important factor affecting NATO's performance was its uneven ability to accommodate the interests of individual partners under the rubric of a common security policy and acceptable internal arrangements. NATO was especially successful at bringing the United States into acceptance of an enduring European commitment in the early 1950s and then orchestrating West Germany's entrance into the alliance in the mid-1950s. The political changes associated with these steps, however, proved difficult for France to accept. NATO's inability to find a formula for upgrading French interests in the face of NATO's internally changing distribution of power led France to begin distancing itself from the alliance, especially after de Gaulle took power in 1958. As the 1950s unfolded, NATO came to be increasingly dominated by a U.S.-British axis and a U.S.-West German axis, with France steadily retreating to the sidelines. As a result, NATO was able to continue

growing in terms of overall political unity and military strength, but not to the degree that would have been possible had France remained a satisfied partner.

For both good and ill, NATO's external behavior in the 1950s reflected these internal dynamics. On balance, the decade was a highly successful one for NATO. Acting together under U.S. leadership, NATO's partners laid the foundations for a strong alliance by forging agreement on a collective security treaty, an integrated military organization, German rearmament, an enduring transatlantic bargain, and a strong nuclear force posture that provided extended deterrence. These developments helped establish the Cold War's basic security architecture on terms that ultimately worked in the West's favor. On the negative side, however, NATO ended the decade with a questionable military strategy that relied too heavily on nuclear weapons, a weak conventional defense posture, and a reputation for being politically incapable of following through on its policy commitments by executing necessary programs. Unfortunately, the solution to these problems required NATO to travel a path that seemed likely to drive one of its original members, France, further from the fold. This dubious legacy was to confront the United States and its allies with a number of troublesome problems in the 1960s. These events of the 1950s and the lessons that can be drawn from them are examined in the following sections.

## II. THE LEGACY OF WORLD WAR II

NATO was created in response to the Cold War and the realization that a military alliance was needed to contain Soviet expansion. But more fundamentally, NATO's origins lie in World War II and the transatlantic partnership that was forged then. During this bitter conflict, the United States and Britain gained major experience at practicing coalition warfare, overcoming its obstacles, and harnessing its resources. As a result, these nations were predisposed to turning to an alliance when relations with the Soviet Union broke down in the war's aftermath. Had they not been able to draw on their wartime experience, it is unlikely that an alliance like NATO, especially its integrated military structure, would have been possible.

Waging a coalition war against Germany was not easy. The United States and Britain shared many things in common, but they were still sovereign nations whose interests were not always identical. They also found themselves facing dissimilar geostrategic situations that tended to foster quite different psychological predispositions toward prosecuting the war effort. Britain, still exhausted from World War I, while confronting a threat to its physical survival and a dispiriting decline in its overseas imperial empire, was prone to a war policy of calculation and caution. By contrast, the United States, historically an isolationist nation and only recently a convert to internationalism, was acting less out of immediate fear for its survival than a newly awakened sense that it had vital overseas interests to protect. Enjoying vast resources that were just being harnessed and only beginning to assume its role as a global superpower, it found itself predisposed to a policy of exuberant, often naive, ambitiousness. As a result, the British and the Americans often found themselves pursuing different priorities that could not easily be harmonized. Even when they were able to reach accommodations on strategic policy, their different military doctrines, practices, and weapon systems often did not blend well together. This further compounded the problems they faced in trying to conduct a joint campaign to defeat Germany.

A good example of the purely military problems they encountered is the campaign they waged from 1942 to 1943 to protect the North Atlantic sea-lanes. The task of keeping beleaguered Britain adequately supplied while building up the military forces needed to retake Western Europe required the shipping of millions of tons of cargo every month. The Germans, who had become experts on undersea warfare in World War I, launched an intense submarine campaign to interdict this effort. Faced with this threat, the British Royal Navy, which had learned harsh lessons in dealing with the German submarine threat in the Great War, was committed to forming cargo ships into large convoys and providing them a strong escort of surface combatants and air cover. The American Navy entered the war with a different doctrine. Preferring to hunt German submarines through search operations over large areas, it initially was lukewarm to escort operations and saw little value in the convoy strategy. This important difference nearly sowed the seeds of disaster in the troubled months of 1942 and 1943.<sup>1</sup>

The Americans and the British tried to resolve their differences by dividing the Atlantic Ocean into two separate zones. The U.S. Navy, unenthusiastic about a heavy commitment to the Atlantic campaign that would divert resources from the Pacific, assumed the task of protecting the waters along the U.S. coastline. The British and the Canadians took responsibility for protecting farther out, on the North Atlantic itself. This division of labor soon proved to be militarily untenable. The Germans concentrated their submarines along the U.S. coast and were able to inflict massive losses on allied shipping, which the U.S. Navy initially proved incapable of protecting. Meanwhile, the British and Canadians, with only limited assets, were hard pressed to defend the lengthy Atlantic sea-lanes against local German submarine forces that, while not numerically large, were still capable of inflicting major damage against inadequately protected convoys. Allied losses there ran high as well. The problem was brought under control only after the

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<sup>1</sup>For an account of the allied antisubmarine warfare campaign, see Dan van der Vat, *The Atlantic Campaign*, "World War II's Great Struggle at Sea," New York: Harper and Row, 1988.

United States committed more naval assets to the sea-lane defense mission, the U.S. Navy adopted the convoy escort strategy, antisubmarine warfare technology improved, and the three nations formed a combined command capable of joint operations. Even then, the allied victory was a narrow one. As late as mid-1943, allied shipping losses still were exceeding the production capacity to replace them and Britain was running dangerously short of supplies. The situation turned around only in 1944 when the massive U.S. shipbuilding program gathered full steam.<sup>2</sup>

Similar problems arose in their initial efforts to coordinate air and land operations. Nonetheless, as the war progressed the Western allies slowly but steadily became skilled at combined planning. From 1942 to 1943 they mounted a joint strategic bombing campaign against Germany and combined offensives in North Africa and Italy. The high watermark was reached over the following two years, during which they conducted their huge coalition offensive on the European continent that led to victory. This effort began with the buildup for the Normandy invasion, which required logistics management on a massive scale. This was followed in June 1944 by the Normandy invasion itself. The largest amphibious operation ever undertaken, the invasion required joint planning of the most complicated sort. Then came the breakout at St. Lo, the buildup of nearly 100 divisions on the continent, and the rapid advance by fall 1944 to the German "West Wall." This offensive campaign required the making of many difficult strategy choices and complicated battlefield maneuvers, all demanding close coordination among the allied powers. The German counterattack at the Battle of the Bulge that winter provided the allies their first taste of a theater-wide defensive campaign, an experience that was to prove valuable years later in guiding NATO's efforts to plan for the defense of Western Europe against a Soviet attack. Finally, spring 1945 saw the allied advance across the Rhine, the victorious battles in the Ruhr, and ultimate victory.

As many history books have pointed out, Anglo-American cooperation was not achieved easily. Indeed, the two nations struggled repeatedly

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Chap. 9.

over strategy and tactics. During 1943-1944, they engaged in a lengthy argument over whether the alliance strategy should emphasize a continued advance through the Mediterranean (as the British preferred) or, as the Americans preferred, an invasion of France across the English Channel. After the Normandy invasion, British and American commanders engaged in a continuing tug of war over how the offensive campaign was to be conducted and how resources were to be allocated to their respective forces. As the allied armies advanced across France, British Field Marshal Montgomery constantly argued for a strategy that placed a greater weight of effort on the British and Canadian forces on the allied northern flank. Opposing him were American generals Bradley, Patton, and other commanders who favored emphasis on the U.S. advance on the southern flank. General Eisenhower, caught in the middle, resolved this argument by patiently sticking to a broad front strategy that placed relatively co-equal emphasis on both factions. This approach, in turn, satisfied almost no one. Although Eisenhower's strategy was militarily prudent and politically adroit, it was criticized by both British and American generals as being insufficiently aggressive. This stressful argument finally ceased only when the guns fell silent in May 1945.<sup>3</sup>

When World War II is judged from a historical perspective, nonetheless, what stands out is not the incessant political struggles and temporary military setbacks that bedeviled the alliance. Far outweighing the negative features was the enormous success that the United States, Britain, and others achieved in conducting combined warfare on a grand scale. This enterprise was an entirely new, revolutionary feature of international politics that went well beyond World War I, a war in which the allies fought along side each other but

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<sup>3</sup>For a thorough analysis of the U.S.-British debates on OVERLORD (the Normandy invasion) and the subsequent allied advance to the West Wall, see David Eisenhower's excellent book, *Eisenhower: At War 1943-1945*, New York: Harper and Row, 1985. An excellent analysis of the Battle of the Bulge is presented in Charles B. MacDonald's *A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of the Battle of the Bulge*, New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985.



not in so integrated a fashion. This experience was enormously influential in shaping efforts by the North Atlantic nations to erect a strong military alliance to contend with Stalin's designs in the postwar era. It provided them the technical knowledge and expertise that helped them react with despatch once they realized that they needed to strengthen their defenses. More important, it gave them the necessary political will and confidence in each other. As a result of World War II, they knew that despite the many barriers to combined operations, a coalition effort was feasible and that the sacrifices it entailed were well worth the benefits it offered.

### III. CONTAINMENT AND RECOVERY

Coalition planning did not get underway until well after the Cold War had begun. In the atmosphere of relief and fatigue that accompanied their final victory in 1945, the Western allies initially were slow to react to the fact that victory over Germany had left them confronting an entirely new adversary in Central Europe. Although they began encountering problems with Stalin shortly after the war ended in May 1945, for some time they held out hope that a continuation of their wartime cooperation with the Soviets was still possible. This view was especially prominent in the United States. There the lingering spirit of wartime goodwill predominated over the skepticism that such Soviet experts as George Kennan, Charles Bohlen, and Averell Harriman felt for future East-West relations.<sup>1</sup> The British, with their long history of diplomatic involvement in Europe's troubled affairs, were more doubtful. But since the United States had emerged from the war as the West's leading power, its views were decisive in shaping the free world's stance on postwar relations with the Soviet Union.

At the time, Stalin's agenda in Europe was still unclear. He had been a reliable ally in World War II and his postwar diplomacy, while clearly tough-minded, suggested a flexible willingness to respond to Western interests and pressure. Only later would it become apparent that his appetites tended to expand in relation to the opportunities facing him. As a result, Western governments were genuinely uncertain about whether an accord might be reached with him. Additionally, the Western allies themselves still had not formulated a firm stance on Germany's future, an issue that was to become central in the West's dealings with Stalin. The West was in widespread agreement that Germany should be denied the military power that had permitted Hitler's

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas's book, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986, provides a detailed assessment of how the views of Kennan, Bohlen, and Harriman evolved in 1944 and 1945.

aggressive policies and facilitated Berlin's ability to play the freewheeling role in Central Europe that had led to two world wars. But there was no parallel consensus on Germany's future government, its economic recovery, its exact role in Europe, and reunification. Within each nation, contending schools argued over future policy. While some favored an economically strong and united Germany allied with the West, others opted for a weakened, divided, and neutral nation. This ambivalence toward Germany, coupled with confusion about Stalin's intentions, led the Western allies to continue negotiating with the Soviets in a spirit of compromise and accommodation.

During the last half of 1945, concern began mounting as it became increasingly clear that Stalin was not going to live up to the agreements at Yalta and Potsdam. The West had originally hoped that Poland would be allowed to live under democratic rule and that the Soviets would merely exercise a benign "sphere of influence" in that nation. Germany, the West further presumed, would be reunited under terms acceptable to both sides. By 1946 Poland had fallen completely in the USSR's orbit and many were coming to fear that the Soviets intended to communize and militarily occupy East Germany as well. The sphere of influence that Stalin had in mind, it was becoming clear, thus extended well westward of any concepts originally envisioned by the West. Moreover, Western diplomats were beginning to fear that Stalin had expansionist designs on West Germany as well.

It was in this atmosphere that Western opinions began to harden to the point where a policy of firmness toward the USSR started taking shape. In early 1946, George Kennan, then serving at the U.S. embassy in Moscow, cabled his influential "Long Telegram" to Washington calling attention to the USSR's expansionist aims in Europe and the need for a Western policy of firm but patient resistance. Had his message arrived six months earlier it likely would not have had so large an impact; indeed, he had sent similar warnings earlier that made headway only among like-minded colleagues. But by this time a wider range of Washington officials had become disillusioned with Stalin and believed that active American efforts to oppose him in Europe were becoming

necessary. In Western Europe, a similar reappraisal was gathering force as the British, French, and other governments began discussing ways to oppose Soviet hegemony.<sup>2</sup>

Over the course of the next two years, a consensus emerged in the West in favor of the policy of containment, a concept that Kennan was among the first to articulate. The definition of containment was to change a great deal in future years as East-West relations fluctuated back and forth. But at the time it was adopted, it was a doctrine that, while influenced by anticommunist ideology, was grounded heavily in traditional geopolitical considerations. Although it rejected Stalin's imposition of communist regimes as an unacceptable tool of statecraft, it pragmatically recognized that the Soviets were unlikely to be dislodged from there anytime soon. Its primary goal was defensive: to prevent the Soviets from using their power base in Eastern Europe to extend their influence and control westward. It aspired to create a stable balance of power based on Western strength, unity, and resolve that would protect the West's vital interests by denying Stalin control over Western Europe as well as such other strategically important regions as Japan and the Middle East oil fields.<sup>3</sup>

Nor was containment entirely bleak about the future of East-West relations. It accepted conflict with Stalin's Soviet Union as a reality of postwar European security affairs, one that had to be managed carefully and could not be resolved anytime soon. But it held out hope

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<sup>2</sup>In spring 1946, Winston Churchill gave his "Iron Curtain" speech at Fulton, Missouri. U.S. and allied reactions were partly driven by a threatening speech Stalin gave in early 1946 and by his private remarks to Western diplomats that suggested that the Soviet Union intended to pursue a unilateral, expansionist course in Europe. Kennan's "Long Telegram" (Moscow Embassy Telegram #511) is reprinted in Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis's *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1979. Gaddis's *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, presents a historical analysis of how Western policy unfolded in the postwar period. See also Isaacson and Thomas, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>The containment policy is described and analyzed by Gaddis in *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

that once confronted with firm Western resistance, the Soviets would come to recognize that their hostile paranoia toward the West and their obsessive preoccupation with physical security were counterproductive. It further hoped that Soviet foreign policy would mature over time, and that the communist bloc would develop internal fissures that would prevent it from acting as a monolith. In this event, the containment policy calculated, a mutually acceptable East-West relationship eventually might be established, one that respected the legitimate interests of both sides.

Any prospects for optimism, however, lay well into the future. For the moment, containment's authors assumed, Stalin was pursuing an adversarial course. Whether Stalin's designs were driven by purely defensive goals stemming from traditional Russian aims, or offensive objectives growing out of communist ideology, or a combination of the two, was deemed beside the point. The core reality was that Soviet policy posed a direct, immediate threat to the safety and security of the West European nations as well as the vital interests of the United States. Given this, containment calculated, the West had no alternative but to set aside hopes for further cooperation and to focus primarily on how it could best resist Stalin's designs in Europe.

Containment postulated that the Western nations could best implement this policy by banding together and by presenting Stalin with a united front, one aimed at denying him the opportunity to pick off the West European nations one by one. Initially, it did not perceive the Soviet threat in purely, or even primarily, military terms. While it recognized that the Soviets had the military wherewithal to invade Western Europe, it presumed that the Soviet threat to Western Europe was largely a political one. It feared that Stalin might employ the Soviet Union's dominant position in Central Europe to manipulate, browbeat, and intimidate the West European nations into submission. It further worried that Stalin would take advantage of the economic chaos and political instability prevailing across Western Europe to orchestrate a series of communist takeovers by either coup d'etat or democratic elections (e.g., Greece, Italy, and France). To reduce this threat,

containment called for a policy aimed at prompt economic recovery in Western Europe and the creation of stable democratic regimes there.

Containment recognized that the West would succeed only if the United States abandoned its prewar isolationism and involved itself heavily in European security affairs. It also recognized that the West European nations themselves would have to set aside their previous squabbles by cooperating together to an unparalleled extent. For these reasons, it implicitly called for creation of a close and enduring transatlantic relationship and movement toward political integration in Western Europe. Containment thus turned out to be more than a purely negative policy. It was originally designed for the defensive purpose of keeping the Soviet Union at bay. But by levying a demanding set of requirements on the West, it laid the foundation for an enormously positive vision for the future. In important ways, it helped launch the West on the path of a grand strategy, one aimed not only at blocking the Soviet Union but also at building a strong and stable Western alliance.

The United States began implementing containment in March 1946, when it insisted that Stalin honor his commitment to withdraw Soviet forces from Iran, which had entered that country during the war. In August, the United States rebuffed a Soviet demand for a joint Turkish-Soviet defense system that would have given the Soviets military control over the Turkish Straits and the Dardanelles. Both efforts were successful. Soviet troops left Iran in May and Stalin quietly dropped his demands on Turkey, thereby leaving the Turks with sovereign control over the Straits. These two experiences suggested that while Stalin was intent on extending Soviet power into any area where a vacuum existed, he was sensitive to Western interests when the West stood up to defend them. From this, Washington drew the lesson that a policy of firmness would pay off.

The United States and its allies began applying the same philosophy in Central Europe. That year the Western allies took their first collective steps toward containment by deciding to halt payment of industrial reparations to the Soviet Union. The Soviets, who were in the process of dismantling many German industrial sites in their

occupation zone and shipping the equipment to the USSR, responded to the West's rebuff by formally denying the West access to the Soviet zone. This step left the two sides confronting each other across an increasingly tense border that, as a product of purely military agreements in the final days of the war, lacked any natural political legitimacy. Moreover, the western zone of Germany lay destitute; fear that the German population would starve was one important motivating factor behind the West's interest in rekindling the German economy. With political tensions mounting, the United States announced in September that American military forces would remain in Europe for the foreseeable future, rather than continue withdrawing as previously planned. Washington also offered to merge, for economic purposes, the U.S. occupation zone with the zones of other powers--an offer that the other Western powers accepted but the Soviets, as expected, turned aside. Together, these two actions signalled that the United States was rapidly approaching a permanent split with the Soviets and was beginning to move in the direction of creating a coalition of Western nations to oppose Stalin in Central Europe.

Spring 1947 was a particularly important turning point in launching the Cold War. Early in March, communist insurgency in Greece led to U.S. enunciation of the Truman Doctrine, which laid the policy basis for containment and offered U.S. aid to beleaguered nations along Europe's southern flank. In the wake of this important departure, U.S. Secretary of State Marshall, U.K. Foreign Minister Bevin, and French Foreign Minister Bidault journeyed to Moscow for critical four-power talks on Berlin, Germany, and Austria. Despite four weeks of intensive discussions, the Moscow Conference ended in failure to reconcile competing Soviet and allied positions. At the core of their differences were divergent views about Germany. Although the Western allies still were not in complete agreement on Germany's future (the French were especially unenthusiastic about recovery), they were moving steadily in the direction of a strong, democratic system on the Western side. The Soviets, it became clear at Moscow, wanted no part of any such design. Indeed, their clear distaste for any stable German government suggested

a desire to pave the way for the kind of chronic instability that could lead to a communist takeover.<sup>4</sup>

Growing alarm in Washington and Western Europe led in June 1947 to enunciation of the Marshall Plan (later officially named the European Recovery Program--ERP). The offer of major U.S. economic assistance was extended to the Eastern bloc, but the Soviets, unwilling to permit East European nations to develop close economic relations with the West, refused. This left the United States and its West European allies free to collaborate together. Progress on the Marshall Plan proceeded slowly at first. Negotiations with the allies bogged down over West European needs, and the U.S. Congress, still beset by isolationism, balked at the expense. But eventually the details were worked out with the allies, and Congress came along by approving an interim aid package in November 1947 and then the entire plan the following spring. Aid to Western Europe began flowing immediately thereafter. All told, the United States eventually provided some \$13 billion of economic assistance. By providing food, coal, and financial support for rebuilding Western Europe's industries and infrastructure, the Marshall Plan played an enormously important role in launching the allied nations on the road to economic health.<sup>5</sup>

The adoption of the Marshall Plan and the ERP meant that by early 1948 the West had completed the forging of a strategic policy in Europe, one composed of two intertwined parts: containment and recovery. Containment was publicly accorded the stature of being the West's principal goal, while recovery was initially advertised as a means to this end. But in reality recovery was also an important goal in itself. By rebuilding war-ravaged Western Europe, achieving economic prosperity, and fostering stable democratic regimes there, the United States aspired to a purpose that went well beyond the management of East-West relations. Its visionary goal was the creation of a Western community

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<sup>4</sup>The proceedings of the 1947 Moscow Conference are discussed at length in Forrest C. Pogue's *George C. Marshall: Statesman, 1945-1959*, New York: Viking Press, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, Chaps. 13-15.



of nations, one tied together by similar values, common interests, collective security, and robust trade through an open international economic system. Similarly, containment, in turn, became a means to this end as well as a goal in itself. By blocking further Soviet expansion, it was intended to provide Western Europe the security shield that was needed for recovery to take hold. Containment and recovery thus were interdependent: Together they formed the basis of a Western grand strategy in Europe, one that looked far into the future.

Along with containment and recovery came an activist policy toward West Germany that laid to rest earlier thoughts that the Western powers intended to keep that nation neutral and economically weak. In mid-1947, the Western powers began taking steps to unify West Germany and to integrate it into the emerging West European order. Despite Stalin's vigorous protests (the Soviet representative to the Four-Power Control Council governing Germany finally walked out in early 1948), this effort gathered force over the following year, ultimately resulting in creation of the Federal Republic. The West pursued this controversial course not only out of humanitarian instincts but also because containment required a rapid German industrial reconstruction that could help fuel economic recovery across Western Europe.<sup>6</sup> In many ways, this decision marked the final political break with Moscow. The idea that a modern industrial German state was about to rise phoenixlike from its own ashes clearly was anathema to the Soviets, who only recently had been victimized by Hitler's aggression and were unwilling to tolerate a resurgence of German power. Given these incompatible views on Germany, an East-West accommodation no longer was a practical alternative. The Cold War that ensued was not a product of misperceptions. There was no lack of diplomatic encounters to clarify things.

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<sup>6</sup>For an analysis of West Germany's role in Western recovery plans, see John A. Reed, Jr., *Germany and NATO*, Ft. Leslie J. McNair, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1987. Also, see Catherine McArdle Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1975; and James L. Richardson, *Germany and the Atlantic Alliance*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966.

By adopting the twin policies of containment and recovery, the West made an explicit strategic choice in which it set aside one concept of European order to pursue another. It abandoned hope that it could use diplomacy to reach a grand settlement with Stalin, one that presumably would have involved a neutral but possibly reunited status for Germany. It chose instead to build its own unity and strength, anchored on West German revival. The West was well aware that this policy would alienate the Soviets, intensify the Cold War, and at least temporarily help perpetuate the division of Europe into two hostile camps. But calculating that Stalin was not amenable to further diplomacy, the West concluded that this course was best.

Did the West act intelligently by proceeding along these lines? Containment and recovery, undeniably, were purchased at a price. In their wake came a Cold War that lasted fully four decades and only now is abating. At issue is whether this price could have been avoided. Could the West, by handling Stalin more adroitly, have had its cake and eaten it too?

In answering this question affirmatively, the revisionist school of the 1970s contended that the West became so obsessively preoccupied with its own security that it went too far toward throwing down the gauntlet of confrontation with the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup> Citing the fact that Stalin periodically continued to send out diplomatic feelers suggesting flexibility on Germany and other matters (e.g., his 1952 demarche endorsing German reunification), it argued that the West effectively foreclosed still-existing opportunities to deal with the Kremlin. Indeed, some members of this school asserted that the West itself was the principal cause of the Cold War. Presumably the entire affair could have been avoided had the West looked beyond its narrow horizons and made a stronger attempt to find common ground with the Soviets.

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<sup>7</sup>For an analysis of revisionist theories, see Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, and Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970.

To what degree are these allegations correct? While there is no way of knowing the answer, without question containment was pursued in an increasingly virulent way that suggested declining flexibility toward the Soviet Union. This especially was the case once NATO was formed and the Cold War took on military overtones. But to acknowledge that the West is partly to blame for the Cold War's tense atmosphere is not to conclude that a far better European security order was possible had the West gone further toward placating Stalin. The core issue is not whether containment and recovery were implemented flawlessly, but whether some other policy--involving more concessions to Stalin and less Western resolve--could have done a better job of both preserving stability and protecting the West's security. If such a policy existed, it was unknown to the architects of Western policy in the late 1940s and it has not been identified in the years since then.

While the conservative principles that drove Western policy are unglamorous, it is hard to refute their underlying assumption that in the face of uncertainty and risk, prudence should be the hallmark of statecraft. In similar situations throughout history, nations normally have been reluctant to risk their security on the thesis that steps to protect themselves might offend an already hostile, well-armed, and seemingly expansionist adversary. Nor have groups of nations typically neglected to nurture their common bonds in the face of open hostility from a rival bloc espousing entirely alien values. Those nations that departed from these norms often suffered catastrophic consequences. Judged by the standards and lessons of history, the West's stance thus was a logical response to the situation at hand.

Moreover, the West had ample justification for concluding that Stalin's goals went well beyond an accord that merely protected the Soviet Union's legitimate security interests. Whether Stalin would have asserted control over Western Europe had the opportunity been offered him is a conjectural question that cannot be answered. Suffice to say that his failure to demobilize, his brutal conduct in Eastern Europe, his threatening demeanor toward Western Europe, and the details of his agenda in Germany hardly suggest a proclivity toward restraint in

absence of firm Western resistance. In all likelihood the East-West conflict could have been averted only if the West had been willing to acquiesce to Stalin's unacceptable goals for West Germany and the European security order. The West's unwillingness to do so undeniably contributed to the stormy events that produced the Cold War. But for all practical purposes, the West had no alternative. Judged from the perspective of the last four decades, including Gorbachev's willingness to acknowledge past Soviet errors, the West's tough-minded stance stands up well as a sound strategic choice.

Whatever the case, there is little room for argument that containment, when judged from a historical perspective, paid the West handsome dividends in more ways than one. The United States and its allies succeeded in both stemming the Soviet tide in Europe and in orchestrating the development of a stable, prosperous, and increasingly integrated Western alliance. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union, cut off from the West's wealth and yet unwilling to temper its security ambitions, fell steadily behind. Endowed with impressive natural resources of its own, it tried to compete by energizing its own economy and by establishing an economic alliance with its East European vassals. This effort initially showed signs of succeeding, but eventually it fell victim to the inability of a command economy to offset the advantages of an open market. The result was a major strategic defeat for the Soviet Union, one that not only left the Eastern bloc far behind the West but also questioned the very fundamentals of socialist rule. By the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union had fallen so far into decay that it could compete only in military strength, and even then at the cost of further economic stagnation. This state of affairs evidently played no small role in the decision of its new leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, to sue for peace on terms that openly recognized both the West's economic superiority and the Soviet Union's own need for democratizing reforms. In important ways, glasnost and perestroika paid the West's strategic policy its ultimate compliment.

#### IV. NATO'S BIRTH

Despite its success in forging containment and recovery, the West as of early 1948 had not yet forged the defense policies that also were needed to establish a complete grand strategy. Indeed, the West's defenses were still in disarray and deterrence was nothing more than an academic concept. At the close of World War II, the Western powers had commanded a massive army of about 100 divisions and over four million soldiers in Europe. Had it been retained, this force would have easily been strong enough to contend with the large Soviet Army that occupied Eastern Europe. But in the months following Germany's surrender, the allies promptly began demobilizing and reconfiguring their remaining forces for peacetime occupation duty. By early 1948, the United States had only about 200,000 troops in Europe, a number that was on its way down to 95,000 soldiers. Similarly, the United Kingdom had under 250,000 troops there and France, about 80,000. Moreover, since most of these U.S. and allied forces were engaged in occupation duties, even they had little combat proficiency.<sup>1</sup>

The West's military vulnerability in Central Europe was magnified further by highly disadvantageous terrain. By the time the Germans had surrendered in early May 1945, Western armies had advanced deeply into Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Austria. As of May 8, the British 21st Army Group and the U.S. 9th and 1st Armies stood on the western bank of the Elbe River, only 60 miles from Berlin. To the south, the U.S. 3rd and 7th Armies occupied a generally straight line stretching from Chemnitz, only 40 miles from Dresden, to Pilsen and Linz. This gave them control of the densely forested Thuringerwald and other defensible terrain in western Czechoslovakia. But in honoring earlier agreements with the Soviets, the British and U.S. forces withdrew westward to what became the present inter-German border. This withdrawal not only robbed them of important depth but also deprived them of the Elbe River and

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<sup>1</sup>See Robert Endicott Osgood's classic book, *NATO, The Entangling Alliance*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

other defensible terrain. It also left them holding a long, concave defense line against a large Soviet army that held the advantage of a convex line and interior lines of communication. In other words, the West now found itself facing the worst possible geographical situation for a small force attempting to contain a larger attacker.<sup>2</sup>

The details of allied postwar force deployments made matters worse. As of early 1948, as Table 1 shows, the West had available only four infantry divisions, two armored divisions, and several independent brigades--the equivalent of only about nine divisions in manpower, tanks, artillery, and other weapons. Of this force, the United States provided only one infantry division and three armored regiments. A nine-division force at best would have been enough to constitute only a World War II-type "field army," i.e., a force large enough to defend only about 100 to 150 km of the 750-km inter-German border. For this reason alone, a serious defense of West Germany was impossible. Moreover, these allied forces were neither integrated together in a single command nor concentrated in a single location. About half were deployed back near the Rhine River, a good distance removed from units in the forward areas. Also, about two-thirds of them--American and French forces--were deployed in the southern part of West Germany, the area where they had fought in the war. The northern half of the country, with its open terrain, was defended by only a single British armored division supported by a paratroop brigade and a few small Danish units. This maldeployment practically invited a high-speed Soviet armored attack aimed at enveloping allied forces and seizing the Lowlands.

Nowhere had the logic of demobilization been carried further than in the United States, where both the government and the public were preoccupied with returning the nation to civilian life. Although President Truman was a relative newcomer to international affairs, he was surrounded by able advisors--such as George Marshall, Dean Acheson, and Robert Lovett--who had alerted him to Stalin's intrigues. As a result, he fully supported the Marshall Plan, the European Recovery

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<sup>2</sup>See David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower*, p. 777.

Table 1

ALLIED FORCES IN CENTRAL EUROPE,  
1948

Force	Number
Divisions-equivalents	6
Brigades	27
Tanks	600
Armored vehicles	1000
Antitank weapons	500
Artillery	500
Aircraft	600

SOURCE: Author's estimate based on unit lists and standard weapon inventories for this period; multiple sources.

NOTE: Allied forces also included a number of lightly armed "constabulary" units performing administrative, police, and other occupation duties.

Program, the rebuilding of Germany, and the other diplomatic and economic aspects of containment. However, he was largely blind to the West's vulnerable defense position in Europe. While his aversion to greater U.S. defense preparedness was partly owed to the pressures he faced from an isolationist Congress, he himself had his own antimilitary agenda in mind. Truman had been a longtime critic of military "waste" while serving in the Congress. Now that he was president, he was principally concerned with maintaining a balanced budget and paring back the \$250 billion national debt inherited from the war, all without raising federal taxes. This led him to impose a series of austerity budgets on the Pentagon that all but eliminated the massive military posture that the United States had fielded at the end of the war<sup>3</sup> and thereby helped leave Western Europe militarily destitute.

<sup>3</sup>See Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953*, New York: Doubleday, 1987. For a description of the Pentagon's struggles with Truman over the postwar U.S. military posture, see Omar N. Bradley, *A General's Life*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983 (Part Four, "Washington").

In 1945, the Pentagon's budget had been \$81.6 billion. It dropped to \$44.7 billion in 1946, and then to only \$13.1 billion in 1947. With the Cold War heating up in early 1948, the Pentagon had asked for a postwar budget of about \$15 billion a year, which would have been enough to support a minimally adequate force posture and modernization plan. But Truman rejected this request. Privately passing word that he eventually intended to cut the defense budget down to \$6 to \$7 billion, he arbitrarily imposed a \$10 billion ceiling on the Pentagon and a set of similarly stringent force goals. When the military fought back, Truman ultimately compromised with a budget that fell roughly midway between his ceiling and the Pentagon's demands. But repeated pleas for more by senior officers from all three services fell on deaf ears in the White House.<sup>4</sup>

Truman's fiscal austerity had a disastrous impact on U.S. military strength. At the end of the war, the U.S. defense establishment had included some 12 million soldiers, sailors, and airmen. The level was down to 3 million by mid-1946, to 1.6 million a year later, and to 1.5 million by mid-1948. The Army was in the worst shape of all. In 1945, the Army had stood at 6 million soldiers and nearly 100 well-trained divisions. The Army's senior leadership had recommended a peacetime force of 700,000 troops, a universal military training program to keep manpower at adequate levels, and some 10 to 12 combat-ready divisions. By early-1948, however, the Army had shrunk to only 530,000 men, many of whom were assigned to clerical, administrative, and occupation duties. It fielded only some nine divisions, most of which were badly understrength, poorly trained, and reliant on reserve soldiers to bring them up to authorized levels. Only three active divisions were available in the United States as a usable strategic reserve, and only the 82nd Airborne Division was close to being combat-ready. This state of affairs led Army Chief of Staff General Omar Bradley to declare bluntly that the Army of 1948 "could not fight its way out of a wet paper bag."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Bradley, *A General's Life*.

<sup>5</sup>Blair, *The Forgotten War*, Chap. 1, pp. 3-29.



The Navy was not in much better shape. In early 1945, the Navy had consisted of 40 aircraft carriers, 24 battleships, several hundred smaller surface combatants and submarines, 24,000 aircraft, and 3 million sailors supported by an additional 480,000 Marines. The Navy's leadership had recommended a peacetime force of 15 carriers, 400 combatant ships, 550,000 sailors, and 100,000 Marines. By mid-1948, Navy force levels fell far below this estimate, consisting then of only 11 aging aircraft carriers, 289 combatants, 429,000 sailors, and 86,000 Marines. The Air Force, too, experienced similar cuts. In World War II, the Army Air Force had consisted of 2.3 million men, 68,400 aircraft, and 218 groups (a "group" was roughly equivalent to today's wing, numbering either 30 bombers or 75 fighter planes). The air generals had recommended a postwar force of 70 groups and 400,000 men. By early 1948, the Air Force had shrunk to 38 groups, only 11 of which were operationally effective.<sup>6</sup>

American military strength rested almost entirely on the U.S. monopoly of atomic weapons. But the U.S. atomic arsenal itself had fared no better under Truman. As of April 1948, the U.S. stockpile consisted of only a dozen Nagasaki-type atomic bombs, all of which were unassembled. Despite the Pentagon's urgent request for a buildup to 400 bombs, the stockpile still stood at 50 bombs that summer. Moreover, the Air Force lacked enough long-range bombers to reach distant targets. In mid-1948, the Air Force had a paltry force of 32 B-29 bombers equipped to deliver atomic bombs. By the end of the year, the Air Force's inventory had grown somewhat, but only to 100 bombs and a like number of bombers. To the uninitiated observer, this might have seemed like a potent force in itself. But when the all-important military details were taken into account, 100 low-yield bombs were hardly enough to blunt the massive Soviet Army. While these in theory were enough to inflict major destruction on Soviet urban areas, the capacity of unescorted Air Force bombers to reach targets as far away as the USSR and to penetrate Soviet defenses was questionable.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Blair, *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>Blair, *ibid.* See also George Quester, *Nuclear Diplomacy*, New York: Harper and Row, 1974. The essential point here is that a

The West European allies presented a similarly sad picture. As of early 1948, the West thus lacked any real semblance of military strength either in Western Europe or the United States. By comparison, the Soviet Union still deployed some 30 divisions in East Germany and elsewhere in Eastern Europe (including 9 tank and 11 motorized infantry divisions). The West thus found itself heavily outnumbered in divisions, tanks, and other weapons. Since these Soviet units themselves were originally on occupation duty, many had been reduced to cadre status in which only 25 to 50 percent of their manpower actually was present. As of early 1948, they consequently were not prepared for an immediate attack. But they were capable of being filled-out quickly--far faster than the West could hope to respond. Further, as the Cold War heated up in 1948 and 1949, Stalin undertook an effort to bring their readiness up to combat status by increasing their manpower and training. This rendered them far better prepared to launch a surprise attack into West Germany if the situation so dictated.

Also, the Soviets, who had not demobilized nearly to the same degree as the West, possessed massive reserves in the USSR itself. Western intelligence estimates at the time credited the Soviets with 5 million men still under arms, fully 175 divisions arrayed against Western Europe, and another 125 divisions in strategic reserve.<sup>8</sup> While this estimate later proved to be inflated, there is no doubt that the

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credible nuclear deterrent requires more than simply the possession of nuclear explosives. It requires a sufficient stockpile to destroy the relevant targets and the means to deliver these weapons. The United States was on the way to acquiring them by the late 1940s, but did not yet have them. The Strategic Air Command was to emerge as a full-fledged nuclear bombardment force only in the 1950s. For an analysis of the problems and prospects associated with a strategic bombardment campaign in the late 1940s, see JCS 1952/1: "Evaluation of Current Strategic Air Offensive Plans," December 1948, reprinted in Etzhold and Gaddis, *Containment*, pp. 357-359.

<sup>8</sup>In *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970*, Thomas W. Wolfe concludes that after World War II ended, the Soviet Army demobilized from a wartime level of 500 divisions and 12 to 15 million men to about 175 divisions and 4 million men. In 1948, a further reorganization was undertaken that left the Soviet Army with a different internal structure but with World War II-style weapons. Full-scale modernization of the Soviet Army with new weapons and updated training and tactics began some two years later (Chap. 3, pp. 32-50).

Soviets easily enjoyed an overwhelming military advantage in Europe. With Germany still totally disarmed and the other West European allies militarily weak and economically exhausted, the Soviet Union's military edge was counterbalanced only by the American atomic arsenal. However, the small U.S. atomic force did not yet pose a military-credible deterrent if Stalin were willing to pay a price for conquering Europe.

The events of early 1948 were to galvanize the West into addressing this situation. As the Marshall Plan and German recovery began gathering momentum in late 1947, Stalin had responded by stepping up his own campaign in Europe. In September, he created the Cominform to strengthen his control over communist parties across Western Europe. Soon thereafter he ordered the communist parties in Italy and France to stage general strikes aimed at crippling the economies of these nations. In February 1948, Czechoslovakia, previously a democratic nation, fell under communist rule, thereby bringing Stalin's efforts to reconstruct the political face of Eastern Europe one step further toward completion. This accomplished, Stalin abruptly began turning the screws on West Germany. In mid-June, the Soviets started disrupting rail and road traffic to West Berlin. Then on June 24, one day after the West announced creation of a West German currency, Stalin severed all land routes to that city and cut off its electricity. Apparently this step was aimed not only at squeezing West Berlin but also at pressuring the West to abandon its plans to form a West German government.<sup>9</sup> The West responded by launching a massive airlift to keep the city resupplied--an act that signaled its growing willingness to resist Stalin's designs with military force. As a result of these dramatic developments, the East-West struggle took on a new and more dangerous dimension. The possibility of war, previously dismissed as remote, suddenly seemed to have become real.

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<sup>9</sup>See Isaacson and Evans, *The Wise Men*, Pogue, *George C. Marshall*, and Dean Acheson's memoirs, *Present at the Creation: My Years at the State Department*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969, for an appraisal of Western perceptions of Stalin's motives. See Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970*, for an assessment of the motives behind Stalin's policies toward Berlin. See also Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957.

Over the following year, the United States and several West European nations pursued a complicated diplomatic course that ultimately resulted in the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, the West's first step in laying NATO's foundation. Shortly after the Berlin blockade began, the United States started to address its military capacity to deal with the deteriorating situation in Europe. In March 1948, the U.S. Military Governor of Germany, General Lucius Clay, had cabled Washington an alarming warning that war in Europe could break out at any moment. In response, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff set about drafting a unified war plan for prescribing how combat operations might be conducted in the event of war there. Partly motivated by fear that the Berlin crisis would soon explode into war, the first plan, dubbed "HALFMOON," was hastily drafted over the next two months and published in July 1948. This "emergency" plan focused on current operations rather than strategies for the future. Later renamed "FLEETWOOD" and "DOUBLESTAR," it was distributed to the U.S. commands as an interim basis for coordinating their efforts to prepare detailed operational plans.<sup>10</sup>

HALFMOON produced a dismal forecast of how a war in Europe was likely to unfold. It envisioned a worldwide Soviet attack launched simultaneously in Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East. Realistic almost to a fault, HALFMOON predicted that the Soviets would quickly sweep to major victory in all three theaters. In Europe, it forecasted that allied forces would be driven steadily backwards--first to the Rhine, then to the English Channel and through the Pyrennes Mountains into Spain. It predicted that in a matter of a few weeks, all of Western Europe likely would be lost and a total U.S. evacuation would be necessary. In the Middle East, HALFMOON estimated that the Mediterranean would be closed and that Soviet forces would seize control over the Persian Gulf oil fields. In the Far East, a similar U.S. evacuation from Korea and China was also deemed necessary.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>"HALFMOON" (JSC 1844/13 "Brief of Short Range Emergency War Plan") is reprinted in Etzhold and Gaddis's *Containment*, pp. 315-324.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. HALFMOON thus responded to then-existing fears that Stalin's political agenda was focused on the southern flank and the

In an attempt to cope with this defeat, HALFMOON called for a military response that at best was uninspiring. It recommended a U.S.-allied effort aimed at maintaining three strategic footholds: the United Kingdom, the Cairo-Suez area, and Japan/Okinawa. This limited objective, it estimated, was all that then-existing U.S. and allied forces could hope to accomplish. In conjunction with an American retreat to these footholds, HALFMOON called on the U.S. Navy to begin mining Soviet ports in the northern waters and the Far East. Presuming that authority would be granted to employ atomic weapons against the Soviet homeland, it also called upon the U.S. Strategic Air Command promptly to launch a full-scale bombing campaign against Soviet industry and war-making capability. It envisioned that this air offensive would begin within two weeks of D-Day and would be mounted from the United Kingdom, Middle East, and Okinawa footholds. But it did not envision that this bombing campaign would have immediately decisive results. Since HALFMOON was compelled to make due with the 50 to 100 atomic bombs then in the U.S. stockpile, it proposed to rely on conventional ordnance to make up the difference. As a result, it calculated, a strategic bombing campaign of several months duration would be needed.

HALFMOON hoped that this campaign would soften up the Soviet Union's forces and war-making capacity to the point where the United States, after mobilizing, would eventually be able to mount a counteroffensive. It envisioned a second phase of war in which the West, after assembling some 23 U.S. and British divisions and 1400 tactical aircraft, would begin mounting localized counterattacks about 12 months after D-Day. HALFMOON envisioned initial efforts to reopen the Mediterranean and regain the Middle East oil fields. Its plans for retaking Europe envisioned a lengthy World War II-style mobilization,

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Middle East/Persian Gulf oilfields. This fear was to lessen over the next year or two as the Southern Flank situation stabilized. From that point forward, U.S. defense planning focused primarily on the Center Region. Concern over a possible Soviet invasion of Iran was to resurface in the late 1970s, when the fall of the Shah of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan suggested an impending Soviet drive southward.

after which American forces would invade the continent and eject the Soviets. It thus called for a repeat of the Normandy invasion. But it was silent on precisely how the United States and Britain could hope to accomplish this demanding task against an entrenched Soviet Army that, in contrast to the Germans in 1944, would not be facing the distraction of a two-front war.

Despite the alarming light it shed on the West's defense prospects, HALFMOON itself failed to motivate the White House into launching an emergency program to rebuild America's military strength. As the Berlin crisis mounted in the summer of 1948, Truman authorized several measures to improve military readiness. Reinstating the draft, he temporarily increased troop levels in Europe and authorized expansion of the Army to 850,000 men distributed among 12 active divisions and 6 ready National Guard divisions. He also sped up the construction of atomic bombs, brought the Air Force's 38 groups up to full strength, and authorized the speedy deployment of 10 more groups, including more strategic bombers. But as the Berlin crisis began fading in late 1948, he returned to his budget-cutting ways. The guidelines that he issued the Pentagon in early 1949 envisioned a defense budget of \$12 to \$14.5 billion--fully 25 percent less than what the three services were now demanding as the price for a serious effort to defend Europe. The Army was cut back to 677,000 men and 10 divisions. A lid was clamped on the Navy's plans for constructing modern attack carriers. The Air Force was allowed to keep its 48 combat groups, but Truman impounded the extra \$1 billion that the Congress had approved for building an additional 18 air groups.<sup>12</sup>

#### SIGNING OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY

The events of 1948, however, were to have a more enduring impact in shaping the attitudes of key State Department and Pentagon officials who were responsible for dealing with Europe. From Berlin and HALFMOON, they realized that as long as the West remained militarily weak, it

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<sup>12</sup>Blair, *The Forgotten War*; Bradley, *A General's Life*.

would be vulnerable to Soviet pressure tactics as well as a direct invasion. In essence, some form of military alliance had become necessary, one that would both send a signal to Stalin and provide the means to defend the continent. State and Defense officials thus began urging the White House to move in this direction, and although they were not able to budge Truman on the U.S. defense budget, they did succeed in warming him to the idea of a North Atlantic treaty.

Support for this idea had been building in Western Europe as well. During 1946 and 1947, a number of European nations had begun to address the troublesome military situation in Europe. In March 1947, the Treaty of Dunkirk had been signed, which primarily joined the British and the French together in planning for a possible military resurgence of Germany. Shortly thereafter the West Europeans, reacting to Stalin's actions in Eastern Europe, began shifting their attention to the growing Soviet threat. In March 1948, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg signed the Brussels Pact. This treaty united these nations in a military alliance that was specifically directed against the Soviets. But it did not include the nation that was needed to make a western alliance a viable entity: the United States.<sup>13</sup>

The Brussels Pact nations promptly launched a diplomatic effort to remedy this deficiency. In late December 1947, the British approached the United States with the suggestion for a mutual defense arrangement that would link American military power directly to the defense of Europe. London's demarche then had been strongly supported by France, the Low Countries, and other West European nations. As a result, the Brussels Pact members had little difficulty in agreeing in late spring 1948 on an effort to formally negotiate a North Atlantic treaty with the United States. This idea quickly met with favor among Secretary of State George Marshall and other senior Truman administration officials, who had come to the same conclusion but had wanted the West Europeans to take the initiative. With Truman's approval, Marshall and others set

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<sup>13</sup>See Pogue, *George C. Marshall*, and Osgood, *NATO, The Entangling Alliance*. Also see Acheson, *Present at the Creation*.

about to mobilize political support in the Congress for a formal alliance. Despite the isolationist sentiments that still existed in some congressional quarters, this effort was successfully concluded in June 1948 when the Senate passed the Vandenberg Resolution. This landmark legislation provided the executive branch the bipartisan congressional support it needed to pursue a collective security arrangement with Western Europe.<sup>14</sup>

Shortly thereafter, transatlantic planning commenced for establishing a combined staff and a military structure that would join U.S. and allied military forces together into a collaborative alliance. This complex enterprise, conducted amidst the contentious 1948 U.S. presidential election campaign, took several months to complete. But it ultimately proved successful. In the process, the original membership (the United States, Britain, Belgium, Canada, France, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) was expanded to include Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Italy. Truman's surprising reelection in November cleared the way for approval by the Congress, which lent its assent after prolonged hearings during early 1949. In April, the United States and the West European allies formally signed the North Atlantic Treaty, thereby committing these nations to the common cause of collective security and mutual defense. In the succeeding weeks, the Western Union Defense Organization formally delegated most of its defense responsibilities to the new alliance. With this step, the North Atlantic Alliance formally assumed its role as the West's principal mechanism for preserving peace on the troubled European continent.

For all its importance, the formal treaty was a short, two-page document composed of 14 separate, sparsely worded articles. While the first two articles exhorted member nations to develop cooperative political and economic relations, Articles 3 to 5 established the collective security framework for the alliance. Article 5, the key provision, stated that the parties agree that an armed attack against

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<sup>14</sup>Osgood, *NATO, The Entangling Alliance*, Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, and Pogue, *George C. Marshall*, provide accounts of how the Vandenberg Resolution came to pass.



one or more of them "shall be considered an attack against them all." In the event of such an attack, Article 5 further stated, the parties will take such action as deemed necessary, "including the use of armed force to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area." With this profound but ambiguous statement, the treaty established the core political and legal foundation for the new alliance. The treaty called for the creation of a "council" to consider matters concerning implementation. This council was granted the authority to create subsidiary bodies as might be necessary. Beyond this, the treaty provided little guidance on what kind of superstructure--in terms of organization, command network, military strategy, and force posture--should be built on top of this foundation. By saying little in this area, the treaty thus left the member nations free to create whatever kind of alliance they deemed necessary.

The following September, the alliance approved the establishment of a set of civilian and military committees that gave NATO an organizational structure, albeit not a fully developed staff system. Included were the North Atlantic Council (NAC), composed of allied foreign ministers; a Defense Committee, composed of defense ministers; and a Military Committee, composed of allied chiefs of staff. Attached to the Military Committee was a Standing Group, which was entrusted with the important function of devising defense plans for each of NATO's sub-regions. In November, the NAC created a defense Financial and Economic Board, made up of allied finance ministers, and a Military Production and Supply Board, which reported to the Military Committee. Somewhat later the Foreign Ministers established a Council of Deputies to help the NAC facilitate political exchanges and to implement its directives.

## TOWARD A HOLLOW ALLIANCE

Notwithstanding the importance of these steps, the new alliance still had not yet made any formal political commitment to a defense buildup or to any particular military strategy. These issues remained to be addressed, and as of mid-1949 substantial disagreement existed on exactly what course should be pursued. Essentially, military staffs on

both sides of the Atlantic favored a fully integrated military structure and a powerful defense force. But civilian officials, conscious of the negative impact that a defense buildup would have on economic recovery, were chary of any expensive rearmament plan. The following year the alliance struggled with the problem of striking a proper balance between these two concerns. As we shall see below, it initially chose to tilt toward its economic priorities and to relegate military requirements to a distinctly secondary position. It elected to begin developing plans for a serious defense effort, but it did not elect to implement them. As a result, NATO temporarily was to remain a largely paper alliance, one united by a treaty and a loose political organization but not possessing the military wherewithal to defend itself. This situation was to continue for another nine months.

NATO's stall pattern was hardly the fault of the professional military establishments on both sides of the Atlantic. During the months in which the North Atlantic Treaty was being drafted, important progress had been made by U.S. and allied staffs in developing operational plans that ultimately were to become the basis for guiding the new alliance's defense efforts. The result was that by the time the treaty was signed, a broad consensus already existed among U.S. and allied senior officers on how the new alliance should go about conducting its military business. While the plans that were adopted by no means solved all the problems facing the alliance, they did provide an initial basis for joint planning. Taken together, they underscored the need to involve U.S. forces directly in the defense of Western Europe, to bolster the alliance's total forces, and to harmonize the contributions of all members.

In the United States, the Pentagon had set about in late 1948 to integrate American war plans with evolving efforts by the West Europeans. The result was the replacement of HALFMOON with a new, NATO-oriented plan called "OFFTACKLE."<sup>15</sup> Subsequently renamed SHAKEDOWN and CROSSPIECE, OFFTACKLE, officially adopted in mid-1949, was a more

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<sup>15</sup>"OFFTACKLE" (JSPC 877/59, "Brief of Joint Outline Emergency War Plan") is reprinted in Etzhold and Gaddis, *Containment*, pp. 324-334.

complete plan than HALFMOON. Like its predecessor, it addressed the problem of how the United States would conduct a war with only presently existing American and allied forces. This led it to postulate limited, realistic goals for the immediate future. Unlike HALFMOON, it benefited from coherent strategic policy guidance from the National Security Council. It thus was able to outline how a military campaign might be conducted that responded to national policy goals rather than purely military considerations.

OFFTACKLE consequently elevated the strategic importance of Europe in relationship to other regions. This change was a product of a revised sense of U.S. global priorities and an altered assessment of Soviet intentions and capabilities. Like its predecessor, OFFTACKLE assumed that a Soviet attack would have a global scope. But unlike HALFMOON, it concluded that the Soviets would not have the military capability to attack in strength virtually everywhere at once. In downgrading the Soviet threat, OFFTACKLE suggested that the United States would have some flexibility to concentrate its resources on Europe, the area most heavily threatened. OFFTACKLE also downgraded the importance of retaining control of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf oil fields. This further encouraged a U.S. focus on Europe.

With regard to defending Europe, OFFTACKLE preserved HALFMOON's nuclear bombardment, but it also called for a serious effort to defend the European continent itself. It laid down a requirement for a main line of resistance to be anchored no further west than the Rhine River, the best terrain feature for halting a Soviet advance with only limited U.S. and allied forces. This line was to be extended on the left to the United Kingdom and on the right to the Cairo-Suez area. OFFTACKLE recognized realistically that NATO's forces might be driven back from the Rhine and even off the continent. But in contrast to HALFMOON, it did not conclude that a complete evacuation of Europe was certain. It postulated that NATO likely would be able to hold a substantial bridgehead in Western Europe, while preserving the United Kingdom as a base for a subsequent buildup and counterattack. It also concluded that NATO likely would be able to retain control over the western

Mediterranean and to maintain contact with Turkey in the east.

OFFTACKLE therefore marked an important turn in U.S. assessments toward a more optimistic appraisal of the West's defense prospects in Europe.

Building on this appraisal, OFFTACKLE called for a three-phased war lasting more than two years that would begin with a strategic defense of Europe and Asia, and then would transition to a strategic offensive in Europe. The first phase was to cover about four months. During this time, U.S. and allied forces were to defend against the Soviet attack in Europe while U.S. bombers were to launch a strategic campaign, employing atomic and conventional bombs, against the Soviet homeland and war-making capacity. This bombing campaign was to be launched not only from forward bases, but also from the continental United States; at the time, the B-36 bomber was being built, which promised to provide the capability to strike the Soviet Union from American bases. Some 300 atomic bombs and 17000 tons of conventional explosives were to be delivered against the USSR in all, enough in theory to destroy some 85 percent of Soviet industrial and military targets.<sup>16</sup>

OFFTACKLE's second phase, lasting through the end of the first year, was to include successful efforts to stop the Soviet advance coupled with an intensification of the strategic bombing campaign. During this period, a sustained buildup was to be conducted in the United Kingdom and from whatever bridgehead remained on the continent. This buildup was to lead to the third phase, which was to encompass the entire second year of the war. The key operational goal was the military defeat of Soviet forces in Western Europe, through reinvasion if necessary. This victory was to lead to a fourth phase of uncertain duration and unspecified operational objectives. OFFTACKLE's political guidance contemplated war-termination goals as broad as the complete elimination of any Soviet military presence outside the USSR's borders and even the possible destruction of the Bolshevik regime itself. In this sensitive area, OFFTACKLE kept U.S. options open. Although it did not mandate the adoption of the "unconditional surrender" strategy that

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

had been employed in World War II, it did not rule out this strategy either.

During the time OFFTACKLE was being written in Washington, allied military staffs were busy developing operational plans of their own. In September 1948, the Brussels Pact had formed a Western Union Defense Organization, which included a Defense Committee and a Consultative Council of Foreign Ministers. The Defense Committee was to be assisted by a Joint Chiefs of Staff to be located at Fontainbleau, France. British Field Marshall Montgomery of World War II fame was appointed chairman, with a senior French general as his deputy. Over the next several months Montgomery led an effort to formulate initial defense plans for Central Europe, plans that could be used by the North Atlantic alliance once it was launched. The United States was not a formal participant in this effort, but American military advisors were present<sup>17</sup> and Montgomery clearly had an eventual U.S. contribution in mind.

Montgomery's study was expressly intended to address not only current operations but also future goals, with one eye on the Russians and the other on Western parliaments. An important document, it marked one of the West's first efforts to specify the military objectives that it wanted to pursue in Europe and the forces that would be needed to attain them. The defense plan that Montgomery adopted, like OFFTACKLE, called for strategic bombardment of the Soviet Union as its centerpiece along with a sea blockade of Europe and protection of the Middle East oil fields. But in deference to the continental allies, it also called for an even more serious effort to defend the European mainland itself. It was this concept that carried the seeds of a debate over NATO's future forces, one that Montgomery hoped would lead to a substantial Western military buildup.

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<sup>17</sup>See Osgood, *NATO, The Entangling Alliance*. See also Stanley Karnowski, *The German Army and NATO Strategy*, Ft. Leslie J. McNair, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1984.

The exact location of where the Brussels Pact's defense line was to be drawn--how far forward--particularly became a matter of controversy. In one sense, a forward defense of West German territory was unavoidable. The Western allies could hardly afford to cede occupied West Germany in advance, and the fact that many U.S. and allied forces were based on German territory meant that fighting initially would break out there. But the allies had the option of conducting a mobile, delaying defense that would trade space for time and allow them to select the best terrain for making a stand. At issue was where allied forces would dig in, establish a strong main line of resistance, and attempt to hold. While this issue was most narrowly a technical military matter, it also had important political dimensions that brought into question the West's military strategy and force levels.

Montgomery was an ardent advocate of continental defense, but he was also a military realist. His efforts to balance these two impulses led him initially to favor a defense line running from the North Sea, down the Yessel and Rhine rivers, and stretching along the French-German border to the Mediterranean. This concept, he knew, adequately protected purely British interests, but little else. Predictably, the French, Belgians, and Dutch strongly feared that a Rhine defense, if unsuccessful, could easily lead to a repeat of Dunkirk and another occupation of their own nations. As a result, they began arguing instead for a strong defense effort well eastward, beginning on the present inter-German border.

These valid political concerns ran afoul of Montgomery's technical military calculations in ways that drew attention to his strategic arguments for larger forces. The problem with a defense near the East-West dividing line, Montgomery contended, was that it envisioned a more ambitious effort than what existing West European forces physically could mount. If an attack occurred with little warning, allied forces might not even be able to march to the border before the Soviets had crossed it. Once there, they would be compelled to fight a significantly larger enemy force on terrain that favored the Soviets. Quick defeat would be almost unavoidable. Indeed, Montgomery's

estimates suggested that even the Rhine River would be hard to hold with only present forces. Militarily, Montgomery maintained, defense of West Germany was therefore out-of-the question until the West built much larger forces.

Faced with this troublesome clash between the vital national interests of its members and harsh military realities, the Brussels Pact adopted a compromise calling for a defense effort "as far forward as possible": The Western allies would initially have to satisfy themselves with a Rhine defense due to their paucity of forces; but as more forces were fielded, the defense line would be moved well forward into West Germany. In its very ambiguity, this position laid out a plausible approach for managing the present situation while also paving the way for the future. It temporarily resolved the turmoil over operational defense plans. But by leaving unanswered the critical question of where the required forces for a forward defense were to come from, it made crystal clear that the Brussels Pact needed not only greater defense strength itself, but also military support from the United States and possibly from West Germany as well.<sup>18</sup>

The West's initial defense plans thus were based on two sources--the U.S. OFFTACKLE and Montgomery's study--that seemingly differed noticeably in the priority they placed on defending east of the Rhine. The Montgomery plan called for the protection of West Germany's forward areas, while recognizing that a retreat to the Rhine might be unavoidable. By contrast, OFFTACKLE aimed initially for only a Rhine defense and recognized officially that a retreat westward might be necessary. Differences of this magnitude, with important underlying political consideration, suggesting a clash of competing national interests, often can pose serious complications for a coalition. In this case, however, the differences between the two concepts were more apparent than real. Underlying them was a common conception of the alliance's military purposes, one that united the professional staffs on

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<sup>18</sup>Karnowski, *The German Army and NATO Strategy*, and Reed, *Germany and NATO*, present insightful accounts of Montgomery's studies and their interaction with U.S. war plans.

both sides of the Atlantic into a de facto alliance in favor of transforming NATO into a full-fledged alliance with all the trappings of a large force posture, an integrated command structure, and a common doctrine.

Senior U.S. military officers were hardly opposed to the idea of defending West Germany providing they were given adequate forces for this mission. Since West Germany provided a large portion of Western Europe's industrial strength, loss of that nation alone would have dealt the West a crippling blow. This strategic reality was well recognized by the Pentagon; West Germany's industrial importance was one of the reasons why the United States had embraced containment in the first place. Moreover, a World War II-style reinvasion would have been costly and uncertain. For this military reason alone, forward defense made sense not only to the West Europeans but also to the United States. To U.S. officers, the issue was one of military practicality. They were reluctant to develop operational plans that could not be implemented with the forces that already were deployed or were likely to become available in the near future. By insisting that military realism should be the basis for determining how U.S. forces would be employed in a war, they shied away from a forward defense that extended the West's reach beyond its grasp. But this did not mean they opposed Montgomery's commitment to forward defense or his goal of motivating the alliance to take defense planning seriously. To the contrary.

Although Montgomery's plan and OFFTACKLE appeared to clash on the surface, they actually worked together, in complementary fashion, on behalf of the same cause. For different reasons, both drew attention to the issue of defending West Germany. The former highlighted the strategic need to do so, while the latter made clear that the West presently could not achieve this important goal. The two plans therefore presented a similar political message: Both implicitly called for a substantial Western military buildup. The two plans were also similar in other, more fundamental ways. While they were concerned with deterrence, both recognized that this goal could not be accomplished simply by threatening the Soviet Union with atomic reprisal. They



defined deterrence and defense coterminously. Deterrence, they claimed, could not be achieved with anything short of the military capability to physically defend Western Europe. Defense, they further implied, could be achieved only if the alliance fielded adequate forces to cover the terrain and otherwise execute the missions associated with a traditional field campaign. They thus viewed nuclear weapons as a necessary adjunct to the West's defense posture, not as a substitute for adequate conventional forces.

The two plans also were similar in that they both called for a resort to coalition warfare of the sort that had taken place in World War II. Neither was under the illusion that Soviet military power could be countered by any single Western nation or any subset of nations. OFFTACKLE illustrated that even the minimal goal of preserving a foothold on the European continent was impossible in absence of a substantial allied contribution. The Montgomery plan acknowledged that a large American military force would be needed simply to hold the Rhine River, much less protect West Germany. Both plans therefore recognized that the members of the Western alliance would have to combine their resources together. Anything less, they acknowledged, would doom the West to failure.

Taken together, OFFTACKLE and the Montgomery plan were sufficiently similar to provide the new North Atlantic alliance a common, but politically controversial basis for military planning as it began operations in the summer of 1949. Differences continued to exist, not among U.S. and allied military staffs but at the political level of the alliance. There, a consensus in favor of a militarily strong nature by no means prevailed. Some favored this course, but others opposed it for a combination of political and economic reasons. The prominent belief was that the situation had not yet deteriorated to the point of requiring this step and that the economic costs of a military buildup were unacceptably high. As a result, the drive to further military integration within NATO stalled, and the alliance resorted to a declaratory policy of political formulations that carried NATO only a few steps toward the goal favored by the professional military.

That fall, NATO's civilian authorities officially set about to integrate the military's plans with the alliance's political goals and economic priorities. The result was agreement by NATO's defense ministers on a formal "strategic defense concept" (DC 6/1), which was published in December, 1949.<sup>19</sup> Endorsed by the North Atlantic Council in January 1950, this concept established deterrence of war as the ultimate goal of NATO's military plans. It also called on NATO's members to cooperate together to develop both adequate forces for defending Europe and coordinated plans for employing these forces in the event deterrence failed. When it came to details, however, DC/1 provided not an integrated defense plan but rather a broad, loose, and ineffective collection of principles for coordinating the national efforts of the new alliance's members.

In essence, the strategic concept called for an alliance based on national specialization rather than a uniform distribution of military missions. The United States was assigned the functions of strategic bombardment and, along with Britain, defending the sea lanes. While both nations were given the mission of providing supporting ground and air forces, the task of defending the European landmass itself was assigned largely to the continental allies. This "division of labor" approach was adopted for a combination of reasons that struck responsive chords on both sides of the Atlantic. Militarily, it was appealing because it attempted to channel member nations into areas where they enjoyed relative advantages. It thus offered a way to employ NATO's limited assets to maximum advantage. Politically, it was attractive because it left the distasteful nuclear mission in American hands (thereby satisfying a key West European concern), while acceding to the Truman administration's reluctance to accept conventional missions that would require a big U.S. military buildup.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>DC 6/1 is reprinted in Etzhold and Gaddis, *Containment*, pp. 335-338.

<sup>20</sup>DC 6/1 did not, however, imply that the United States was not to make a contribution to Western Europe's land defenses. At issue here was a matter of degree. It said that "initially, the hard core of ground forces will come from the European nations. Other nations will give aid with the least possible delay and in accordance with overall

Notwithstanding these attractive features, however, this approach was hardly a viable basis for achieving an integrated alliance defense posture and strategy. It left unresolved the troublesome question of how the alliance could hope to defend Central Europe under a philosophy that ignored the degree to which resources were asymmetrically distributed among alliance members. Implausibly, this approach called upon France and the Low Countries somehow to build most of the ground and air forces needed to physically protect the continent. In reality, these nations neither possessed the necessary forces nor were they able to build them. The new strategic concept was silent on how the alliance was to solve this problem. Left unsaid, but widely recognized by both U.S. and allied military authorities, was the implicit conclusion that commitment of large U.S. forces and German rearmament were steps that could not be avoided if NATO truly was to aspire to a viable defense of Central Europe.<sup>21</sup> But this conclusion had not yet been embraced at the alliance's political levels.

Although the division of labor philosophy was not a satisfactory basis for a sound NATO defense program, the new strategic concept still marked an important step forward and helped temporarily to serve as an initial foundation for both allocating defense burdens and coordinating planning for rearmament. In particular, the strategic concept usefully called for a host of cooperative measures to help foster combined planning. Included were standardization of military doctrines; conduct of combined exercises; cooperation in construction and operations of military installations; standardization of maintenance, repair, and service facilities; standardization of material and equipment; cooperation in establishing agreements for guiding military operations; collaboration in research and development; and joint planning for psychological and other special operations. In many ways, these areas

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plans." Etzhold and Gaddis, *ibid.*, p. 338. See Blair, *The Forgotten War*, for a critical account suggesting that budgetary motives lay behind the Truman administration's support of DC 6/1. Acheson implies as much in his memoirs, *Present at the Creation*.

<sup>21</sup>See Reed, *Germany and NATO*, and Karnowski, *The German Army and NATO Strategy*.

were critically important in determining whether the new alliance actually could function as a vital organization. In calling for major cooperative efforts in these areas, the strategic concept in essence helped breathe some life into NATO.<sup>22</sup> But it fell well short of actually bringing the alliance out of infancy into adulthood.

In the following weeks, U.S. and allied military officers accelerated their campaign, albeit with little success, to bring the required maturation about. By early 1950 NATO's defense plans evolved further due to the completion of the second phase of Montgomery's study, which addressed the important issue of exactly how many forces were needed to defend Central Europe. Based on the operational concept of defending on the Rhine or well forward, his study called for a NATO posture that would begin with 34 divisions in Central Europe on mobilization day (M-Day) and would then build to 56 divisions after one month. In addition to these "forces in-being," which were to be used to constitute the initial defense, his study also called for a year-long post D-Day mobilization that would produce about 50 entirely new divisions. These extra forces, Montgomery reasoned, likely would be needed to launch a counteroffensive to recapture territory that might be ceded in initial fighting.<sup>23</sup>

Montgomery's study laid out a force requirement for NATO that accorded with traditional military planning standards for conventional war in Central Europe: some 50 to 60 divisions for defense and about 100 divisions for going on the offensive. In this sense, his estimate was hardly controversial. Indeed, it comfortingly suggested that NATO initially did not have to match the Soviet Union to defend itself. His main aim was to help NATO set appropriate goals for the future and to

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<sup>22</sup>DC 6/1 thus was focused not only on NATO's force levels but also on establishing the entire military framework for an alliance, including the all-important logistic infrastructure and armaments industry.

<sup>23</sup>See Karnowski, *The German Army and NATO Strategy*. See also Robert S. Jordan (ed.), *Generals in International Politics: NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe*, Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1987. In particular, General Andrew Goodpaster's introductory chapter, "The Development of SHAPE, 1950-1953," provides a good account of SHAPE's early planning efforts.

prod the alliance into greater activity. But the immediate effect of his estimate was to demonstrate how far removed NATO was from a viable posture. Although some NATO members had been increasing their forces since 1948, the alliance still was capable of deploying only 12 divisions in Central Europe within the first month or so. Nor were further improvements likely to be forthcoming in the foreseeable future. In the United States, Truman continued to hold a firm line on defense spending. If anything, he wanted to pare back U.S. forces further and to withdraw some units from Europe. In Europe, Germany was still unarmed while Britain, France, and the Low Countries were reluctant to divert resources that were needed to finance their economic recovery. These trends hardly augured well for NATO's military future.

As a result, the North Atlantic Alliance was left confronting the Soviets with only token opposition. Without the ability of atomic weapons to totally change things, West Germany could not be defended. For that matter, even a Rhine defense was infeasible. Although NATO had assembled a military staff, developed a strategic concept and operational doctrine, and begun coalition planning, it was still a hollow shell in what really counted: military strength. This depressing conclusion led a number of American diplomats to conclude that NATO should abandon its quest for a highly developed military structure. As an alternative, they had in mind a set of formal political guarantees that, they hoped, would be enough to reassure the West Europeans and to deter the Soviets. This idea did not ring true with U.S. and allied military authorities, who were skeptical of any arrangement that lacked adequate military strength. But the realities of the moment gave even them little cause for hope.

As the 1950s dawned, the newly created North Atlantic alliance thus found itself facing a dubious military and political situation. On a political level, the United States and the West European allies had recognized that the Cold War required a Western military alliance and had committed themselves accordingly. But they were still so preoccupied with economic recovery that they were reluctant to attend to the requirements of their military strategy. Their continental defenses

remained weak and American reserves could not lend much help. NATO therefore was left dependent upon an American atomic monopoly that, while temporarily secure, was not seen as a cure-all and could not be expected to last forever. Had world affairs not intervened at this juncture, it is possible that NATO's military strength would have remained at this level for some time. But as the 1950s unfolded, the alliance was treated to a series of shocks that jarred it out of its complacency and launched it on a more ambitious military path.

## V. MILITARY BUILDUP

NATO's propensity to lie asleep in periods of tranquility only to burst forth in frenzied military activity was first, and best, illustrated by the dramatic events that took place as the old decade ended and a new one began.

The increasingly provocative political behavior that the Soviet Union had demonstrated in Europe was itself enough to strain NATO's nerves. Although Stalin lifted the Berlin blockade in 1949, after the allied airlift had successfully undermined it, he continued to consolidate communist rule throughout Eastern Europe. By 1950, the "Iron Curtain" had completely descended, thereby permanently dividing the entire continent into two ideologically opposed blocs. Moreover, the Soviets by no means had reconciled themselves to the creation of a democratic nation in West Germany, especially one aligned with the West and potentially capable of rearmament. Soviet diplomacy remained fairly flexible on the subject of Germany's reunification, at least rhetorically. But Stalin showed little practical interest in leaving East Germany or withdrawing Soviet troops.

Equally important, the Soviet Union had exploded its own atomic weapon in late August 1949, thereby ending forever the American monopoly that until then had been the cornerstone of NATO's military strategy. The United States immediately commenced development of the hydrogen bomb, a vastly more powerful weapon that was intended to partially compensate for the USSR's unexpected breakthrough. It was to test this weapon in November 1952. But the Soviets were to checkmate this gain by detonating their own hydrogen device only eight months later. To be sure, the Soviet Union was still years away from developing the large nuclear stockpile and delivery vehicles needed to strike the United States. But, even as early as 1950, the clock clearly had already started ticking on NATO's nuclear dominance,<sup>1</sup> thereby rendering the West's exposed position in Central Europe even more vulnerable.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas W. Wolfe's *Soviet Power and Europe: 1945-1970*, provides a

As if this setback was not enough, developments in Asia dealt further shocks to NATO's sensibilities. In October 1949, Mao Tse-Tung's guerrilla army swept to victory in China, in the process compelling the Nationalist regime to move to the offshore island of Formosa (Taipei). The establishment of a communist regime in China tilted the Asian power balance toward Moscow and left the West confronting the possibility of communist expansion there as well. Then in June 1950, North Korean forces, apparently with Soviet approval, suddenly attacked South Korea and quickly defeated the weak South Korean forces opposing them. The United States reacted by promptly sending reinforcements from its forces in Japan. But the first U.S. units to arrive were themselves overpowered by the advancing North Koreans. Within a few days of this embarrassing route, U.S. and South Korean forces found themselves clinging precariously to a narrow foothold on the southern tip of the peninsula.<sup>2</sup>

The prospect of a communist regime in control of the entire Korean peninsula posed an immediate threat to Japan, which had been entirely disarmed after its surrender in 1945. Beyond this, the Korean war had ominous implications for Europe as well. The now nuclear-capable communist bloc finally had crossed the great divide by initiating military hostilities against the West. Alarm spread that the Korean War might be a forerunner of a Soviet advance on Western Europe. Indeed, many worried that the North Korean attack was a diversion designed to draw the United States into a war on the other side of the globe, thereby leaving Western Europe vulnerable to a Soviet thrust into West Germany.

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detailed account of Soviet defense programs and military strategy in this period.

<sup>2</sup>Blair, *The Forgotten War*, Chaps. 5-6.



## NSC-68

These reversals motivated the United States not only to send large forces to Korea but also to bolster its overall global posture, including its military presence in Europe. The first American attempt to forge a definitive policy toward the Soviet Union and Europe, NSC-20/4, had been written in late 1948, before these setbacks had taken place. In early spring 1950, it was replaced by NSC-68, a document that assessed how the United States and its allies could find more effective means for implementing containment. Written on the eve of the Korean War by an ad-hoc committee of State and Defense Department officials under Paul Nitze's direction, it was to have a major impact on reshaping the U.S. government's thinking about how containment was to be achieved and about the state of the West's defense preparedness.<sup>3</sup>

NSC-68 viewed the international situation in alarmist terms. When George Kennan had written the containment policy three years earlier, he balanced off his sober appraisal of Stalin's goals with a cautiously optimistic assessment of the West's ability to live harmoniously with the Soviet Union over the long run. NSC-68 toned down the positive side of his assessment, transformed containment into a global doctrine that went well beyond Europe's boundaries, and militarized it. NSC-68 argued that the Soviet Union's expansionist tendencies thus far had shown no signs of abating even though the USSR already had gained control of nearly all areas on its periphery that were vital to its physical security. Arguing that the communist takeovers in Eastern Europe and China had strengthened the Soviet Union's global hand, NSC-68 dismissed Kennan's contention that the communist bloc was showing signs of internal fragmentation that would prevent the Soviets from mobilizing its assets to support external aggression. Finally, NSC-68 saw no signs that the Soviets would soon prove willing to negotiate with the West on establishing a stable balance of power, or that merely political, economic, and diplomatic action by the West would be enough to check

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<sup>3</sup>NSC-68 is reprinted in Etzhold and Gaddis, *Containment*, pp. 385-442. For a critique of it, see Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, Chap. 4, pp. 89-126.

Soviet expansionism. NSC-68 thus portrayed the Cold War in starkly confrontational and military terms. Its bottom line was that the Soviet Union posed an uncompromising and growing threat, one that the West needed to take even more seriously than before.

NSC-68 particularly worried that the Soviet Union might soon resort to overt military conquest as a means to pursue expansion. Kennan had interpreted the Soviet threat in primarily political and economic terms. Convinced that the Soviets had seen enough fighting in World War II, he was worried more about internal subversion than military attack. NSC-68 reached the opposite conclusion. It argued that military force was becoming an increasingly important instrument of Soviet foreign policy. It recognized that the Soviets thus far had been deterred from attacking by the American atomic monopoly. To date, it acknowledged, the threat primarily had been that the Soviets might attempt either to intimidate the West politically or to use proxies to attack Western interests. But, NSC-68 estimated, this was likely to change once the Soviets had acquired a nuclear capability of their own. At this juncture, NSC-68 argued, Stalin might well resort to open conquest in Europe or elsewhere. NSC-68 thus foresaw the definite possibility of war with the Soviet Union in the not distant future: It postulated that a period of "peak danger" lay only a few years off.

NSC-68 called on the United States and its allies to intensify their pursuit of containment by actively blocking Soviet expansion not only in areas that were strategically vital to the West, but even in peripheral areas. It worried that a setback almost anywhere would set a bad precedent, encourage the Soviets to transgress further, and contribute to a loss of confidence in the West. This concern led it to establish a new concept for containment, one that called for a firm perimeter defense along the entire Soviet periphery. This concept implied that along with Central Europe and Japan, such secondary areas as Korea, South Asia, the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf were to be defended if communist military forces transgressed there. NSC-68 thus cast the containment policy in global and inflexible terms. Further, it viewed military power as the principal mechanism of containment.

Setting aside Kennan's argument that political and economic instruments were equally important in the strategic equation, it contended that the West required defensive strength that at least matched the Soviet Union's military might. Indeed, it concluded that "without superior military strength, in being and readily mobilizable, a policy of containment...is no more than a policy of bluff."

NSC-68 called for an ambitious nuclear program, including development of the hydrogen bomb, acquisition of more U.S. strategic bombers, and an upgraded bomber air defense system. But it rejected the idea that nuclear weapons alone could provide the West with adequate military power. It argued that the United States had relied too heavily on nuclear weapons and therefore was left with few options between capitulation and precipitation of a global atomic war. To solve this problem, it called for a prompt and massive buildup of U.S. and allied ground, naval, and air strength. It did not specify how large a military posture should be built or by how much the U.S. defense budget should be increased. But NSC-68 clearly was talking in orders of magnitude. Informal estimates circulated at the time envisioned a budget of about \$50 billion, or about three and one-half times larger than Truman's present budget.<sup>4</sup>

## BUILDUP IN EUROPE

Although NSC-68 had broadly endorsed a major rearmament effort, it did not immediately trigger a greatly enhanced U.S. defense budget. Indeed Truman and Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, neither of whom were initially pleased with NSC-68, still held out hopes of keeping defense spending and force levels down to roughly present levels. This changed a short while later, however, when the Korean War broke out. Within a few weeks Truman dispatched several divisions to reinforce American and South Korean units holding out in Pusan. This action stripped bare the Army's reserves in the United States, thereby leaving NATO even more vulnerable to a Soviet attack in Europe. Accordingly,

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<sup>4</sup>Blair, *The Forgotten War*, p. 26.

Truman authorized a quick call-up of four National Guard divisions and 265,000 men to help compensate for this diversion. With this accomplished, he lifted the Defense Department's budgetary ceiling for FY51 and authorized the executive branch to determine long-range force requirements for both defending Korea and protecting other regions, including Europe.<sup>5</sup>

This task was accomplished over the following year. In July 1951, NSC-114 was issued, which authorized a big, long-term defense buildup to be commenced immediately. In response, the Defense Department requested a budget of \$70 billion along with a buildup that would culminate in 33 Army divisions, 3 Marine divisions, 143 air wings, 12 large carriers, and 420 naval combatants. Truman pared this request back to about \$50 billion and called for a stretched-out buildup that eventually would fulfill Air Force goals but would leave the Army and Navy well short of these targets. Even so, by early 1953 U.S. force levels had reached 20 Army divisions (8 in the Far East), 3 Marine divisions, 98 air wings, 14 large carriers, and 401 major naval combatants. The United States was now vastly better prepared to execute its global military strategy.<sup>6</sup>

This military buildup was accompanied by an American effort to energize NATO. In December 1950, Washington proposed a major NATO military buildup to include increased U.S. troop strength in Europe, a combined force under an American supreme commander, and development of a fully integrated civilian and military staff structure that made NATO a true organization. Truman pledged 6 U.S. divisions to NATO's defenses plus a reinforcing corps, a level that the Congress later reduced to a still substantial deployment of 5 divisions. During 1951 and 1952, U.S. troop strength in Europe grew from 145,000 to 346,000, thereby bringing U.S. Army forces there up to a strength of 5 divisions (4 infantry, 1 armored) and 3 independent regiments. Also, the United States launched

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<sup>5</sup>See Bradley's memoirs for a JCS perspective on the DoD budget battles during this period (*A General's Life*, Chaps. 4-5).

<sup>6</sup>Eight of these divisions, along with supporting air and naval forces, were deployed in the Korean theater. Even with this diversion, significantly more U.S. forces were now available for Europe than only two years before.

an expensive \$15 billion military assistance program to provide allied forces with the equipment they needed to defend themselves. This aid program was to play an important role in making possible the NATO conventional defense buildup that took place over the next several years.

Along with those forces came the weight of U.S. political leadership. In January 1951, General Eisenhower, who had been recalled to active duty, arrived in Europe to assume the position of NATO's first supreme commander (SACEUR); Montgomery was appointed Deputy SACEUR. In addition to establishing SHAPE headquarters the following summer, Eisenhower visited West European capitals and Washington, D.C., urging an immediate upswing in NATO's defense programs. His campaign soon resulted in major improvements that went well beyond the beneficial effects of the U.S. assistance program. British and French defense spending that year jumped upwards by 33 percent. The alliance also launched programs to increase training, procure larger ammunition stockpiles and other war reserves, and to construct new airfields, signal networks, pipelines, and storage facilities. These measures had the effect of building the all-important military infrastructure that was necessary for NATO to establish a better defense posture. As these measures took effect, optimism began building on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>7</sup>

Along with these improvements come a series of institutional enhancements that further energized NATO. In late 1951, agreement was reached on establishment of a civilian International Staff to facilitate coordination of decisions with alliance military authorities. In November, the NATO Defense College was created. In early 1952, the SACLANT and CINCHAN military commands were officially established to guide NATO's naval operations in the North Atlantic. Shortly thereafter, Lord Ismay (U.K.) became NATO's first Secretary General, and the various staffs serving him were amalgamated into a single organizational headquarters, located in Paris. With these important

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<sup>7</sup>See Jordan, *Generals in International Politics*, Chap. 1, "Eisenhower: Rekindling the Spirit of the West."

steps, NATO at last had become an alliance with a full-fledged organization and military command structure.

During this period, NATO also launched an effort to adapt a coherent military strategy, one that dropped the earlier division of labor philosophy and openly called for a large defense posture of U.S. and allied forces. A series of studies resulted in agreement in 1951 on MC 14/1, NATO's first formal strategy statement. Representing a combination of American and West European thinking, MC 14/1 postulated a strategy that relied heavily on strategic nuclear weapons. But it also incorporated ambitious goals for NATO's initial land defenses. It recognized that NATO's present force limitations temporarily would make a defense of all West German territory possible. Accordingly, it called for defense line initially along the Rhine River. But in a marked departure from the past, it also limited the Rhine defense to a period of five years, during which time NATO's forces were to grow to the point of making a more forward defense possible.<sup>8</sup>

MC 14/1 relied on American strategic bombardment and alliance-wide mobilization to achieve ultimate victory. But the forward defense component of the strategy was recognized as being viable only if NATO's ground posture could be significantly strengthened. Building on Montgomery's earlier efforts, the NATO military staff produced a revised estimate calling for 90 active and reserve divisions "in being." This force level however did not apply only to the Central Region and the AFCENT command there, which accounted only for 54 divisions. It also envisioned a strong conventional defense along the southern flank under AFSOUTH (21 divisions), on the northern flank under AFNORTH (14 divisions), and in the North Atlantic (1 division presumably for Iceland). Thus NATO's military strategy, in response to the alliance's growing membership, had been expanded to include the entire European theater.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>See Karnowski, *The German Army and NATO Strategy*, Chap. 2.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

## THE LISBON GOALS

Although the alliance now found itself in high gear, the NATO staff's ambitious force goals soon proved to be more than the traffic would bear. At the time, NATO's entire posture still numbered only some 12 divisions and 900 combat aircraft. Many European and American political leaders objected that a major, fast-paced military buildup would consume scarce investment funds, trigger inflation, deplete currency reserves, and thereby undermine Western Europe's economic recovery. In response, the alliance commissioned a further internal review of its military requirements in order to adjust force levels, readiness standards, and scheduling to the prevailing political and economic constraints. This study was led by three "wise men"--Averell Harriman (U.S.), Jean Monnet (France), and Sir Edwin Plowden (U.K.)--who commanded political stature across the alliance. It culminated in the force goals that were officially adopted by the North Atlantic Council at Lisbon in early 1952. As shown in Table 2, the Lisbon goals established alliance-wide targets for ground and air forces (along with a navy building to over 700 ships).

Although the Lisbon agreement was later to be characterized as an exercise in futility, at the time it was regarded as a major achievement in alliance planning. It reflected a NATO-wide decision partially to subordinate economic recovery to rearmament and to establish a common frame of reference for guiding member nation defense efforts in the years ahead. While it did not scale back the total force level

Table 2  
LISBON FORCE GOALS

	1952	1953	1954
Divisions	50	75	96
Aircraft	4000	6500	9000

SOURCE: See Osgood, *NATO, The Entangling Alliance*, pp. 87-88.

envisioned by earlier studies, it did stretch out the pace at which NATO's members would be required to meet the new goals. Also, it mandated that only 35 to 40 of the 96 total divisions need be combat-ready units: Its basic concept was to create enough active forces to contend with highly ready Soviet units that might launch a surprise attack, while deploying the remainder as less expensive reserve units whose readiness would be linked to the arrival of later-deploying Soviet reserves. As a result, the Lisbon goals concluded that about 40 percent of NATO's posture could be less expensive reserve units that would be available a few days or weeks after mobilization. It thus attempted to launch a buildup that would be financially affordable and politically realistic. Even so, the Lisbon goals postulated daunting targets for the alliance. These targets, it was widely recognized, could be achieved only if all member nations exerted strong efforts in the face of tough economic difficulties. A true coalition response was required.

Although skepticism prevailed in some quarters, the alliance's initial response was encouraging. On the northern flank, Norway and Denmark began upgrading their combat forces. On the southern flank, Italy, Greece, and Turkey (the latter two nations were admitted to NATO in 1952) did likewise. In the critical Center Region, a similar pattern emerged. Belgium, aided by U.S. military assistance, committed itself to an ambitious rearmament program. Its defense budget grew from only 5 million francs in 1948 to 21 million francs in 1953; its army doubled in size in this period from 75,000 soldiers to 150,000. Reacting to the Lisbon goals, Belgium set a future target of fielding 3 active and 2 reserve divisions, an air force of 400 aircraft, and a 15-ship navy. The Netherlands committed itself to providing a single corps of 1 active and 4 reserve divisions that could be mobilized within 48 hours. Canada also agreed to provide a single brigade in Europe and an air division, plus 2 reinforcing brigades. The United Kingdom agreed to reverse its centuries-old policy of avoiding continental commitments and set about to establish a combat-ready British Army of the Rhine (BAOR), a force that would field 4 or 5 divisions. Perhaps most important, France, then an outspoken advocate of forward defense, agreed to provide about 15



divisions. At the time, however, the French had only 5 divisions in Europe; 10 others were tied up in Indochina and elsewhere. France's ability to fully meet this commitment anytime soon was a large question mark.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of these increases, NATO's defenses in 1953 stood at much higher levels than had been the case five years before. As Table 3 shows, NATO's strength had at least doubled in nearly every category. These increases did not fully offset the Soviet Union's edge, but they brought the force balance closer into alignment. The Soviets, of course, retained the capacity to reinforce from the western USSR. But the United States now had the capacity to reinforce NATO with at least an additional 3 to 6 divisions. All this was not nearly enough to give NATO a highly confident defense posture, especially for a forward defense of West German territory. But it was enough to begin making NATO competitive on the battlefield at least in the early stages.

Table 3  
NATO FORCE TRENDS,  
1948-1953

Force	1948	1953
Manpower (000's)	450	600
Division-equivalents	6	16
Brigades/regiments	27	47
Tanks	600	1650
Armored vehicles	1000	2000
Antitank weapons	500	1100
Artillery	500	1150
Aircraft	600	1300

SOURCE: Author's estimate; multiple sources. Similar data can be found in Phillip A. Karber, "The Central European Arms Race, 1948-80," draft paper presented to the Arms Control Conference at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Ebenhausen, FRG, June 11-13, 1980.

<sup>10</sup>Osgood, *NATO, The Entangling Alliance*.

The Lisbon Force Goals promised to improve NATO's defenses in the Center Region further. But even if the United States and its other NATO allies completely met all the commitments entrusted to them, together they would provide only 37 to 42 of the 54 divisions (depending upon the extent of U.S. and French reinforcements) that the Lisbon goals required for Central Europe. As the architects of the Lisbon agreement were well aware, a viable Center Region posture could be attained only if the alliance faced up to the politically wrenching problem of allowing West Germany to rearm. Accordingly the Lisbon Goals, based on complex alliance negotiations that had been underway since 1950, also called for deployment of 12 West German divisions.<sup>11</sup> Over the next two years the alliance's defense deliberations were to focus primarily on how this controversial goal could be achieved.

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<sup>11</sup>Karnowski, *The German Army and NATO Strategy*.

## VI. GERMAN REARMAMENT

Efforts by the occupying Western powers to establish a sovereign Federal Republic of Germany were part of a conscious strategy to integrate that nation within the Western alliance, including both its military and economic arms. This campaign got underway in 1948 and steadily gained momentum in the following years. In late 1948 West Germany's Parliamentary Council met in Bonn to establish a provisional constitution for a new state. The new constitution, termed the "Basic Law," was approved by allied military governments and adopted in May 1949. Two weeks later, the Federal Republic was officially proclaimed and placed under the guidance of a civilian High Commission. In the following months Konrad Adenauer, an ardent advocate of integration with the West even at the expense of reunification, was elected and confirmed by the new Bundestag as the FRG's first Chancellor.

Over the next three years, the Federal Republic emerged as a stable, economically strong, pro-NATO democracy. In no small way, this achievement was a product of Adenauer's visionary but clear-minded, pragmatic leadership. Adenauer calculated that Germany needed to be anchored in the West not only to protect itself from the Soviet Union, but also to ensure that the FRG would never again succumb to nationalist forces at home. As a result, he consciously sought to embed the FRG in Western institutions and to be "a good ally." The West, for the most part, reacted favorably to Adenauer's agenda. The state of war between Germany and the Western powers was officially terminated, and in 1951 West Germany became a member of the new European Coal and Steel Community, the forerunner of the Common Market. In May 1952, a Contractual Agreement was signed by the United States, France, and Britain, thereby formally ending the military occupation of Germany. Full sovereignty, however, was not achieved until almost three years later, after a lengthy diplomatic dispute over Germany's rearmament had been resolved.

## INITIAL STEPS

Interest in rearming West Germany had emerged together with the drive to make that nation an important political and economic contributor to the Western alliance. The idea of rearmament first took hold in the Pentagon in 1948, where U.S. military officers were quick to realize that Western Europe could not be defended without a German military contribution. Political support for this idea was lacking, however, especially among France and other West European nations that still were embittered by World War II. Moreover, West Germany itself was hostile to the idea; immediately after becoming Chancellor, Adenauer swore off any interest in rearmament. By 1950, opinions had changed. That year the United States, driven by ambitious Pentagon demands for a highly developed NATO defense establishment that would make a large U.S. force presence sensible, conditioned its military commitment to NATO on agreement that German rearmament would eventually be undertaken. By this time, the British and most West European nations (minus France) also had reconciled themselves to the idea, especially if German forces would become part of an all-European army.<sup>1</sup> The stage was thus set for the alliance to begin moving in this direction.

The drive that took place during 1950-1952 to rearm West Germany, restore its sovereignty, and admit it into NATO--astonishing steps given the recent legacy of World War II--can be understood only in the context of the changes that were taking place in European security affairs and the West's attitude toward the FRG. Prior to 1950, the situation in Europe was fairly fluid. Many in the West still hoped that a satisfactory deal could be worked out with Stalin now that he had come to understand NATO's resolve and the limits of Soviet power. Reinforcing their hopes was the fact that Stalin himself had been

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<sup>1</sup>The background events leading up to the FRG's admission into NATO are covered by Reed, *Germany and NATO*; Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*; and Richardson, *Germany and the Atlantic Alliance*. For an excellent analysis of the action of the Bundeswehr, see Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

showing some signs of flexibility after having been rebuffed over Berlin and confronted with NATO's formation. The outbreak of the Korean War, coupled with what seemed to be a decision by Stalin to abandon any interest in a settlement with the West, changed this. It became apparent in the West that Europe was now permanently divided into two opposing camps and that a prolonged period of tension was in store. Indeed, fear spread that the Korean War was only the Eastern bloc's opening gambit and that Western Europe would be next.

The division of Europe into two blocs cast West Germany into the role of being a Western front-line state, one that could not be allowed to remain neutral and unarmed. The idea of rearming West Germany would have been anathema only a few years before, when anger toward Germany still ran high in most Western nations. But the West's psychology had undergone a fundamental transformation since then; West Germany, in the West's collective mind, had gone from being a foe to becoming a friend. This process had started as early as 1946, when Western officials began sending signals of acceptance to West Germany, and crystallized during the Berlin crisis of 1948-1949. During the Berlin blockade, Germans began being perceived as innocent victims of Soviet aggression who had the pluck and determination to stand up to Stalin's bullying tactics. Meanwhile, denazification and the creation of democratic institutions in the new Federal Republic helped cleanse Germany's authoritarian and militaristic image. Also, West Germany's energetic economic recovery and its evident willingness to be a stable contributor to the Western community were impressive. Taken together, these developments gave West Germany an entirely new and attractive image. Essentially, NATO's members came to conclude that the Federal Republic was needed in the alliance not only for geopolitical purposes, but also because it belonged in the fold for reason of common values.

In West Germany itself, the Adenauer government began to see potential advantages in rearmament and entrance into NATO. Adenauer recognized that this step likely would be controversial among the German populace, which had developed a markedly antimilitary orientation since 1945. Abroad, rearmament could be expected to stir up fears of a

resurgent German militarism and irredentism. Equally important, it likely would put a final nail in the coffin of reunification. Offsetting these drawbacks, in Adenauer's eyes, was the principal consideration that the FRG's territory could not be physically protected from Soviet aggression in absence of NATO membership and the presence of a sizable German army. This alone made rearmament a practical necessity. Politically, rearmament also offered a host of benefits as long as it could be undertaken within the framework of NATO and other western institutions. Among these benefits, rearmament could help gain sovereignty for the FRG and establish a more equal relationship with other Western nations. Entrance into NATO, in turn, could help gain concessions from the United States and other members regarding the FRG's security, while serving to erase lingering memories of World War II. Finally, Adenauer hoped this act might help strengthen democratic institutions within West Germany while further promoting the cause of political integration across Western Europe.

As the early months of 1950 passed by, Bonn received a growing number of signals from the United States and other NATO nations giving a green light to rearmament. Adenauer initially demurred, but when the Korean War broke out in late June he dramatically switched positions and became an active proponent of rearmament. In late August, he informed the Allied High Commission that West Germany was now willing to make a military contribution within the framework of a European force. This was followed by his decision in October to initiate a secret, low-keyed effort in Bonn to begin drawing up plans (expressed in the Himmerod memorandum, the Bundeswehr's Magna Carta) for the formation of a West German defense establishment, one that would be tightly integrated into Federal Republic democratic institutions. This effort produced tentative ideas on a host of matters, including force levels, doctrine, weapon systems, and logistics. Adenauer then appointed Theodore Blank, a parliamentary deputy of the CDU party, as his new security adviser, with a small staff of civilians and ex-military officers charged with responsibility for transforming the Himmerod concepts into full-fledged plans. In succeeding months, Blank's staff was to grow steadily, eventually mutating into the present-day FRG defense ministry.

Meanwhile, official interest grew steadily in other NATO capitals, including Washington. In January 1951, General Eisenhower spoke favorably of the idea. That month, FRG officials met with the U.S., British, and French High Commissioners atop the Petersberg outside Bonn and opened formal discussions about FRG rearmament, entrance into NATO, and sovereignty. As these talks progressed over the following months, the West's commitment to these steps steadily deepened. That September the North Atlantic Council officially agreed to consider West Germany's participation in NATO of a political and military nature. The only issue was one of exactly how rearmament was to be achieved and within what Western institutional framework.

#### THE PARIS AGREEMENT OF 1954

It was at this juncture that the French, who still remained opposed to the emergence of any German army as an independent entity, entered the arena in an effort to channel rearmament in a direction acceptable to them. In Paris, a number of West European allies had been negotiating on forming an all-European military force. The onset of the Petersberg talks in Bonn led the French government to invite the FRG to join the negotiations in Paris. This accomplished, the French in October proposed the Pleven Plan (named after Premier René Pleven), which called for creation of a European Defense Community (EDC). As envisioned by Pleven, the EDC was to include a Special European Force under a European Minister of Defense, which would have its own command staff but still would be controlled by SACEUR. German soldiers were to contribute to this force, along with other continental allies, but the Federal Republic would be not allowed to form its own General Staff, defense ministry, or armaments industry. In essence, the Pleven Plan aimed at creating German forces without rearming the West German state itself.

The United States and other alliance members, including the FRG, came to support the basic idea that any German army should be integrated into the Western alliance in a European army. The Paris Conference in July 1951 endorsed this concept, and General Eisenhower agreed to

cooperate in its development. The specifics of the Pleven Plan, however, drew little support outside France. On purely military grounds, it suffered from technical drawbacks. It initially envisioned that the new European Force would have no national identity above the battalion (later regimental) level. This concept drew a cool response from NATO's military commanders, who felt that multinational integration below the corps level (or at most, division) was operationally infeasible. Equally important, the Pleven Plan was politically unacceptable. It implied French domination of the European Force and the near exclusion of the Americans and British--an idea received poorly in Washington and London. Moreover, it was viewed in Bonn as an affront to the FRG's sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

The Pleven Plan's rejection triggered the United States and other West European nations into launching negotiations aimed at creating an EDC and a rearmed West Germany in an alternative, more widely accepted way. The goal of this approach was to tie West German forces to the alliance, preserve a balance of military power between the FRG and France, and achieve an equitable distribution of U.S. military assistance among the West European nations. These negotiations culminated in May 1952--the same time that the Lisbon Force Goals were agreed upon--with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, which, upon approval of allied parliaments, was to bring the EDC to life. Ratification of the EDC, in turn, was to trigger activation of the Bonn Convention, also signed at this time, restoring West Germany to full sovereignty.

The EDC Treaty envisioned a European force, but unlike the original Pleven Plan it authorized national units at the divisional level and abandoned plans for integration at lower echelons. It was intended to merge the armed forces of six signatory nations: France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. It also included

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<sup>2</sup>See Karnowski, *The Germany Army and NATO Strategy*, and Osgood, *NATO, The Entangling Alliance*. See also Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles*, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973, Chaps. 12-13.



agreements committing the U.S. and British forces to the defense of EDC nations, including West Germany, and called upon France to contribute 12 to 15 divisions. Equally important, it established upper limits on total German military strength that remain in effect today, with peacetime German ground, air, and naval manpower to be limited to 500,000 men. Although some earlier studies had envisioned a German army of 18 divisions, the EDC Treaty limited the FRG to 12 active divisions plus some reserve units. In total, some 43 allied divisions were to be fielded, all under a supreme commander and with a single budget. The budget was to be controlled by an executive commissariat, a council of ministers, an assembly, and a court of justice. The EDC thus aimed to propel the West European members a good distance in the direction of political integration.<sup>3</sup>

The EDC, however, never got off the ground because the French, having been important architects of this laboriously negotiated treaty, promptly backed away from the entire enterprise. Shortly after the Treaty was signed, the French government decided to delay ratifying it until early 1953. Under intense U.S. pressure, exemplified by Secretary of State Dulles's famous "agonizing reappraisal" speech, the Treaty was finally submitted to the National Assembly for approval, where it promptly encountered major opposition from hostile French political parties. The Treaty languished until 1954, when the Laniel government fell over Indochina. The new Premier, Pierre Mendes-France, demanded major revisions to the Treaty, which were rejected by the other signatories. Facing continuing demands from the United States and other alliance members to approve the Treaty and thereby restore the FRG's long-delayed sovereignty, he finally brought the Treaty to a vote. On August 30, 1954, the National Assembly rejected it by a margin of 319 to 264.

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<sup>3</sup>Early studies by the FRG government had identified a requirement of 12 to 18 divisions. The EDC Treaty and the subsequent Paris Agreement limited the Bundeswehr to 12 active divisions. Also, they allowed the FRG to deploy a reserve Territorial Army. The FRG thus was granted flexibility to build a posture somewhat larger than the 12-division limit.

This negative reaction partly was a product of resurgent French nationalism, which rejected the concept of European unity and any loss of sovereign control over French forces. But it also was driven by practical reasons. Militarily, the French were unable to meet the Treaty's force commitments due to their large overseas deployments. Politically, France by 1954 also had begun to become concerned about West Germany's growing political energy and were chary of an organization that left out the British as a counterbalance. Whatever the causes, France's decision--not the first (or last) by Paris to annoy Washington, London, and Bonn--left the dismayed alliance with the dispiriting task of forging an entirely new arrangement for authorizing the FRG's admission into NATO.

The task might have been impossible if support for West Germany's rearmament and entrance into NATO had dissipated in the intervening years. But this was not the case. The political atmosphere in Europe, to be sure, had changed for the better. But the bloc-to-bloc nature of what was rapidly becoming a permanent bipolar confrontation along the inter-German border had not changed. As a result, NATO's members remained intent on bringing the FRG into the fold.

The Korean War scare had long since died down and then disappeared entirely when an armistice ended the war in 1953. In May 1952, Stalin had surprisingly announced a proposal calling for German reunification and withdrawal of foreign troops in exchange for a neutrality that would keep Germany out of NATO. Several months of diplomatic contacts ensued, after which the FRG and other Western governments decided that Stalin's proposal would give the Soviets too much latitude for intervening in Germany's affairs and therefore declined to negotiate formally. Following this rejection, Soviet diplomacy went into a temporary hiatus brought about by Stalin's death. By early 1954, Moscow became active again and within a few months the Soviet government offered a number of proposals for a European collective security system to replace NATO. These ideas were also turned aside by the West because they would have forced the United States out of Europe, denied immediate free elections in Germany, and otherwise failed to provide adequate security guarantees

to other West European allies. Early 1954 thus found little prospect for an East-West deal in Central Europe; however, at least the two sides were now talking to each other.

Notwithstanding this progress, however, in other ways the Cold War seemed even more entrenched than ever. In particular, the Soviet government's adoption of a more flexible stance on German reunification and other European security issues was accompanied by a widespread acceleration of military modernization programs that steadily improved the quality of Soviet forces arrayed against Western Europe. Most noteworthy was the appearance of light and medium bombers that could deliver nuclear weapons against targets in Western Europe as well as U.S. bomber staging bases along the USSR's periphery. Within the Soviet homeland, the USSR's bomber air defense network, which was not particularly strong in World War II, was beefed up noticeably, thereby suggesting a concentrated effort to block attacks by U.S. bombers.

In the forward areas, meanwhile, Soviet occupation forces in East Germany were organized into a "Group of Soviet Forces, Germany (GSFG)," made up of six field armies, thus implying adoption of a formal wartime mission. The GSFG's 22 divisions, along with 8 Soviet divisions in other East European nations were promptly reorganized, brought to higher standards of training and readiness, provided better logistic support and facilities, and given new equipment. For example, in 1952 the T-54 tank replaced the World War II vintage T-34 and modern jet fighters were deployed to Soviet tactical air units in the forward areas.

This force improvement campaign was accompanied by a Soviet effort to rehabilitate the military forces of its East European allies. In 1948 the Soviet government had begun signing separate mutual defense treaties with each of these nations. Rearmament began almost immediately, commencing with the establishment of a large "people's police force" in East Germany. By early 1954, efforts were underway to field some 65 to 80 East European divisions, about one-half of which were maintained in combat-ready status. Some 30 of these divisions were arrayed in Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia, within easy striking range of West Germany's borders.

All this military activity left the Western allies suspended between confusion and caution. Although Soviet diplomacy was steadily signaling a flexible willingness to negotiate Europe's future, Moscow's military buildup was making Western Europe even more vulnerable to invasion than before. Especially in the eyes of suspicious Western governments, the whole effort suggested a cynical Soviet effort to divide the Western allies among themselves while preserving massive Soviet military strength in Central Europe. Whatever the case, the Soviet Union's military buildup was having the effect of leaving West Germany vulnerable not only to a Soviet invasion launched after several months of reinforcement from the USSR but also to a surprise attack mounted by Soviet forces stationed in East Germany. This important development strongly increased the rationale for deploying a West German army that, along with U.S. and British forces, could respond quickly.

The ambiguity of the situation triggered a bitter public debate within West Germany, where the question of rearmament was taken up by the Bundestag in 1953. In particular, the SPD party, claiming that Stalin's 1952 proposal was a "lost opportunity," attacked Adenauer on the grounds that rearmament would permanently scuttle any hope for reunification. Adenauer, dismissing Stalin's demarche as a charade, countered with the argument that West Germany's security would be far better ensured by embedding the nation in the Western alliance. Moreover, reunification, he maintained, could best be achieved through a "policy of strength" that only full sovereignty, rearmament, and membership in NATO could provide. In the end, Adenauer prevailed in a way that strengthened his position within West Germany. A number of SPD members relented and began working with Adenauer on planning for the Bundeswehr's creation.

By fall 1954, the West German government still firmly supported the idea of rearmament and entrance into NATO. Similar attitudes prevailed in most other Western capitals, where suspicion of Soviet motives remained high. This was especially true in the United States, where the frustrating experience of the Korean War had left the American government still intent on erecting a solid NATO deterrent in Central

Europe. The only issue was finding some new mechanism to replace the EDC, one that West Germany, France, Britain, and other alliance members would accept.

Negotiations in the following weeks fortunately led to agreement on a new plan, largely engineered by U.K. Foreign Minister Anthony Eden with U.S. support, that proved satisfactory. This plan abandoned the idea of a separate West European defense force by calling for integration of purely national forces under a strengthened SACEUR, who was given responsibility for operational control of German forces in wartime and inspection of them in peacetime. It provided for West German membership, as a fully sovereign nation, in both NATO and the Brussels Treaty (now named "West European Union," or WEU). The EDC's troop limits remained in effect and the FRG voluntarily pledged not to produce nuclear weapons and certain other armaments (chemical and biological) or to create a General Staff. The FRG also voluntarily pledged not to undertake a military role independent of NATO or to use force to change European borders. Additionally, the British and the United States promised to retain a large force presence in Germany for as long as necessary, thereby meeting an important French and West German demand. This accord was quickly approved by the allied governments and was signed in Paris in October 1954.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Paris Agreement has largely been forgotten by contemporary generations, its signing was one of the most important events in NATO's history, comparable to the North Atlantic Treaty itself and the establishment of NATO's integrated military structure. What the Paris Agreement did was to help seal the transatlantic bargain by creating a set of three mutually reinforcing, interdependent commitments. From the United States, the Paris Agreement formalized a commitment to provide both extended nuclear deterrence to Western Europe and a sizable American military presence there. It thereby permanently reversed the alliance's original commitment to a division of labor that excused the United States from defending the European continent. From

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<sup>4</sup>See Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles*, for an in-depth discussion of the London and Paris meetings that led to this agreement.

West Germany, it extracted a commitment to rearmament, but one of moderate, politically acceptable proportions. From the other Western allies, including Britain, it secured a commitment to provide sizable military forces for the defense of the continent.

Hence, each participant was required to undertake important, enduring obligations of the sort that sovereign nations do normally accept. The Paris Agreement made these obligations acceptable by offering each participant offsetting strategic gains that exceeded the costs of these commitments. The West European allies agreed with the United States that they would cooperate in building the strong NATO defense posture, which made a lasting U.S. military presence in Europe a safe, beneficial proposition. The West European nations (the FRG aside) got extended deterrence from the United States made credible by an American presence, as well as guarantees that a rearmed West Germany would play a healthy role in Europe. For its part, the Federal Republic got sovereignty, co-equal status in the Western community, and an alliance commitment to defend West German territory. While granting the FRG sovereignty, the allies kept their legal rights regarding Berlin and other aspects of German unity, including control over a future peace treaty resolving Germany's post-World War II status. In exchange, the FRG secured NATO agreement to support eventual reunification of Germany, a provision that was highly important to Adenauer internally. The Paris Agreement thus created a mutually satisfying exchange. What made it most satisfying and enduring is that this exchange upgraded the common interests of all participants in one simple but fundamental way. By establishing multinational roles and missions that were blended together to create a workable coalition, it laid the basis for a cooperative program to build the kind of military posture that could defend the West's security interests. The Paris Agreement provided the foundation upon which NATO's later innovations in military strategy and force posture were built. It continues in effect today, a monument to NATO's ability effectively to conduct coalition planning, management, and politics.

In the wake of the Paris Agreement, the FRG was formally admitted into NATO in May 1955. In response, Bonn announced a plan to undertake establishment of a defense force (named Bundeswehr) and full rearmament. Bonn aimed to field the first German soldiers by the following fall and to begin providing staff support for NATO. By using U.S. weapons under the security assistance program, it hoped to deploy the first two German Army (Bundesheer) divisions as early as 1957. By 1961, it aspired to achieve activation of all 12 divisions as well as a lightly equipped reserve Territorial Army for rear-area security. Bonn also established plans for a sizable air force of 10 tactical fighter wings (85,000 men) and a small coastal navy of 15 squadrons (20,000 men).

Although German planners initially favored an Army largely made up of armored divisions, Bonn's final plan called for a mix of four different types of divisions: five armored, five armored infantry, one airborne, and one mountain division. Support structures were purposely kept small and were made reliant on the territorial reserves and the civilian sector. The guiding concept was to configure the Army solely for strategic defensive operations; more armored divisions and larger support structures would have allowed broader scope for offensive operations. The approved posture provided the large infantry forces that were needed to help defend a broad front line in sufficient density. At the same time, it rejected such concepts as fixed installations, barrier systems, and use of lightly equipped infantry on any terrain other than mountains and thick forests. German planners, many of them Wehrmacht veterans, had concluded that the Army's main maneuver divisions must be able to fight in the intense mobile, armor-dominated battles that would take place on the open, rolling terrain along the key attack corridors. Each of the ten heavy divisions consequently was provided a balanced combination of armor, infantry, and artillery. Also, plans were drawn up to mechanize the infantry battalions in both the armored and armored infantry divisions by providing them armored personnel carriers. This was done to give infantry units sufficient mobility and protection from enemy artillery fire.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See Karnowski, *The German Army and NATO Strategy*. Also, Phillip Karber provides a good analysis of the Bundeswehr's structure and

The impending deployment of these German ground forces raised important questions about NATO's defense concept. For all practical purposes, early movement of the defense line from the Rhine River well eastward was a precondition for the FRG's willingness to rearm. But exactly where the new line was to be drawn remained an open issue. American and allied military authorities remained cautious about any plans that tactically might be difficult to implement and could expose NATO's forces to quick penetrations. A core problem was that rivers (e.g., the Weser, Main, and Danube) and other defensible terrain in many areas were located some distance to the West. Moreover, many allied forces were stationed in the middle of West Germany and were most familiar with the terrain there. Moving them forward en masse would have been difficult and costly. This was a practical factor that unavoidably weighed heavily in the calculations of budget-conscious NATO governments.

The FRG itself obviously favored a forward defense, but officially adopted a reserved stance on quickly pushing NATO into defending along the inter-German border. Adenauer was reluctant for the FRG to immediately take the initiative on this sensitive issue in ways that might appear overly assertive. He was also influenced by senior officers of the new FRG Army who were militarily unattracted to any rigid interpretation of forward defense. The doctrine that they had inherited from the Wehrmacht in World War II stressed mobile defense in which major counterattacks would be launched into the flanks of advancing enemy forces. This provided a rationale not for a thick, linear line along the border but instead a thinner front and the massing of large reserves in the rear areas.<sup>6</sup>

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evolution in his chapter "The Federal Republic of Germany" in Jeffrey Simon's *NATO and the Warsaw Pact Mobilization*, Fort Leslie J. McNair, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1988.

<sup>6</sup>Karnowski, *The German Army and NATO Strategy*. Also, Henry Kissinger provides background material on the evolution of Germany defense concepts. See *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957, Chap. 9, pp. 269-315.



For these reasons, no decision was immediately taken. The simple fact that the German Army would not be fully fielded for several years meant that this difficult decision did not have to be made for the moment. But once the German Army reached full strength, NATO officials knew, the alliance would have to come to grips with it. This doctrinal issue notwithstanding, the decision to rearm West Germany meant that NATO's defense strategy and conventional force posture, after five years of struggle, finally seemed close to realization. The United States had firmly committed itself to Western Europe's defense. An operational plan had been established that commanded political and military support across the alliance. NATO's charter members had agreed upon plans to provide forces to execute it. Finally, progress was well underway to create the solid foundation of German military strength that was necessary for the military strategy to work.

This momentum slowed, however, during the next several years because of a decline in political tensions in East-West relations, the steady fading of the West's sense of urgency and the associated rise of economic and budgetary priorities on both sides of the Atlantic. The result was a sharp swing, first by the United States and then by the entire alliance, toward relying on nuclear weapons for deterrence and defense. A predictable, if not entirely intended, by-product of this shift toward a nuclear strategy was a sharp downswing in NATO's conventional defense efforts that resulted in the alliance's failure to attain the defense goals to which it had so enthusiastically committed itself only a few years before.

## VII. NUCLEAR INTERLUDE

While nuclear weapons had been integral to NATO's military strategy from the onset, they had originally played a circumscribed role that did not interfere with the goal of also building conventional strength. MC 14/1 had assumed that NATO's defense posture would fully incorporate nuclear weapons into its operational plans and force structure, and that these weapons would be used early. But it essentially laid nuclear forces on top of what otherwise was a traditional plan for waging a conventional campaign in Central Europe. MC 14/1 adopted this approach primarily because NATO's military commanders continued to regard nuclear weapons as a firepower-enhancing adjunct to conventional forces, rather than the forerunner of an entirely different form of warfare. Their judgment stemmed primarily from the fact that even as late as 1951, the West's nuclear inventory was as yet a relatively modest one. Although the United States was embarking on a major nuclear buildup, its strategic bomber force for the moment was still unable to wage a militarily decisive bombardment campaign against the Soviet Union. Additionally, the alliance lacked the delivery systems and the small, low-yield nuclear warheads that were needed for tactical employment on the battlefield. Nuclear integration into NATO's ground and tactical air forces thus was not then feasible, and the alliance's tactical concepts for land warfare had no alternative but to rely primarily on conventional weapons for their firepower.

All this began to change as the mid-1950s approached. By the time Eisenhower assumed office, the Strategic Air Command was well on the way toward acquiring a force of 300 intercontinental B-36 bombers supported by about 1400 medium-range B-47 jet bombers that could reach the Soviet Union from U.S. bases along the USSR's periphery. There were also plans to replace the aging and vulnerable B-36s with a force of about 500 intercontinental B-52 jet bombers that could strike the Soviet Union from bases within the United States. Moreover, nuclear weapons that could be employed tactically started entering the U.S. inventory as

well. In October 1953, the first U.S. atomic artillery piece, the 280-mm cannon weighing 85 tons, arrived in Europe. In 1954, smaller and more maneuverable rockets and missiles, including Honest John, Corporal, Matador, and Regulus, followed. Under development were even smaller nuclear tube artillery shells and bombs that could be delivered by tactical aircraft.

This technological revolution greatly expanded the role that nuclear weapons, once fully deployed, were capable of playing in NATO's military strategy. The acquisition of a large force of modern bombers gave the Strategic Air Command the nuclear capability to destroy the Soviet Union's war-making industrial potential in a single crushing blow, thereby obviating the need for a prolonged and marginally effective conventional bombing campaign. Simultaneously, the deployment of tactical weapons promised to provide NATO's theater commanders the capacity to wage a nuclear campaign on the battlefield itself, one aimed at blunting a massive Soviet invasion through nuclear firepower delivered by NATO's ground and air forces. Since the Soviet Union still lacked both a credible strategic bomber force and a sizable inventory of tactical nuclear weapons, the West temporarily enjoyed nuclear superiority over the USSR to a seemingly decisive degree. NATO's emerging nuclear force posture thus seemed to provide the alliance a conveniently low-cost and militarily effective alternative for deterring a Soviet attack and defending Central Europe.

U.S. efforts to integrate nuclear weapons into its force posture and strategy began accelerating early in 1953, shortly after the Eisenhower Administration took office. Eisenhower himself saw the military potential of nuclear weapons and quickly embraced them as the solution to the West's defense problems. Aware that the alliance was going to encounter difficulty meeting the Lisbon Force Goals, he felt that NATO would have serious trouble executing its increasingly ambitious defense plans if it continued to rely on conventional forces. He concluded that nuclear weapons offered a viable mechanism for underwriting the West's military strategy. Eisenhower also was motivated by his own budgetary priorities. By late 1953 the Korean

armistice had been signed, Stalin had died, and the Cold War seemed to be thawing. The prevailing mood in the United States was one of war-weariness coupled with a desire to return to peace, prosperity, and tranquility. All this led Eisenhower, himself a fiscal conservative, to scale back U.S. defense spending in order to bring the federal budget back into balance and to facilitate the steady, inflation-free economic growth that the nation wanted. Because nuclear weapons were cheap and powerful, they fit perfectly into this calculus. By substituting them for expensive conventional forces, Eisenhower found a way to cut the DoD budget while maintaining a seemingly strong deterrent.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, in late 1953 the White House issued NSC 162, which articulated an entirely new national security policy for the Eisenhower administration. Called the "New Look," this policy rejected NSC-68's assumption that East-West relations were likely to reach a peak danger point in the near future. Envisioning instead an enduring East-West struggle lasting many years, the New Look asserted that the United States needed to settle down for the long haul. This meant that the United States needed to place high priority not only on defense preparedness but also on its own economic health and social cohesion. Above all, NSC-162 asserted, the United States could not afford to bankrupt itself in pursuit of military strength that would provide short-term security at the expense of stripping the nation of its competitiveness in the long run.

Given this emphasis on economic prosperity at home, the New Look aimed at striking a balanced relationship between the ends and means of national security policy. With respect to ends, the New Look called for continued pursuit of containment around the globe. Indeed, it said that the United States should strive to gain the initiative in the Cold War and, if possible, to roll back the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe, the Far East, and elsewhere. But in addressing the question of means, it called for pursuit of this ambitious goal at affordable cost. This led

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<sup>1</sup>See Eisenhower's memoirs. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1963, Chap. 18, pp. 445-458.

the New Look to emphasize a wide variety of policy instruments beyond purely military power, including alliances, economic assistance, psychological warfare, and covert action. Instruments of this nature, the New Look's authors felt, could help block Soviet expansion inexpensively, thereby allowing the United States to win the Cold War not only in the short term but in the long term as well.

In situations when Soviet provocation could be answered only through military force, the New Look sought to economize by calling on the United States to respond at times, in places, and in ways that took advantage of its own strengths and capitalized on enemy weaknesses. In particular, the New Look concluded that the West should not attempt directly to counterbalance Soviet conventional military power in areas around the USSR's periphery where the Soviets could bring their strengths to bear. Instead, the New Look said, the United States and its allies should strive to enhance deterrence through the threat of retaliation elsewhere: on the seas, in other locations, and, if necessary, with nuclear escalation. Contrary to popular impressions, the New Look did not envision the use of nuclear weapons in all, or even most, contingencies. Nor did it call for brinkmanship tactics in every crisis. But it certainly did call for early nuclear escalation in the event of a major Soviet attack on the United States and Western Europe. The military strategy that it endorsed for this situation was one of "Massive Retaliation," a term that Secretary of State Dulles made famous in his speech to the Council of Foreign Relations in early 1954.<sup>2</sup>

Although this concept became associated with Dulles because he was among the first to use it publicly, Massive Retaliation was a product of the Pentagon's efforts to use newly emerging nuclear technologies to come to grips with Eisenhower's budgetary stringency. Its origins lay in OFFTACKLE, which called for nuclear bombardment of the Soviet Union as part of the first phase of the West's military strategy in Europe.

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<sup>2</sup>For a review of the New Look and Massive Retaliation, see Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*. See also Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.

Recognizing that NATO was unlikely to field all the conventional forces required by MC 14/1 and the Lisbon goals, Pentagon planners essentially lifted the nuclear bombardment phase out of OFFTACKLE and made it the core feature of Eisenhower's strategy. Massive Retaliation was based on a scenario in which the Soviet Union was assumed to strike first by launching an all-out attack aimed at conquering Western Europe and destroying U.S. military and industrial power as well. It envisioned that the war would begin with a Soviet nuclear strike on the United States and Western Europe, followed immediately by a full-scale Soviet invasion intended to overrun the entire continent. In response to this provocation, it called on the Strategic Air Command to deliver a massive nuclear blow against the Soviet Union's urban and industrial areas and military facilities. Following this, U.S. and allied forces were to use their tactical nuclear weapons to destroy advancing Soviet armies in Europe. Massive Retaliation calculated that the West, due to its nuclear superiority would win this exchange decisively, thereby removing all possible incentives for the Soviets to attack in the first place.

Massive Retaliation was a strategy aimed primarily at deterring a Soviet attack by making the risks and costs of aggression far outweigh any rational calculus of gains. Preoccupied with deterrence, it was less concerned with developing a coherent doctrine for actually fighting a war in Europe, especially in situations that fell short of an all-out attack. Nor was it highly concerned with controlling escalation once a major war had begun. Indeed it assumed that escalation was made virtually unavoidable by the all-out nature of the Soviet attack, and was made desirable by virtue of the West's ability to use nuclear weapons to gain victory.

Massive Retaliation also was a programmatic strategy, one aimed at accommodating the reduced defense budgets that the Eisenhower administration was willing to fund. While providing a powerful rationale for beefing up the Strategic Air Command and for distributing nuclear weapons to U.S. and allied forces in Europe, it left NATO's conventional forces without an important role to play in defending Western Europe. It therefore offered a plausible reason for cutting

back on expensive conventional forces, which now were relegated to a secondary position in U.S. military strategy and NATO's defense planning.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the New Look, Massive Retaliation, and the post-Korea demobilization, U.S. defense spending dipped downward from \$44 billion in FY53 to about \$36 billion in FY55 and FY56. Along with these smaller budgets came major reductions in U.S. combat forces. The Army was instructed to reduce from 20 divisions and 1.5 million soldiers to 14 divisions and 1.0 million men. The Navy was ordered to reduce from 1126 combat ships to 1030, with an equivalent cut in manpower from 760,000 to 650,000. The Marine Corps maintained its legislatively mandated three divisions but was cut from 240,000 to 190,000 men. By contrast the Air Force, the primary beneficiary of the nuclear strategy, was allowed to grow from 910,000 men and 110 wings to a SAC-dominated 975,000 men and 137 wings.

The New Look and Massive Retaliation were to come under mounting attack from 1956 onward, a development that led the Eisenhower administration to soften their sharp edges. The result was the eventual adoption of a partially modified defense policy dubbed the "New New Look." This policy altered U.S. military strategy in three ways. Recognizing that the Soviets were acquiring a nuclear deterrent at a faster pace than originally estimated, the New New Look deemphasized Massive Retaliation's call for absolute nuclear superiority. It substituted instead an emphasis on "sufficiency"--a finite deterrent that, while capable of doing more than only destroying Soviet urban areas, would not be able to completely eliminate the USSR's retaliatory punch. The New New Look also placed greater emphasis on the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons, thereby giving U.S. ground and air forces a greater capacity for waging a limited theater nuclear war. Finally, it placed greater emphasis--at a primarily conceptual level--on conventional forces for fighting wars in which nuclear escalation was not appropriate.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>For a further analysis see Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*.

<sup>4</sup>See Huntington, *The Common Defense*, Chap. 7.

Despite these changes, the New New Look did not fundamentally alter the original doctrine's preoccupation with nuclear weapons and low defense budgets. In 1956, the Eisenhower administration set a goal for future DoD budgets of \$38 billion annually, a level some \$3 to \$10 billion lower than the JCS and DoD requested each year. Actual spending slowly rose above the administration's target, reaching \$43 billion in FY61, Eisenhower's last budget. But much of this increase reflected inflation. In real terms (constant dollars) the defense budget in 1960 was lower than any year since 1950. Moreover, ever-increasing portions of the budget were allocated to nuclear modernization programs, thereby channeling money away from conventional forces and changing the internal distribution of DoD funding. Air Force spending rose steadily until by the late 1950s the Air Force was receiving nearly one-half of the entire budget. Naval funding remained roughly constant as the Navy, with its supercarriers, successfully carved out a role for itself in the new strategy. Despite the vociferous objections of its leadership, which rejected the notion that nuclear weapons could handle all future challenges, Army spending plummeted downward. From a 1953 peak of over \$16 billion, it fell to \$8.7 billion by 1955. Thereafter it recovered only slowly. By 1960, it was still only \$9.6 billion, or less than one-quarter of total defense spending.

These stringent budgets, coupled with the rising costs of modern hardware, had a predictable impact on the U.S. force structure. The Air Force was scaled back from 137 to 126 wings. With SAC consuming 54 wings and strategic air defenses another 34 wings, this left USAF tactical forces with only 35 wings. While carrier force levels remained constant, the Navy lost some 20 combat ships. The Army suffered the worst of all. By 1959, it had reached a low point of 859,000 active soldiers and 14 divisions. Moreover, only 11 divisions were near combat ready; the remainder were training divisions that could not quickly deploy to war. The resulting posture, together with the Marine Corps, was still large enough to enable the United States to respond to small "brush fire" wars and limited contingencies, such as the Lebanon landing that took place in 1958. But it left the United States lacking the



forces to fight a major conventional war of the sort that could occur in Europe.<sup>5</sup>

Shortly after the Eisenhower administration decided to anchor U.S. military strategy on nuclear weapons, it launched a diplomatic effort to refashion NATO's military strategy along the same lines. This campaign began in earnest in late 1953 and mounted steadily from 1954 to 1956. It culminated at the NATO summit of fall 1957, when the alliance formally adopted a new, nuclear-oriented military strategy (MC 14/2) and approved several important programmatic decisions to field the nuclear forces required by it. Eisenhower's last three years in office were largely devoted to implementing these decisions and fending off criticisms directed at them, while trying to strike a balance between the allies' demands for greater sharing of control over nuclear weapons and congressional reluctance to provide it.

One of the most important problems that the Eisenhower administration encountered in its campaign in Europe was that of convincing the West European allies to recognize the virtues of a nuclear-oriented strategy. Initially, the West European allies, many of which were not yet well versed on nuclear weapons, reacted uncertainly to the idea. The reaction was most muted in Paris; where the French government initially was slow to understand the implications of Washington's shift. In Germany, meanwhile, the idea of a nuclear strategy initially provoked a strongly negative and emotional response from the general populace. This especially was the case after a SHAPE war game in June 1955, unfortunately named "Carte Blanche," suggested that even a relatively minor nuclear exchange on West German soil could result in the detonation of over 300 warheads causing five million casualties.<sup>6</sup> The FRG government took Carte Blanche in stride, but even it did not immediately favor a nuclear strategy. While Adenauer recognized the military and budgetary arguments for this course, he also

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<sup>5</sup>For a critique of the U.S. Army in the late 1950s, see General Maxwell Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960.

<sup>6</sup>See Osgood, *NATO, The Entangling Alliance*, Chaps. 5-6. Also, Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, Chap. 9.

feared that a nuclear buildup could lead to the withdrawal of American forces and that an actual nuclear war would result in the obliteration of Europe. As a result, he initially wavered. The British were favorably inclined to a nuclear strategy for largely budgetary reasons. Nonetheless, London voiced concerns similar to Bonn's, while also questioning whether NATO's threat to escalate would be credible in Moscow.<sup>7</sup>

Despite their initial misgivings, both Bonn and London ultimately decided to bow to American leadership on this issue. One reason was their reluctance to divide the alliance. To them, the most important goal was to preserve the U.S. commitment to NATO; the question of military strategy, while important, was secondary. Also, they feared that opposition would result in their loss of influence within NATO's councils. Nuclear weapons offered an important vehicle for maintaining national prestige. An equally important reason was that a nuclear strategy provided them an opportunity to back away from their own costly conventional defense commitments, while modernizing their remaining forces with highly advanced, nuclear-oriented weaponry. These reasons were especially important in Bonn, where a bitter debate in 1956 elevated nuclear advocate Franz Josef Strausse to the defense ministry and transformed Adenauer's government into a firm supporter of nuclear deterrence. Other allied nations had reservations, but in the end they reacted in a similarly pragmatic way.

The allies' willingness to embrace nuclear weapons was partly driven by purely military and budgetary issues, but it was also heavily influenced by broader trends in European security affairs at the time. Key among these was the need to reassure London, Paris, and Bonn of the U.S. commitment to Europe. The events of 1956 were particularly influential in this regard. Coming on the heels of prolonged transatlantic tensions over policies in the Third World, the Suez crisis that year drove a wedge between the United States and its British and

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<sup>7</sup>See David Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1983. See also Karnowski, *The German Army and NATO Strategy*, and Osgood, *NATO, The Entangling Alliance*.

French allies. Washington had failed to back an aborted effort by these two nations to intervene militarily in the Israeli-Arab war in order to regain control of the Suez canal. The crisis led to the fall of Eden's government and left a bitter residue on both sides of the Atlantic for months afterwards. In the face of these strains in NATO's unity, the Soviet invasion of Hungary, which was undertaken at the same time as the Suez crisis, made clear the West's inability to influence events in Eastern Europe. It also highlighted West Germany's exposed position and its heavy reliance on American support. The United States at the time seemed to question its force presence in Europe, thereby further heightening Bonn's concerns. By late 1956, all three West European governments therefore had come to doubt Washington's constancy. Their fears created strong political reasons for adoption of a new strategy that underscored both the American commitment to Western Europe and the healing effects of nuclear strength.<sup>8</sup>

NATO's willingness to embrace nuclear weapons also was influenced by the deterioration in East-West relations that took place around this time. In early 1955 the Soviets had surprisingly announced their intention to sign the Austrian State Treaty, which provided for withdrawal of Soviet forces and an independent, neutral status for that nation. This demarche was connected with Moscow's campaign to derail the FRG's rearmament and entrance into NATO, but it spawned hopes for the better across Western Europe. In mid-July, an East-West summit was held at Geneva, which gave further cause for optimism. There the Soviets astonished their Western counterparts by signing a communique that expressly called for German reunification through free elections in both halves of that nation. Hopes were dashed at a foreign ministers meeting a month later, however, when the Soviets sweepingly rejected reunification and re-elections. Disillusioned Western negotiators arrived home with the conclusion that the Soviets would never permit reunification except under conditions of the communization of all of Germany.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>For an analysis of these trends, see Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles*.

<sup>9</sup>See Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, for a discussion of the Geneva Summit, Chap. 16, pp. 503-534.

From that point on, events quickly slid downhill. The Soviet Union's brutal subjugation of Hungary in late 1956 returned the Cold War to earlier, darker days. Tensions mounted throughout the following year. Then in November 1958 Soviet Premier Khrushchev announced his intention of signing a "peace treaty" with East Germany that, he implied, would terminate allied rights in West Berlin. He called on the Western allies to begin negotiations with the East German government toward a complete withdrawal of allied forces from that city, and set a six-month deadline for completion of the task. Shortly thereafter, Soviet troops began both detaining allied truck convoys to West Berlin and complaining about western air traffic to the city.

Khrushchev's pressure tactics confronted the West with an ominous diplomatic crisis. At a minimum, his actions seemed designed to compel the West to grant de facto recognition to the East German government, a step that would have undermined Adenauer, caused grave troubles within West Germany, and divided NATO. Beyond that, Khrushchev seemed to be implying that the Soviets were prepared to use force to seize West Berlin, an act of war that would have compelled the West, still badly outgunned in conventional forces, to respond. The West held its ground and the crisis fortunately receded the following spring when the two sides reached agreement to convene a foreign minister's meeting followed by a summit to discuss European issues. But the Berlin problem was by no means resolved and the West faced the future with a sense of foreboding.

The Soviet Union's diplomatic pressure tactics were accompanied by a troubling upswing in its defense efforts. In May 1955 the Warsaw Pact was formed, thereby confronting NATO with a threatening military alliance that brought Soviet and East European forces together under a single command structure. From 1955 to 1959, Khrushchev pared back the Soviet Union's military manpower from its Korean War peak of about 5.7 million men to about 3.6 to 4.0 million. This sizable cutback, however, reflected no appreciable downgrading of the Soviet/Warsaw Pact threat to Central Europe. Soviet troop strength in Eastern Europe remained at about earlier levels, and the 28 to 30 Soviet divisions there were

streamlined with new tanks, APCs, and other weapons that substantially augmented both their firepower and their mobility. In the western USSR, meanwhile, the Soviets continued to maintain and upgrade a sizable number of reserve divisions. All told, the Warsaw Pact still easily maintained the force of 80 to 100 combat divisions, along with tactical air support, that military planning standards held necessary for a full-scale theater offensive.<sup>10</sup>

Accompanying this was an extensive nuclear modernization of Soviet theater forces. The mid- to late 1950s saw the deployment of a large force of medium-range bombers coupled with the large-scale introduction of medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs and IRBMs). By the late 1950s, several hundred bombers and missiles were deployed in the western USSR, enough easily to devastate all of Western Europe. Additionally, the Soviets began deploying FROG and SCUD shorter-range missiles to their ground units. Along with the development of tactical air bombs, these missiles provided Soviet military commanders the capacity to wage a fast-moving offensive theater nuclear campaign, even against NATO's nuclear-equipped forces.

Equally important, the Soviets began making rapid strides toward the long-feared deployment of intercontinental ballistic missiles. The launching of the Sputnik satellite in October 1957 caused the most public alarm in the United States and Western Europe. But a more militarily important development was their first successful test of an ICBM two months earlier. The Soviets were still some years removed from a full-fledged, operationally effective force. But they nonetheless appeared to be ahead of the United States in this critical weapon; at the time, U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) were themselves only in the early stages of development and testing. The two sides thus were locked in a race to deploy intercontinental missiles, and the likely winner was by no means apparent.

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<sup>10</sup>See Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970*, Chap. 8, pp. 160-194.

Seven years earlier, in 1950, events of this magnitude had been enough to galvanize the entire NATO alliance into bolstering its defense spending and the launching of ambitious efforts to increase its force levels. But nothing of this sort happened now. With both sides of the alliance locked into a stance of fiscal stringency, the net effect of these political trends was to make nuclear weapons look even better in the eyes of the West European allies. As a result, political support for adoption of a nuclear strategy built steadily across Western Europe. Acceptance of this course was not uniformly enthusiastic. For example, Denmark and Norway acquiesced Washington's new strategy but refused to allow nuclear weapons to be deployed on their soil. But the key West European powers--Britain, West Germany, and France--increasingly favored the idea. Indeed, by the time the decade ended these governments had come to embrace nuclear weapons wholeheartedly as the key for linking U.S. military power to Europe. This view made them hostile to any suggestion that nuclear weapons were not a perfect deterrent and opposed to any thoughts of attaching major importance to enhanced conventional strength. By 1960, many were even willing to assert that strong conventional defenses actually would undermine deterrence by signaling a lack of resolve to escalate. This extreme position hardly left them open-minded to the signals of reappraisal that were beginning to emanate from the United States by this time.

The emergence of this allied consensus enabled the United States to steer the alliance in the direction that Eisenhower had settled on in 1953. The process by which NATO officially came to adopt a nuclear strategy began late that year, when the NAC endorsed a "long haul" approach to defense planning that relaxed NATO's previous urgency about its conventional buildup. The following year MC 48 was issued, which implied a requirement for low-yield battlefield nuclear weapons that not only would be held by U.S. forces but also could be distributed to allied units in wartime. In December 1955, the NAC acted on MC 48's conclusions by deciding to equip NATO's existing forces with these weapons. This left out West German forces, which were only in the early stages of deployment, but over the following year, support built for distributing nuclear weapons to FRG units as well.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>See Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas*.

These developments set the stage for the landmark decisions that were taken in 1957 and ratified by the NATO summit meeting, attended by Eisenhower and other chiefs of state, that fall. At this summit, NATO decided to provide U.S.-built intermediate-range ballistic missiles to SACEUR, a step designed to give NATO an interim missile force until ICBMs became available. At the urging of the FRG and other allies, it also decided to establish a large nuclear stockpile in Europe under a Program of Cooperation (POC) program in which the allies would receive access to nuclear warheads for attack aircraft, battlefield missiles, field artillery, and surface-to-air missiles. This decision, which took nearly a full decade to implement, was to result in the eventual deployment of over 7,000 nuclear warheads in Europe. Equally important, the summit resulted in NATO's decision to set aside MC 14/1 and to adopt MC 14/2, which anchored NATO's defense plans on a large-scale theater nuclear operation backed by a massive strategic nuclear blow against the Soviet homeland.<sup>12</sup>

The new strategy was not entirely indifferent to conventional defenses. The debate at the time centered around whether NATO's conventional posture should provide merely a "tripwire" or instead a true "pause." The tripwire idea envisioned a very brief defense effort, one that would serve to trigger an almost immediate nuclear response. By contrast, the pause concept called for a somewhat more prolonged defense, one lengthy enough to provide NATO sufficient time to assess the situation before making the decision to escalate. This "pause" concept was especially favored by SACEUR (first Alfred Gruenther and later Lauris Norstad), who wanted a broader set of options than a purely tripwire posture could provide. MC 14/2 responded positively to SACEUR's wishes. But like massive retaliation, it still called for a large-scale resort to nuclear weapons, tactically and strategically, a relatively short time after war had begun. It thus relegated conventional forces, per se, to playing a limited role in alliance military doctrine.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>For a discussion of the 1957 NATO Summit, see Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1965, Chap. 9, pp. 227-238.

<sup>13</sup>Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas*.

Not surprisingly, NATO's adoption of MC 14/2 brought in its wake a downgrading of the ambitious conventional defense goals that the alliance had adopted at the 1952 Lisbon meeting. This process had begun as far back as 1953, when the NAC's "long haul" decision had retained the original Lisbon goals but relaxed their demanding timelines, thereby permitting a more leisurely approach. MC 48, in turn, had retained the Lisbon goals for active forces but pared down immediate requirements for reserve formations. In 1956 the NAC carried this a step further by directing SACEUR to reappraise NATO's overall force requirements in light of the anticipated distribution of nuclear weapons. Based on the results of SACEUR's review, the NAC in 1957 tentatively approved a Center Region requirement for 30 active divisions that were to be available on M-Day or shortly thereafter. These divisions were to be oriented to mobile operations; while they were to have a "residual" conventional capability, they primarily were to be configured for tactical nuclear war. The goal of also providing up to 30 less ready reserve formations was kept on the books, but it was relegated to a distant priority that, by common consensus, no longer was taken seriously. These force goals eventually were given formal approval in MC 70, an important planning document adopted in 1958.

With MC 70, the alliance thus completed a formal process in which, driven by its growing emphasis on nuclear weapons, it backed away from its earlier commitment to field some 50 to 60 ground divisions. The rationale was starkly simple. A posture of 50 to 60 divisions was needed to fight a full-scale conventional defensive campaign. By contrast, a posture of 30 divisions was all that was deemed necessary to wage a nuclear war and otherwise support the new strategy. By postulating that the firepower of nuclear weapons could offset the need for forces on the ground, MC 14/2 thereby offered NATO's financially stressed nations an appealing way to buy deterrence cheaply.



### VIII. CHINKS IN NATO'S NUCLEAR ARMOR

The nuclear weapons that NATO deployed in the United States and Western Europe during the late 1950s and thereafter brought with them a host of beneficial results. In addition to restoring the alliance's self-confidence, they created two of the three legs of the military triad that was to anchor NATO's defense policy in the coming decades. The specific military strategy that was adopted in 1957, however, eventually turned out to be a mistake because it carried a good thing too far, and because it had adverse consequences for NATO's conventional defenses that went well beyond its original intent.

MC 14's core problem was that, like Massive Retaliation, it was based on faulty strategic logic. It assumed that any war in Europe would be an all-out conflict in which the Soviet Union would pursue unlimited political goals, probably would be the first to employ nuclear weapons, and would indiscriminately attack targets in the United States and Western Europe. Under these circumstances, a total Western nuclear response clearly would have been politically feasible, indeed unavoidable. But MC 14/2 ignored the equally likely possibility that the Soviets might both attack with limited aims and employ military force in limited ways, perhaps not even using nuclear weapons at the onset. In this situation, the onus of crossing the nuclear threshold would lie entirely on the West's shoulders. Given the stakes, risks, and interests of NATO's nations in this situation, an all-out response might be neither politically feasible nor militarily appropriate. MC 14/2 thus left the alliance without a coherent military strategy for dealing with limited war.<sup>1</sup>

The rationale for MC 14/2's reduced conventional posture was based on the proposition that the enhanced firepower of nuclear weapons could

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<sup>1</sup>See Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, and his subsequent book, *The Necessity for Choice*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960. See also William W. Kaufmann, *The McNamara Strategy*, New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

offset the traditional need for large ground forces. But as a number of U.S. and allied army officers argued at the time, the tradeoff between firepower and mass was a complex one. Many officers were concerned that even with a full complement of nuclear weapons, a 30-division posture might not be large enough to wage a successful tactical nuclear war, especially against a larger and similarly armed enemy. Advocates of tactical nuclear weapons argued that since the Soviets would be compelled to mass its ground forces in order to punch through NATO's defenses, nuclear strikes could be employed to inflict heavy damage on them. Critics countered that in order to compel the Soviets to concentrate, NATO would be compelled to mass its own forces, thereby exposing them to Soviet nuclear fires as well. On balance, since tactical nuclear war seemed likely to be characterized by the same relative attrition dynamics that often dominated conventional fighting, it was not evident that a small nuclear army could beat a larger one.

While this issue was itself a worrisome imponderable that was as yet unresolved, there was no doubt about the limitations of a 30-division posture in a purely conventional war. A posture of this small size would suffice only to establish an initial defense line across the Center Region front. It would provide almost no additional reserves and would leave the forward line vulnerable to early penetrations even in purely conventional combat. For example, at the Battle of the Bulge in 1944, American forces in the Ardennes were penetrated by advancing German units before the end of the first day because the American units there were thinly spread. NATO's forces likely could hold out longer, but how much longer was uncertain. In absence of reserves, breakthroughs could not be countered and likely would respond in the speedy defeat of NATO. Moreover, even if NATO's 30 divisions were able to hold the line and compel the Soviets to fight a grueling attrition battle, they lacked the conventional firepower to defeat their larger opponents. Outnumbered by 3:1 or more, they would be worn down and eventually annihilated by enemy tanks and artillery. In order to prevent defeat, they would be required early and massively to resort to nuclear firepower for this purpose alone, even if the enemy did not itself initiate nuclear war.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>A key point here is that the long breadth of the inter-German border and force density requirements would have compelled NATO's

MC 14/2 and the new force goals thus combined together to forge a revolutionary change in NATO's strategy that extended well beyond the workings of the new strategy alone. A nuclear buildup plausibly could have been adopted as a logical supplement to a still-existing strong conventional posture--the position that MC 14/1 implicitly endorsed and MC 14/3 later adopted. Under the old strategy, nuclear escalation was viewed as a desirable way to maximize NATO's prospects for successful defense. But it was not unavoidably required and, if the enemy exercised nuclear restraint, it plausibly could have been treated as a drastic step to be undertaken only as a last resort. Escalation would have become absolutely necessary only when the conventional defense collapsed. With a 50- to 60-division posture, this promised to happen relatively late in the fighting (after several days and weeks) and conceivably might not have occurred at all. The new strategy and force goals, for all their fiscal attraction, stripped away any possibility of a prolonged conventional phase and avoidance of nuclear war. For all but minor contingencies, they left NATO physically dependent upon nuclear escalation as its primary military option. This state of affairs was reflected in the official statements of many NATO military authorities, who stressed that irrespective of Soviet actions, the alliance actively planned to initiate tactical nuclear war in Europe early in the game, and in a big way.

To make matters worse, MC 14/2's adoption soon led to a major downswing in NATO's conventional force strength that went further than its backers endorsed and originally envisioned. As a result, MC 14/2's deleterious effects extended well beyond the adverse consequences of its doctrine and force goals alone. During the last three years of the 1950s, public attention was largely riveted on the steady stream of NATO nuclear programs that followed MC 14/2's adoption and the controversial

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commanders to commit most of these 30 divisions along the front line, thereby leaving NATO without operational reserves that could be withheld from initial commitment for subsequent use in breakthrough sectors. For a good discussion of tactical nuclear operations, see Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969*, New York: Harper and Row, 1971, Chap. 4, pp. 117-164.

issues these measures raised. Behind the scenes, meanwhile, NATO's conventional defense efforts--their rationale undercut and their constituency weakened--suffered a steady loss of momentum. As of early 1955, NATO's posture in Central Europe had reached a level of about 20 active and reserve divisions, with the additional 12 FRG divisions to be available soon. As the strategy pendulum swung sharply toward nuclear weapons, however, NATO's force efforts began diminishing appreciably.

The new strategy did not result in any immediate withdrawal of American forces from Europe. But this possibility constantly was under examination in Washington, and was even endorsed by JCS Chairman Arthur Radford, a Navy admiral who was strongly committed to nuclear weapons. Eisenhower turned aside Radford's advice in this area; U.S. military manpower levels in Europe, which totaled 427,000 men in 1953, were still at a relatively high 379,000 by 1960. But his budget reductions did cut heavily into additional ground reinforcements the United States might be able to send in an emergency. The allies meanwhile took steps that actually did scale back NATO's forces in Europe. For example, MC 14/2 and MC 70 philosophically pulled the rug out from under any immediate urgency for the FRG rearmament program. While Bonn did not reduce its original aspirations for total force levels, it did react by stretching out the Bundeswehr's activation schedule. The new schedule became hostage to a host of constraints, including budgetary restrictions, reduced conscription periods, and training delays. The first four German divisions did not become available to NATO until late in the decade, and completion of the buildup, originally set for 1961, was slipped until 1965.<sup>3</sup>

The French reacted in a more extreme way by sending four additional combat divisions to Algeria to fight a war that soon came to tie down 400,000 French troops. By the late 1950s actual French contributions, originally envisioned to build to some 15 to 20 divisions, had dropped to the equivalent of only one division. More important, Charles de Gaulle came to power in 1958 and immediately began questioning what he

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<sup>3</sup>See Karnowski, *The German Army and NATO Strategy*, and Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*.

regarded to be France's subservient role in the alliance. In addition to making France an independent nuclear power, he also eventually decided to take it entirely out of NATO's integrated military structure. Although this step was not culminated until 1966 when France entirely withdrew from NATO's integrated military structure, de Gaulle began moving in this direction in 1959 when he removed some French naval units in the Mediterranean.

The other allied powers did not raise similarly negative questions about their role in NATO, but they did generally pare back their force contributions and defense budgets. In 1956 the Belgians decided to deactivate one of their three divisions by placing it in reserve status. In 1957 the British announced a major, cost-reducing defense cutback by disbanding two Army divisions, reducing active military manpower from 690,000 to 375,000, and by cutting the BAOR from 77,000 to 64,000 soldiers. The Netherlands Army also underwent a cutback. Originally envisioned as a five-division force, by the early 1960s it had been scaled back to three divisions. Similar reductions in Danish forces rounded out this downward trend in NATO's posture.<sup>4</sup>

These publicly visible steps were accompanied by less visible changes that had similarly detrimental consequences for NATO's conventional war-fighting capability. In response to the nuclear strategy, the U.S. Army abandoned its traditional structure, which had provided for three large regimental-sized formations that were intended to operate closely together on the battlefield. This structure was an outgrowth of World War II and the Korean War, and was ideally suited to operations aimed at holding large segments of ground over a sustained period. But it was not well suited for nuclear combat. By virtue of its tendency to concentrate forces, this structure seemed vulnerable to nuclear fires and otherwise ill suited to the demands of the relatively open and highly fluid nuclear battlefield.

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<sup>4</sup>See Osgood, *NATO, The Entangling Alliance*, p. 133. For historical data on West European force trends, see David C. Isby and Charles Kamps, Jr., *Armies of NATO's Central Front*, London: Janes, 1987.

The Army reacted by adopting the so-called "Pentomic" divisional structure. This concept provided for five smaller "battle groups" to replace the three regiments and a leaner logistic support structure than before. These battle groups were intended to operate independently of each other and to rely primarily on their nuclear firepower to undertake both offensive and defensive operations. By virtue of their larger numbers of separate units, they offered the commander greater versatility on the battlefield. Since they were smaller than a regiment, they were also more agile and presented a less lucrative target to enemy nuclear fires. The Army began implementing the Pentomic structure for its infantry divisions in 1956. Not long thereafter, the Germans, the British, and other NATO armies began following suit to varying degrees.<sup>5</sup>

This change may have rendered NATO's armies better able to fight on the nuclear battlefield, at least as it was theorized at the time. But it also undercut their ability to conduct sustained conventional fighting. Minus its nuclear firepower, each battle group lacked the mass, firepower, and logistic support to hold a large piece of terrain or to engage a well-armed enemy. In order to fight effectively as a combined arms division, the individual battle groups needed to be brought either into direct physical contact or at least into sufficient proximity to coordinate their efforts. However, their primary reliance on nuclear firepower dictated a doctrinal practice of deploying them well apart on the battlefield in order to avoid destroying each other with nuclear fires. This constrained their ability to work together in either defense or offense and made logistic resupply difficult. It also

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<sup>5</sup>See A. J. Bacevich, *The Pentomic Era: The U.S. Army Between Korea and Vietnam*, Ft. Leslie M. McNair, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1986. In general, the allies did not go as far as the Pentomic structure. The Germans, for example, adopted a brigade structure that was oriented to fighting a nuclear war but could also conduct conventional operations. The negative effects of the Pentomic structure thus were felt primarily in southern FRG, where U.S. forces were concentrated. The allies, however, trimmed their support structures and war reserve stocks to the point where they would have been hard-pressed to conduct sustained conventional operations.

created open gaps in the defense line through which, in purely conventional fighting, an enemy easily could pass. The Pentomic division thus left NATO with porous ground defenses that were an open invitation to conventional attack not only by virtue of their small size but also their internal structure. Further compounding this problem was the fact that U.S. and allied ground forces, being nuclear oriented, were not provided the sizable war reserve stocks of equipment and ammunition that are needed to sustain fighting beyond a few days. Even had NATO's ground forces somehow been able to contain the initial Soviet thrust, they soon would have run short of bullets to continue the fight.

The negative effects of the Pentomic structure were compounded by parallel trends in tactical air forces that left NATO's air arm also oriented to nuclear war. The 1950s saw the United States and its allies modernize its air forces with a large number of modern jet fighter-bombers that were a major improvement over the models that had fought in the Korean War. But these aircraft were primarily designed to deliver tactical nuclear weapons against enemy rear-area targets. As a result, they lacked the command and control systems, avionics, aerodynamic features, and advanced munitions for conducting effective conventional strikes, especially in close air support operations against enemy armored formations. Further, they were not provided the survivable air bases, maintenance support, and sustaining stocks needed to fight beyond a few days. The net result of these developments was that NATO's air forces were largely incapable of fighting conventionally in ways that NATO's ground forces most needed their help.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, NATO's naval forces also acquired a decidedly nuclear orientation. This especially was the case for the U.S. Navy. Primarily configured to launch nuclear strikes from carriers against the Soviet homeland, it lacked the doctrinal orientation and the warships needed to protect NATO convoys plying the North Atlantic sealanes. Thus, all three of NATO's force elements--ground, air, and naval--were configured

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<sup>6</sup>NATO's nuclear-oriented aircraft of this period primarily included the U.S.-made F-100, F-101, F-102, and later, the F-104, as well as the British Hunter and Javelin.

for nuclear war. This may have enabled NATO to escalate early and to prosecute its nuclear war plans to swift completion. But it also left the alliance hard pressed to conduct a conventional war in the systematic, coordinated way needed to contain a Warsaw Pact attack. As the 1950s drew to a close, NATO found itself with a strategy, doctrine, and force structure that not only prescribed nuclear war, but deprived the alliance of full alternatives for anything else.

The combined effect of all these changes--the adoption of a nuclear strategy, reduced force goals, allied force cuts, and a nuclear-oriented force posture--left NATO's forward defenses in worse shape than was commonly appreciated. By 1960 NATO's Center Region posture stood at only 19 divisions. Taking into account manpower and equipment shortages, the real level was somewhat less (17.3). The capability of this force was eroded further by cutbacks in both allied spending and U.S. security assistance, which produced trimming in such important areas as readiness, training, procurement, maintenance, and spares. Even had this posture been adequately funded, it still would have been incapable of sustained forward defense in a major war. NATO's critics charged that NATO forces were reduced to being a trip wire, or a "plate glass window" that would shatter at the first blow. Perhaps this accusation went too far. But there is little doubt that NATO's forces were unable to constitute a frontal defense that is associated with current concepts. As tactical concepts at that time recognized, they would have been compelled to fight a mobile defense that, at a minimum, would have ceded large portions of West Germany.

Equally worrisome, NATO's ground posture had shrunk to the point where its capability to wage tactical nuclear war against a nuclear-armed enemy was itself uncertain. With only about 19 divisions, it fell well short of the 30 divisions needed to meet MC 14/2's goals, which themselves were regarded as too low in many military circles. Hopes for waging nuclear war in Europe consequently depended heavily upon NATO's tactical air forces and "theater" nuclear systems, including the 105 U.S. IRBMs that the alliance had agreed during 1957 to 1959 to deploy in Great Britain, Italy, and Turkey. These forces and NATO's related



command and control system, however, were vulnerable to a surprise attack by enemy IRBM/MRBM nuclear missiles. Such an attack, if successful, threatened to strip NATO of its theater nuclear deterrent and leave the alliance vulnerable to a swift Soviet nuclear land campaign.

This vulnerability left the alliance highly reliant on the U.S. strategic air command and its retaliatory punch. Notwithstanding the progress that the Eisenhower administration was making in enlarging and diversifying the American strategic nuclear deterrent, however, major problems were emerging even here. Until missile-equipped Polaris submarines and ICBM's could be deployed, SAC's deterrent was based on a large bomber force deployed on a small number of bases in the United States and elsewhere. These bases, as well as the U.S. command and control system, were vulnerable to enemy ICBMs, which could span an intercontinental range in only 30 minutes. As late as 1957, the Soviet Union possessed neither the MRBM/IRBM nor ICBM missiles that were necessary to make the West's theater and strategic nuclear forces vulnerable. But in the following three years this situation had begun to change with alarming speed. By early 1960 the Soviets already had deployed a large MRBM/IRBM force and were also busily at work developing an ICBM. Deployment of a large ICBM force was still a few years off--indeed, the United States and NATO initially overestimated how fast the Soviets would proceed. Eventual deployment nonetheless was a virtual certainty; the only issue was when.

The most nightmarish fear confronting the West was that the Soviets might become capable of launching a combined ICBM and MRBM/IRBM attack that would destroy NATO's entire nuclear posture. Even if NATO shored up the survivability of its nuclear forces, its conventional deficiencies still posed a major problem if left unremedied. The risk was that the Soviets might believe that their own retaliatory capability would deter NATO from being the first to cross the nuclear threshold. Increasingly, Western defense experts began to worry that NATO's conventional vulnerability might tempt the Soviets to capitalize on their superiority in ground forces in the hope of quickly conquering

Western Europe by conventional means alone. As much as anytime before, the alliance required a strong military posture. As the 1960s dawned, however, the alliance suddenly found itself with a defense posture that on all sides fell well short of what was required.

## IX. SUMMING UP AND LESSONS LEARNED

With the benefit of hindsight, history often seems to unfold in a logical and almost inevitable fashion. As a result, many historical surveys convey a mechanistic sense of events that does not do justice to the fluidity of the period under review. In reality, most important historical periods contain a large number of crossroads in which key decisions, political struggles, military conflicts, and other events easily could have gone in entirely different directions. The 1950s easily fall into this category. Perhaps the Cold War was inevitable, but there certainly was nothing inevitable about NATO's growth from a diplomatic treaty into a fully developed alliance with an integrated military structure and command system. This development was a product of many decisions on both sides of the Atlantic that easily could have gone differently, especially if key personalities and governments had bowed to the countervailing pressures that they faced. Thus, NATO did not rise on its own. It was created by a strategic vision and then built through a good deal of hard work and political labor.

To what degree was the entire enterprise a success? Did the creation and building of NATO enable the West to achieve its key security goals of preserving Western unity and containing Soviet power in Europe? In answer to these questions, beyond doubt it is true that the 1950s closed on an unhappy note. With its military strategy in turmoil and its forces disturbingly vulnerable, the alliance found itself confronting the need to make unpleasant, costly, and internally stressful defense choices. All this smacked of *deja vu*. Yet the alliance unarguably was a good deal better off in 1960 than it had been in the late 1940s. Then, the alliance had no integrated military structure and its nuclear and conventional forces were both so weak that quite apart from their ability actually to defend Western Europe, deterrence itself was in question. In the years since, the alliance made major strides forward that, while easily overlooked, were only partially undone by its nuclear fixation.

Most important, the United States and its allies made the decisions to form the North Atlantic Alliance itself, to create an integrated military structure, and to develop operational plans for defending the Center Region and the flanks. The alliance also laid a logistic infrastructure and undertaken the task of learning how to wage coalition warfare. Along with this came decisions by individual member nations to commit themselves and their resources to the alliance. Particularly important were the U.S. decision to permanently station large American combat forces in Europe and the alliance's willingness to permit the rearmament of West Germany.

In the wake of these decisions, the alliance successfully deployed a large and powerful nuclear force that, for all its limitations, was still an essential component of deterrence. NATO failed only in the sense that its achievements in building conventional combat forces fell well short of its original aspirations and what was demanded by its security requirements. But NATO at least learned a lesson from its flirtation with nuclear weapons. Also, the conventional defenses that NATO fielded in the late 1950s were significantly larger and more powerful than its posture of the late 1940s. Table 4 displays trends for NATO's ground and tactical air forces during these years. These trends, it should be noted, are a product of complex changes in both U.S. and allied forces. In the early 1950s overall force levels rose because nearly all participants were expanding their forces and reconfiguring them internally. Although the force levels of several members dropped in the late 1950s, the downswing was offset by initial deployment of FRG forces. Since FRG rearmament originally was intended to augment NATO's posture, not compensate for drawdowns by other members, the net result fell well short of NATO's original aspirations. Nonetheless, NATO still made progress in all categories of weaponry.

These force levels include only immediately available forces deployed in Central Europe in peacetime. In an emergency, additional reinforcements would have been available from the United States. In 1948, some two U.S. Army divisions and six USAF tactical fighter wings would have been available by M+45. From 1953 onward, U.S.

Table 4

TRENDS IN NATO'S CONVENTIONAL DEFENSES  
IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Force	1948	1953	1956	1959
Manpower (000's)	350	600	602	644
Divisions	6	16	17	19
Brigades/regiments	27	47	46	52
Division-equivalents	9.0	15.6	16.3	17.3
Tanks	600	1650	1850	2300
Armored vehicles	1000	2000	2500	4000
Antitank weapons	500	1100	1400	1500
Artillery	500	1150	1500	1800
Aircraft	600	1300	1600	1800

SOURCE: Author's estimate; multiple sources.

reinforcements would have included 3 to 6 divisions and 8 to 16 air wings. The increased contribution of U.S. reinforcements must be taken into account in assessing NATO's force posture during this period.

In addition to this quantitative growth, NATO's forces also improved qualitatively with the introduction of new weapons in virtually all categories. The U.S. M-48 and the British Conqueror replaced such older model tanks as the M-47 "Patton." In providing better firepower, mobility, and survivability, these new models significantly improved NATO's armor. Also during this time, NATO tried to mechanize its forces with the introduction of the M-75, M-59, Saracen, and AMX 13 armored personnel carriers. This revolutionary development was to greatly improve the mobility and survivability of NATO's infantry units, thereby enabling them to join with armored units to stand up against Soviet armored attacks. The widespread deployment of 90mm and 105mm recoilless rifles further strengthened the capacity of NATO's infantry to participate in the antiarmor battle. Finally, self-propelled artillery began entering NATO's inventories in the mid 1950s. The appearance of the M-52 (105 mm), M-44 (155 mm), and M-55 (203 mm) dramatically upgraded the ability of NATO's forces to deliver lethal firepower and to maneuver with NATO's armored and mechanized infantry forces.

NATO had entered the 1950s with ground forces that were largely configured as foot infantry supported by small numbers of tanks and towed, underpowered 105mm artillery. By 1959, its forces had become largely armored and mechanized units with modern tanks, armored personnel carriers, and heavier, self-propelled artillery. As a result, NATO's forces were well on their way toward acquiring the capability to fight as a modern combined arms force capable of performing the complicated, high-speed operations required on the modern battlefield. Many of these upgrades were driven by NATO's nuclear doctrine. But as a byproduct, they also greatly strengthened NATO's conventional war-fighting capability.

NATO's improvements in the 1950s thus were a product of both quantitative expansion and qualitative upgrades, both of which must be taken into account in forming an overall evaluation. Table 5 provides an estimate of the combined effects by displaying trends in NATO's ground force strength as measured in static weapons scores. Table 5 assigns NATO's forces in 1948 an index score of 1.0 and then displays the extent of growth in the years thereafter relative to this base. As this table suggests, NATO's ground forces in 1959 were about 4.5 times stronger than in 1948. Roughly 70 percent of this increase was due to quantitative expansion and the remaining 30 percent to qualitative gains. Moreover, this increase measures only improvements to NATO's in-place ground forces. When NATO's air expansion and qualitative upgrades are factored into the equation, NATO's combined score increased from 1.3 in 1948 to 5.7 in 1959. The growth in NATO's reinforcement capability from the United States was less substantial, but still impressive. Overall, as Table 5 suggests, NATO's total conventional combat power--in-place and reinforced--increased by roughly four-fold during the 1950s.

NATO's force increases, of course, must also be judged in relation to gains made by Soviet/Warsaw Pact forces in this period. Table 6 displays relevant force ratios in purely quantitative terms. Table 6 shows that NATO roughly held its own from 1953 onward even though Soviet/Warsaw Pact forces were themselves strengthened with more

Table 5

TRENDS IN NATO'S CONVENTIONAL FORCES  
(Measured in static weapons scores)

Force	1948	1959
In-place ground forces	1.0	4.5
In-place air forces	.3	1.2
Ground reinforcements	.2	.6
Air reinforcements	.2	.5
Total	1.7	6.8

SOURCE: Author's estimate based on Weapons Effectiveness Indicator/Weighted Unit Valuation (WEI/WUV) scores for NATO's ground forces. The WEI/WUV system provides a basis for scoring weapons according to their technological sophistication and their relationship to one another. It is based on a multiattribute utility function. For example, an M-60 tank might get a WEI score of 1.0, while an M-47 might be accorded a .60 score. A tank might be given a WUV category weight of 60 points, and an armored personnel carrier, 10. WEI/WUV scores are then added together to determine the entire score for the NATO posture in any one year. From this, historical trend lines can be determined. The assumption is made here that three NATO tactical fighter wings approximately equate to one ground division in total firepower, kill potential, and costs.

divisions and more weapons so that they could better execute their offensive strategy. Overall, NATO probably also held its own in modernization rates, while preserving its traditional edge in weapons quality. On both sides, weapon replacement policies tend to be driven by obsolescence schedules and by the need to maintain inventories at an acceptable average age. This tends to dictate a replacement rate of 7 to 10 percent per year across the inventory and a slow, steady accretion of combat power of 2 to 4 percent per year.<sup>1</sup> As a result, major qualitative changes seldom occur overnight, or in one side and not the

<sup>1</sup>In general, each new era of weapons technology is estimated to increase the value of NATO's hardware by about 20 percent, a number consistent with WEI scores.

other. There is a natural tendency for both sides to improve at a similar slow, steady pace. This pattern seems to have prevailed throughout the 1950s.

In any case, a major arms buildup emerged in Central Europe during this time. This was not an "arms race" in the classical sense; especially from 1953 on, both sides proceeded methodically rather than at breakneck speed. Nonetheless, what unfolded was a competitive interaction between the two sides as they both sought to strengthen their forces in order to counterbalance the other. It should be noted that this was a competitive buildup between an offensive strategy on the Warsaw Pact's part and a defensive strategy on NATO's side; NATO simply was trying to protect itself, not gain an overall advantage. Nonetheless, Central Europe increasingly became an armed camp as both sides expanded their arsenals. It is noteworthy that this buildup was driven largely by nuclear doctrines on both sides; during the 1950s, the Warsaw Pact, as well as NATO, turned toward a predominantly nuclear strategy. Only in the 1960s and thereafter were the two sides to begin competing heavily in conventional terms.

Table 6

FORCE RATIOS,  
WARSAW PACT/NATO

Force	1948	1953	1956	1959
Manpower	3.6	1.7	1.8	1.9
Division-equivalents	5.6	3.5	3.9	4.0
Tanks	8.0	4.4	6.2	5.0
Armored vehicles	4.5	2.7	3.1	2.6
Antitank weapons	3.6	1.4	1.3	2.0
Artillery	6.5	3.3	3.1	3.3
Aircraft	3.0	1.5	1.6	1.7

SOURCE: Author's estimate. Warsaw Pact force levels are taken from Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970*, and Karber, "The Central European Arms Race, 1948-1980."



The most important question, of course, is whether and to what degree NATO strengthened its ability to defend itself in an actual war in Central Europe. In addressing this issue, it is important to evaluate NATO's force posture in relation to the growing Warsaw Pact threat as well as the Center Region terrain, required density standards, and the requirements of its own strategy. Taking all these factors into account, there is little room for doubt that NATO's forces would have acquitted themselves far better in 1959 than in 1948. At the same time, it also is true that NATO's forces in 1959 still fell well below the levels that NATO military commanders traditionally have felt are needed for an adequate posture: 30 divisions for a nuclear strategy, 40 to 50 divisions for an "initial" conventional defense, and 50 to 60 divisions for a stalwart posture capable of a firm forward, linear defense. NATO's forces thus fell somewhere between impotence and adequacy.

One of the most important indicators of NATO's progress is that as the 1950s unfolded, the debate over NATO's defense doctrine steadily shifted away from the Rhine River and toward the inter-German border. This shift partly reflected NATO's transformation due to West Germany's admission into the alliance. But it also reflected growing confidence in the capabilities of NATO's nuclear and conventional forces. In any event, gone were the late 1940s' debates over whether the Rhine could be held. In their place came a debate over the kind of NATO force posture that would be needed to protect West Germany territory, including the forward areas.

This is not to say that NATO's doctrine in the 1950s came to settle on the layer cake array and a frontal, positional defense directly on the border. These changes were to come later, in the 1960s and the 1970s. The tactical concepts of the 1950s focused on mobile defense operations in which NATO's forces would employ tactical nuclear weapons as they gave ground against a larger Warsaw Pact attacker. A common concept of the late 1950s was a "Weser-Lech" defense, which contemplated a steady withdrawal to the river lines about 100 km behind the inter-German border. But within this framework, the goal of NATO's doctrine and force plans was to maintain the Soviet attack in the forward areas.

In contrast to earlier years, this goal was taken seriously. In this sense, forward defense increasingly became a political-military reality, one that promised to shape NATO's defense planning in the years ahead.

To what degree could NATO actually have executed a forward defense in the 1950s? The answer depends heavily on the kind of war that would have been fought. A full-scale nuclear war inevitably would have resulted in massive losses on both sides, possibly enough to prevent a badly damaged Warsaw Pact force from overrunning NATO's few survivors. In any event, the outcome would have been determined by the strategic nuclear war that would have been fought over European heads, with the most likely result being a cataclysm for both sides. With respect to a nonnuclear conflict, it is impossible to assess how a NATO-Warsaw Pact conventional war might have been fought 30 to 40 years ago, especially since the two sides were largely girding themselves for nuclear combat during the 1950s. Nonetheless, some speculations can be offered based purely on the physical size, weaponry, and dispositions of the two sides then. Had war broken out in 1948, NATO's forces almost certainly would have been defeated very quickly if they had made any attempt to defend West Germany. Warsaw Pact forces likely would have swept across the North German Plain, descended on NATO's small combat formations in southern Germany, decisively defeated them in detail, and then marched westward. In all likelihood, NATO's forces would have been unable to form even a defense line on the Rhine River. The war probably would have ended with Soviet forces standing on the banks of the English Channel.

By 1959, the military situation had changed dramatically for the better. By this time, NATO's forces--taking into account in-place forces and outside reinforcements on both sides--would have been outnumbered by about 3:1 rather than by the larger 5:1 ratio that prevailed in 1948. More important, NATO's forces were now far better able to fight together cohesively because their deployment patterns had improved. In 1948, most of NATO's forces had been based back near the Rhine and in the southern half of West Germany. By 1959, NATO's "center of gravity" had moved well forward. This was driven largely by the

FRG's decision to base its ground forces along the Hamburg-Hannover urban axis, within 50 to 100 km of the inter-German border. Also, by 1959 a four-division German corps and the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR), with three divisions, were based in northern Germany. This enabled them to block a Soviet thrust across the North German Plain and to protect the Ruhr industrial basin. In Central Germany, three U.S. divisions supported by one German division protected the critical Frankfurt area. This left the southern part of Germany sparsely protected, but this area was less strategically vital to NATO.

NATO's forces in 1959 thus were far better able to defend critical terrain features in West Germany and to block likely avenues of advance. They also were sufficiently large and well armed to conduct coordinated, multidivision maneuver operations of the sort that can unhinge even a substantially larger attacker. By 1959, NATO's forces thus had viable defense options. They were not condemned to automatic defeat, and they were strong enough to give Warsaw Pact commanders something to think about. NATO's forces were not large enough to form a thick, linear defense line along the inter-German border. But they would have been able to mount initial resistance in the forward areas and then to conduct a mobile retrograde, in the process delaying the Warsaw Pact's advance and inflicting sizable losses on enemy forces. In the end, Soviet forces might have breached the Rhine River. But especially if American reinforcements arrived in time, NATO's forces might have succeeded in digging in there and halting the advance.

Although this scenario hardly amounts to a strategic victory for NATO, it does measure the extent to which NATO's forces had improved in the span of 12 years. Even if NATO's forces lacked a confident capability to defend West Germany, they were able to make the cost of aggression fairly high. For example, Soviet losses in a 1948 invasion likely would have been only 50,000 to 75,000 soldiers assuming purely conventional combat. By 1959, the price had risen by at least four-fold. Moreover, Soviet commanders would not have been certain in advance of their ability to march to the English Channel. Quite possibly, NATO would have been left with a sufficiently large foothold

to launch a counteroffensive once the United States and other allies had fully mobilized. By 1959, NATO's conventional forces thus posed something of a deterrent in themselves. Added on top of NATO's powerful nuclear arsenal, they made the overall deterrent stronger still.

In an operational sense, as well as purely quantitative terms, then, the 1950s were a decade of net progress for NATO's conventional forces. Moreover, NATO's forces were destined to grow further for the simple reason that by 1959 the German rearmament effort was finally in full swing. Perhaps the decade can best be described as one of "two steps forward, one step backward." In the process, NATO failed to meet the requirements of its military strategy and its force needs, especially for conventional defense. But it did considerably broaden its military options in Central Europe. Equally important, NATO successfully laid an increasingly solid foundation for the further improvements in its strategy and force posture that were to come in the 1960s and 1970s. Without this foundation, these improvements would not have been possible.

Above all, the alliance weathered the Stalin era unscathed. Containment and deterrence, for all their flaws, had worked. In the process the West European nations had made major strides toward economic recovery, political stability, and the beginning stages of integration. Gone were fears that Germany and France would turn on each other, or that the other West European nations would embark on a destructive course. For its part, the United States had shaken off isolationism, had resisted the impulse to turn inward, and had emerged as a committed apostle of transatlantic unity. These political and economic gains far outweighed the West's military successes and failures. The upcoming decade promised to be a period of strain and even crisis. But the Atlantic Alliance had the luxury of facing it with a far greater sense of unity and confidence than only a decade before.

Partly due to NATO's emergence as a unified coalition, the 1950s ended with two hostile, militarily primed alliances glaring at each other across the inter-German border. The tensions of the moment suggested that an explosion was inevitable, if not immediately at hand.

But in reality, this bipolar system was a good deal more stable, and the West incomparably more secure, than had been the case a decade earlier when no alliances existed. In essence, Soviet power had reached its high water mark and already was beginning to recede. The USSR's inability to bludgeon the West into submission over Berlin, or to entice it with suggestive diplomacy, was evidence of this strategic fact. The Soviets may have enjoyed an overall military predominance in Central Europe, but this edge no longer bought them much political leverage against the West. Moreover, morally the two alliances were on entirely different planes. Whereas NATO rested on a foundation of democratic values, legitimate commitments, and growing prosperity, the Warsaw Pact drew its strength entirely from uninvited Soviet forces and East European governments whose internal support at best was skin deep. This difference was not to manifest itself openly for nearly 30 more years. But when it did, it proved to be decisive.

The 1950s also were a decade in which the West made several basic policy and strategy choices, the legacy of which live on today. In evaluating these choices, it is clear that NATO erred by embracing a primarily nuclear strategy in the late 1950s. Nuclear weapons had an important role to play in protecting the West's security, and the alliance was justified in its decision to deploy them in large numbers. But their deployment clearly should not have led to the downgrading of NATO's conventional forces to the point where Central Europe was more vulnerable to a Soviet attack than was necessary.

NATO did not embark on this erroneous course, however, because it was totally blind to the limitations of nuclear deterrence. Several years before massive retaliation, the United States and key West European nations had already recognized that nuclear weapons had only a limited role to play. NSC 68, MC 14/1, and other earlier strategy decisions make this clear. This course was chosen primarily for budgetary reasons, to buy deterrence on the cheap by avoiding the onerous cost of conventional defenses. In the end, the Western allies came to regret this shortsighted decision, just as they came to regret their similarly motivated demobilization after World War II. By being

penny-wise and pound-foolish, the West both compromised its security on the eve of an unexpected intensification of the Cold War and put itself in the uncomfortable position of having to make a hasty, costly, and internally stressful effort to rectify things. The lesson is obvious. The path to security seldom offers easy shortcuts; the traveler is best advised to reconcile himself to the difficulty of the journey.

This experience also shows that any decision to rely more heavily, even if only partially, on nuclear weapons can easily have a negative impact on NATO's conventional defenses that goes well beyond what the strategy itself permits. The reason is alliance dynamics. In order to build an adequate conventional posture, contributions from all NATO's nations are essential. No one nation, or group of nations, can handle this task alone. MC 14/2 and Massive Retaliation were blind to this reality. While they were not entirely indifferent to the need for conventional strength, they created considerable ambiguity on exactly how many conventional forces were needed to achieve deterrence. Some nations, driven by their own budgetary priorities, took advantage of this ambiguity to scale back their contributions, even if only marginally. This step undercut the rationale for ambitious conventional programs among all other participants, even nations that initially were not inclined to embrace nuclear weapons entirely. The result was a cascading effect across the entire alliance that left NATO with weaker conventional defenses than even its nuclear strategy required. The lesson is that conventional defense is a fragile enterprise, one easily undercut by any strategy that creates the impression of relegating it to a subordinate position.

If NATO failed to find security in nuclear weapons in the 1950s, it also was unable to build upon the "division of labor" approach that it originally adopted at its inception. While this idea made sense technically, it quickly was exposed as having major political liabilities. It incorrectly assumed that the West European allies could build adequate conventional defenses in the absence of a major contribution by NATO's largest member, the United States. It also failed to anticipate that the United States would be unwilling to

provide extended nuclear deterrence coverage to Western Europe in absence of the sizable American military presence there. Further, it shortsightedly promised to allow some allies to escape from the responsibility of dealing with nuclear missions, thereby threatening to render NATO less able to forge a consensus on nuclear release in a crisis. For all these reasons, NATO quickly discarded its original endorsement of a formal division of labor. The experience of the 1950s suggests that this approach provides a useful mechanism for fine-tuning NATO's forces at the margins; it does not offer a sound basis for establishing NATO's entire defense posture.

On whole, the West behaved in a remarkably far-sighted and consistent way in its handling of West Germany. The West chose to commit itself to West Germany for reasons that stemmed from a clear understanding of its own vital interests and a sense of grand strategy. This commitment thus went well beyond any ideologically inspired, short-term fixation against communism for its own sake. The central features of the West's defense policy and strategy that emerged in the 1950s--deterrence and a growing emphasis on forward defense--grew directly out of this commitment and were not a product of ill-considered fears or bureaucratic aggrandizement. Similarly, the explosive growth in the West's military requirements in the 1950s primarily was an outgrowth of this commitment rather than any obsessive preoccupation with the Soviet military threat.

The extent to which the Cold War turned into a competitive military rivalry between the two sides clearly was unfortunate. But given the Soviet Union's heavy reliance on military power to underwrite its designs, the West could have avoided an arms race only by endangering and possibly sacrificing its vital interests in Germany. The West chose otherwise. As a result it won the battle for West Germany, and Stalin lost. This experience has clear implications for the future. Although Europe has changed a great deal since the Cold War began, the struggle over Germany has not completely abated. To the extent it continues, the goals of containment, deterrence, and forward defense remain as relevant now as they were 30 years ago.

The West also performed well in shaping the transatlantic political bargain that transformed NATO from a paper treaty into an entangling but militarily powerful alliance. This bargain, to put matters mildly, was an exceedingly complex one. Recognizing that West Germany must remain free from Soviet control, the United States agreed to commit American military power to this task. But as a precondition for the permanent stationing of large U.S. military forces in Central Europe, Washington demanded that West Germany rearm in order to allow NATO to build an adequate NATO defense posture. The FRG in turn proved willing to undertake rearmament and to anchor itself in NATO, but only on condition that the alliance commit itself to a defense of West Germany itself, including territory near the inter-German border. France, the United Kingdom, and other West European nations accepted West German rearmament and forward defense, but they attached to this agreement the stipulation that a tight lid be kept on the size of German forces. This proved acceptable to Bonn, but only if the other West European nations pledged to make up the difference in forces needed to protect the FRG. Seldom, if ever, has an equivalently complicated diplomatic accord been attempted, much less brought to fruition.

Although NATO was created in 1949, fully five years of stressful negotiations were required to lock this transatlantic bargain into place by securing the necessary commitments from the relevant actors. Only after this was accomplished were NATO and its military structure finally set in concrete. But because this bargain produced an alliance that served the vital interests of NATO's members, it proved to be a solid one. By building on the firm foundation that it provided, NATO was able to grow steadily in strength and stature as the 1950s unfolded. Although its historical origins have long since receded from public consciousness, this bargain remains alive today. In a silent way it continues to form the bedrock of the Atlantic community.

The 1950s also showed, however, that this bargain was a potentially fragile one that left the alliance prone to internal fissures. The transatlantic bargain was based on separate but interlocking commitments from the three main actors in the deal: the United States, the FRG, and



the other West European nations. Given this interdependence, failure by any one of these partners to honor its commitment in theory would have undermined the reasons that had led the other two partners to make their own commitments, thereby giving them cause to withdraw as well. The result easily could have been a serious weakening of the alliance and perhaps its complete unraveling. In the 1950s the NATO nations recognized this vulnerability and took care to ensure that alliance policy and strategy never undermined any of these three commitments. The same principle continues to apply today.

In the final analysis, NATO entered the 1950s as a loose collection of sovereign nations and exited it as a unified alliance capable of coalition planning in peace and war. NATO was able to take this enormous step forward because all its members decided to surmount their national instincts, their doubts, their fears, and their histories in order to cooperate together. In particular, Britain, France, and other West European nations decided to place the bitter legacy of World War II behind them by admitting West Germany into their fold as a trusted and co-equal ally. This decision was born of pragmatic self-interests. But it also reflected confidence in the healing effects of recovery and in the ability of democracy to survive in a nation that only five years before had been ruled by a Nazi dictatorship. As events turned out, this decision proved to be a wise one. For its part, the newly created Federal Republic responded with a degree of commitment and responsible policy that even its most ardent advocates had not anticipated. The result was the creation of a West European community, anchored on a transatlantic military alliance and an economic partnership, that fundamentally reshaped the face of Europe.

This success would not have been possible without the strong leadership role that NATO's largest member, the United States, played in this period. In particular, the United States performed well during the time when the new alliance was being established. In these years, 1950 to 1954, the United States showed vision, creativity, and the ability to wisely exercise power on behalf of the common good. Surmounting the normal tendency of governments to behave indecisively in such

situations, it adopted clear goals and energetically set out to attain them. Guided by a strong sense of priorities, it refused to be intimidated by either the barriers facing it or by the need to spend resources. As a result, it succeeded on a scale that has not been matched since. By committing itself to Western Europe's security and then by demanding an integrated military organization, a force posture aligned with a coherent military strategy, and German rearmament, it helped fashion a real military alliance, one that brought the North Atlantic Treaty to life. The Vietnam War 15 years later was to show that this optimistic spirit can carry the seeds of its own destruction when it is not tempered by an understanding of the constraints that even superpowers face. But the experience of NATO's early years shows that the game sometimes is worth the candle and that a powerful, determined nation can often achieve great things if it sets its mind to the task at hand.

At the same time, the United States did not perform flawlessly during NATO's first decade, especially the last half of the 1950s. As the primary architect of NATO's nuclear strategy, it bears heavy responsibility for the errors that the alliance committed in establishing a military doctrine that undermined deterrence and strained NATO from within. Also, the United States often did not adroitly handle relations with individual West European allies. In particular, it ran afoul of both Britain and France over Third World problems, the aborted Suez crisis being the most obvious example. While it went to great lengths to support Britain's unique position in Europe itself, it was considerably less sensitive to France. Part of the problem, of course, was France's own erratic and often counterproductive behavior over German rearmament, its own nuclear aspirations, the Common Market, and other issues. But the United States was also part of the problem. The result was that France's relations with the United States and NATO got off to a rocky start. The seeds of the alliance's future problems with de Gaulle's France were sewn in these years.

Finally, the United States often behaved in a disruptive zig-zag fashion from the mid-1950s onward that caused troublesome strains in its relations with West Germany. In the early- to mid-1950s, Washington had asked Adenauer to wage a difficult political battle within his nation on behalf of rearmament built on a strong West German conventional defense establishment. Shortly after Adenauer had won this battle, the United States abruptly shifted gears by endorsing a nuclear strategy that called the original enterprise into question. With the rug having been pulled out from under him, Adenauer now was obligated to build support in West Germany for a strategy about which he himself had reservations. No sooner had this battle been won than critics in the United States began calling the nuclear strategy into question and demanding a return to conventional defenses. In the 1960s Adenauer came under pressure from a new administration in Washington to reendorse a military strategy that he had once supported but had been compelled to repudiate, largely out of fealty to Washington. The whole experience left Adenauer unnerved and wary of his inconsistent American allies. On balance, the Federal Republic benefited enormously from its close association with the United States in these years. Indeed, it owed its existence to Washington's support. Nonetheless, the Bonn-Washington relationship was less smooth than it otherwise might have been.

The experience of these years illustrates the enormously important role, for good or ill, that American leadership can play in determining NATO's vitality and cohesion. When the United States showed vision, acted consistently, and exercised its power on behalf of goals that made sense for Western Europe, the allies cooperated. But when Washington vacillated, or adopted self-serving goals, or showed unawareness of Western Europe's own political dynamics, NATO withered. The alliance that emerged from the 1950s was not purely, or even primarily, an American creation. But it was an alliance whose energy, strength, and purpose depended enormously on Washington's constancy and vision. The 1950s provide ample lessons on how the United States can lead wisely or poorly, lessons that continue to apply today.

In conclusion, NATO performed unevenly in the 1950s, but on the whole well enough to lay the foundations for the West's eventual victory in the Cold War. The alliance worked best when, confronted by intense crisis, it faced the task of creating a strategic vision to guide its security policy. It performed considerably less well when, once the crisis had receded, it faced the less stimulating task of translating its visions into reality through concrete programs that cost considerable sums of money. NATO's ability to implement its policies by showing sustained commitment to purpose, and to remedy its strategy errors without driving key members out of the alliance, were major question marks as the decade came to a close. To some observers at the time, these problems seemed grave enough, in the face of a relentless Soviet threat, potentially to cause the West's undoing. Subsequent events, however, were to prove otherwise.