Shaping the postwar balance of power: multilateralism in NATO
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At the end of the 1940s, the United States and several West European states allied to defend themselves against invasion by the Soviet Union. Balance-of-power theory predicts the recurrent formation of such balances among states. But it says little about the precise nature of the balance, the principles on which it will be constructed, or its institutional manifestations.1 The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been a peculiar mix. As a formal institution, NATO has through most of its history been distinctly nonmultilateral, with the United States commanding most decision-making power and responsibility. At the same time, NATO provided security to its member states in a way that strongly reflected multilateral principles.2 Within NATO, security was indivisible. It was based on a general organizing principle, the principle that the external boundaries of alliance territory were completely inviolable and that an attack on any border was an attack on all. Diffuse reciprocity was the norm. In

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1. For example, power can be balanced between two states, between two alliance systems, or among many. A balance of power can be relatively cooperative if the “poles” act with conscious restraint in efforts to maintain equilibrium, or it can be highly competitive if each pole seeks to gain power at the other’s expense. Alliance systems can be tightly held “empires,” or they can be looser associations of states akin to spheres of influence. Alliance leaders can try to reformulate domestic politics within their subordinate states, or they can join with other states regardless of their internal characteristics.

2. From Ruggie, I abstract three features that distinguish multilateralism from other patterns of relations between states: indivisibility, generalized organizing principles, and diffuse reciprocity. See John Gerard Ruggie, “Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution,” in this issue of IO.

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the terms set out by John Ruggie, NATO has generally scored low as a multilateral organization but high as an institution of multilateralism.3

The capabilities of the Soviet army meant that the United States faced greater constraints in setting up institutions for security than it faced in establishing monetary, trade, and similar institutions. But those constraints did not determine either the principles or the institutional form of NATO. This article argues that two sets of ideas governed the way in which the United States shaped the postwar balance of power through NATO. The first set of ideas was political in nature. It derived from fundamental beliefs about the relationship between the number of powerful actors in the international system ("polarity") and stability, as well as about peace. The second set of ideas was driven by military considerations having to do with the deterrence of invasion and nuclear strategy.

Under the influence of the first set of ideas, U.S. foreign policymakers sought a security system that would do more than simply prevent Soviet aggression. They strove to construct institutions for peace management, cooperation, and progress that would promote long-term stability in international politics. The best way to do that, according to American foreign policy beliefs, was to foster the development of an autonomous European "pole" as the first step toward a multipolar international system. In politics, multilateralism was a means for promoting evolution toward multipolarity. But the twin concepts of multilateralism and multipolarity were frequently at odds with a second set of ideas about the military requirements for deterrence of invasion. These ideas were directly connected with the challenge of preventing Soviet aggression through the use or the threat of force. Multipolar systems present opportunities for risk-acceptant states committed to a quick and decisive military challenge against the status quo. When that scenario came to predominate American views of European security, ideas about deterrence took immediate precedence over the longer-term purposes of multipolarity.

The "deterrence scenario" overcame the "multipolarity scenario" first during NATO's birthing process at the end of the 1940s, but its victory was only partial and temporary. The multipolarity scenario proved over the 1950s to be stronger and more deeply ingrained. From about 1956 to early 1961, the Eisenhower administration spearheaded a direct move toward multilateralism in NATO, through the sharing of nuclear weapons within the alliance. The rationale behind this effort had little to do with the credibility of extended deterrence or other strategic arguments. It was first and foremost a political move which was designed to speed the transformation of Europe into an integrated defense community with an independent nuclear force and which would recast the nature of the balance of power between East and West.

3. See ibid. Ruggie discusses "collective security," which is one possible manifestation of multilateralism in security. It is not the only one, although a full collective security system would be the modal case.
This effort was blocked when the deterrence scenario came back to the fore under the Kennedy administration. That scenario was now bolstered with a new set of arguments about nuclear strategy that overcame politics and pushed the multipolarity scenario into the background. As the distribution of power between the United States and Europe evened out gradually over the succeeding decades, NATO barely evolved in response.

None of this holds much interest in the stark neorealist image of the security problem facing states. In that vision, security should be a strong case for explaining institutions on a rationalist basis with utilitarian or functional logic and without recourse to ideas. In any case, the institutional form and principles of an alliance hardly matter for what the alliance does and for its impact on the basic character of international politics.

These blind spots need to be filled in. The balance between two sets of ideas and the resulting history of multilateralism within NATO had important consequences for international politics during the cold war, and some of these will be perpetuated as Europe develops a new security system in the 1990s. I therefore argue that multilateralism as a set of principles for an alliance is a dependent variable that begs explanation, because it is also an independent variable with autonomous causal impact on outcomes. Some of those outcomes may challenge basic realist premises about power.

Security, alliances, and multilateralism

Assume that states balance power to provide security and that they prefer to do so in ways that maximize their prospects for autonomy. Is multilateralism an obvious institutional form for these purposes? If the institution is nearly determined by a nexus between this basic deduced preference and objective features of the environment (such as the good to be supplied and the number of actors), there would be no need to go further in explaining NATO.

A priori, there is at least one alternative for an alliance system made up of one extremely powerful state and several smaller states. The alternative is for the large state to cut a series of bilateral deals with each of the subordinates. In the abstract, bilateralism has several advantages from the perspective of the great power. Security becomes an excludable good, which makes it also a bargaining resource. The great power can threaten to abandon a smaller state from the alliance, and because such a threat would not challenge the basis of other agreements, it can be relatively credible. It also becomes possible for the great power to demand differential terms of alliance with each of the small powers, depending on their strategic, economic, or political value. Small states

4. This is consistent with the standard neorealist arguments about alliances. See Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979); and Stephen M. Walt, The Origins of Alliances (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987).
may not benefit particularly by these arrangements, but faced with a direct threat to their existence from an opposing alliance, they would have little choice but to take the price that the market offers.

This is not just a theoretical alternative. Between 1945 and 1948, the Soviet Union imposed a set of bilateral security arrangements on each of its East European neighbors. The organizing principle for this alliance system was "divide and conquer," and the purpose was to maximize Soviet influence over the subordinate states. There were certainly some costs to the Soviet government in choosing this institutional form. Stalin sacrificed some military efficiency and a good deal of legitimacy and thereby diminished the prospect that his alliance system would serve as a basis for broader cooperation among a "socialist community" or as a means of spreading communism throughout the world. But he was willing and able to do this to extract payment for the provision of security and to prevent the development of any East European federation that might challenge exclusive Soviet control.5

This institutional form was not just a theoretical alternative in the West either. Proposals that the United States should provide security guarantees to selected European states on a strictly bilateral basis were championed in Washington by Senator Robert Taft through much of 1947. In March 1947, France and Britain signed a bilateral treaty of "alliance and mutual assistance," the Dunkirk Treaty, which pledged them to unite in case of renewed German aggression. In January 1948, British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin recommended that the West develop a "defense union" by extending the Dunkirk model into a network of bilateral agreements that would include the United States. The structural position of the United States vis-à-vis Western Europe was different certainly from that of the Soviet Union vis-à-vis Eastern Europe, which means that an American version of bilateralism would have looked necessarily more balanced than Stalin's version. But that structural position did not produce NATO. The United States could have interpreted bipolarity and the Soviet threat as a license to develop a more coercive and extractive subsystem for security that the West European states would have been nearly obliged to accept.6

5. By early 1948, the Soviet Union had concluded bilateral "treaties of friendship and mutual assistance" with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria. The treaties bound each country to the Soviet Union and prevented them from dealing directly with one another on security issues. The Soviet army was given a free hand to modernize and reorganize the East European armed forces. See A. Ross Johnson, "The Warsaw Pact: Soviet Military Policy in Eastern Europe," in Sarah Meiklejohn Terry, ed., Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 259. Until the Warsaw Pact was signed in 1955, the Soviet Union did not even offer the facade of an integrated defense organization to its allies, as it had done earlier in the economic field through the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. See Robert L. Hutchings, Soviet—East European Relations: Consolidation and Conflict (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); and Thomas Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970).

6. Indeed, the British and the French in particular might have been more content to the extent that bilateralism would have saved them from having to countenance and deal directly with a revitalized state and military force in Germany.
Multilateralism was an alternative institutional form with a different array of potential benefits. For the United States, multilateralism could reduce some transaction costs within the alliance by enhancing its legitimacy in the eyes of West Europeans. Because the United States would not be overtly privileged at the outset, changes in the relative capabilities of the member states over time would be less likely to inspire direct challenges to the organization’s structure. This would allow the U.S. government to make long-term “investments” in its allies’ defense capabilities as well as facilitate cooperation between the secondary states, leading probably to an overall increase in efficiency for supplying security. But the price of multilateralism also promised to be high. Multilateral institutions may substantially increase the costs of making decisions, particularly when an alliance must negotiate contributions to its budget or the collective provision of scarce resources such as manpower. Even the institution of multilateralism, which NATO did adopt, could be costly. If security is treated as indivisible and an attack on one is an attack on all, the large state sacrifices the ability to differentiate among its allies. In NATO, the United States made a commitment to the security of Belgium that was equal to its commitment to the security of West Germany, despite the greater importance of the latter state. And by adopting a general strategic principle of forward defense against the Soviet Union, the United States sacrificed any claim on its allies’ assistance in “out of area” operations that it might feel the need to pursue, even in the service of NATO interests.

Multilateralism tends to make security a nonexcludable good. This minimizes the hegemon’s coercive power and its ability to extract payment for protection. It makes the sanctioning of free riders difficult and threats of abandonment almost impossible. From a choice-theoretic perspective, multilateralism does not seem a convincing bargain or a determinate solution.

These factors represented real trade-offs for the United States at the end of the 1940s. On abstract logic the outcome looks indeterminate; but to the extent that utilitarian or functional analysis points in any direction, it points away from multilateralism as an institutional form for solving the West’s security problem. Consider first the constraints. With the Soviet army firmly in place in the East, there was pressure to gain as much security as possible for the West as quickly as possible, and the incentives to minimize immediate transaction costs among the allies were strong. Add to this the weight of recent history, particularly the poignant lesson of the Nazi state capitalizing on its opponents’ tendency to free ride or shirk alliance guarantees. The postwar relationship between West Germany and France was a further challenge. A multilateral alliance would

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9. The United States also sacrificed legitimate claims to greater recompense for providing security to relatively exposed states, such as Turkey, than to well-protected states, such as Britain. In effect, the promise was to make an equal sacrifice for highly unequal causes.
need both states in as equal participants, but the French government was resistant (as was the British government, for that matter). The British also had many other reasons to try to hold on to their special relationship with the U.S. government and not submerge it within a multilateral alliance.

Finally, there was the new factor of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons would have made it relatively easy and inexpensive for the United States to conclude a series of bilateral deals with specific partners, since the same arsenal of bombs could be used to offer extended deterrence to more than one state. Strategic nuclear deterrence for Western Europe was nearly a nonrival good in the sense that the United States could extend the umbrella to additional states without detracting from the security of any. But there is nothing about nuclear deterrence per se that makes it nonexcludable. In fact, states that were outside the Soviet orbit and did not join NATO, such as Sweden and Switzerland, were excluded. Nuclear deterrence became a public good (nonrival as well as nonexcludable) within NATO because of institutional choices that do not follow directly from objective features of the environment.\footnote{10}

The general point is that the nature of the good did not determine the institutional form through which it would be provided, since there were alternatives to multilateralism in NATO. Indeed, the constraints and incentives facing the United States should have pushed the outcome to lean away from multilateralism. Why did NATO turn out differently?

**The immediate postwar world**

Franklin Roosevelt’s familiar vision of a postwar balance of power did not rest on naive faith that the interests of the “four policemen”—China, Britain, and, most important, the United States and the Soviet Union—would coincide neatly. What Roosevelt did presume was that each of these states could be induced to behave in foreign policy matters mainly according to pragmatic calculations, through what contemporaries might have called the “geopolitical” consequences of multipolarity. In Roosevelt’s view, the large states would themselves be constrained immediately to practice prudence and caution in their foreign policies as a result of their cross-cutting interests that would line up differently on separate issues and in different regions of the world.\footnote{11}

10. I differ here in emphasis with Olson and Zeckhauser’s classic model, which assumes that strategic nuclear deterrence is a public good and uses that assumption to analyze burden-sharing problems within NATO. See Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, “An Economic Theory of Alliances,” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 48 (August 1966), pp. 266–79. My point is that the publicness of nuclear deterrence within NATO was a result of voluntary institutional choices which themselves need to be explained.

In the somewhat longer term, the same pressures would reduce the troubling tendency of these states to indulge in extreme ideologies, particularly American versions of unilateralism and Soviet versions of proletarian internationalism.\textsuperscript{12} Roosevelt’s reasoning here slipped beyond power politics per se. He believed that the process of politics—the coordinating and the compromising of interests among the great powers—would do good things over time to the internal characteristics of these states and that this, in turn, would make them act in more peacable and cooperative ways. For this reason, it was critical to integrate the Soviet Union directly into the postwar order and to avoid creating even the appearance of a rigid anti-Soviet alliance. In this way, Roosevelt hoped to reinforce the pragmatic elements within Soviet domestic politics that would support a more substantial foundation for broader U.S.–Soviet cooperation over time.\textsuperscript{13} 

While Roosevelt’s arguments about the Soviet Union were not shared widely by American elites in 1944, his strategic vision of a multipolar balance of power was, albeit for different reasons. If Roosevelt were to prove wrong and the Soviet Union was indeed going to be a determined adversary, then the principal danger was American isolationism. The challenge was thus to keep the United States engaged substantively in European and world affairs for the long term. This would require an intellectual rationale that fit the material realities of power and could be sustained within American public opinion. The arguments of Nicholas John Spykman, further developed and popularized by Walter Lippmann in his influential \textit{U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic}, were adapted to fill that niche. Both authors based their arguments on an attack of isolationism as a doctrine that neglected power. But there were alternatives to isolationism apart from a messianic universalism that would drive a state to seek tight control over events all over the world. According to the logic of Spykman and Lippmann, it was neither necessary nor desirable that the United States try to extend its hegemony over very much of the world.\textsuperscript{14} Instead, its

\textsuperscript{12} Kimball includes both isolationism and messianic internationalism as manifestations of U.S. unilateralism, which he characterizes as “the American urge to go it alone in the event that others did not accept American demands.” See Warren F. Kimball, \textit{The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman} (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 84.

\textsuperscript{13} On these points, see Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}, chap. 1; Robert Dallek, \textit{Franklin Delano Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), especially pp. 390–91; and Deborah Larson, \textit{Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation} (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), chap. 2. An important exception was Roosevelt’s summer 1943 decision not to share information about the atomic weapons program with the Soviet Union on a voluntary basis, but Roosevelt consistently resisted Churchill’s efforts to expand the scope of this subpartnership to the exclusion of the Soviets. Kimball, correctly in my view, interprets Roosevelt’s decision on the atomic issue as a way to hedge his bets on Stalin. See Kimball, \textit{The Juggler}, chap. 5.

\textsuperscript{14} See Nicholas John Spykman, \textit{America’s Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power} (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1942); and Walter Lippmann, \textit{U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic} (Boston: Little, Brown, 1943). This argument had intellectual roots in British foreign policy thought as well; see, for example, Sir Halford Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” \textit{Geographical Journal} 23 (April 1904), pp. 421–44.
security and broader interests in world politics were best promoted by aiming to ensure as a minimal necessary goal that no single state would come to control the territory and resources of the Eurasian land mass. This was a doctrine of balance of power by “denial” extended to a global context, which in effect rendered the geopolitical requirements of the argument easier to fulfill. As for the U.S. public, it would be easier to sustain the needed level of commitment if American foreign policy could be presented as favoring diversity and flexibility while encouraging progressive change on a worldwide basis. Rather than openly confronting the Soviet Union in a bipolar contest, the United States would look to be “on the side of history,” supporting the development of other centers of power and continually readjusting to changing interests instead of trying to prevent change from occurring.

Truman, like many others in Washington, did not share Roosevelt’s confidence in Stalin as a willing collaborator. Although Roosevelt did not run up against the practical complications of the four policeman scheme until the end of his life, Truman ran up against them more directly and sooner in his presidency. Nevertheless, at the start of his presidency, Truman held to his predecessor’s view that a managed multipolar balance among what was now the “big three” was possible and would promote peace in the postwar world. Following the counsel of his advisers and particularly Averell Harriman, Truman took a more forceful approach with Stalin but still sought until the end of 1945 at least to coopt the Soviet Union into a broad collaboration along with the United States and Britain.15

The U.S. State Department was generally less optimistic that the Soviet Union could be made a part of this scheme. George Kennan in particular doubted that American leverage could do much to influence Soviet cooperativeness, at least in the short term. According to the logic of his “long telegram,” the balance of power in the postwar world was not going to be a cooperative one, since the Soviet Union, with its potent blend of communism and totalitarianism, was simply not ready to play by collaborative rules.16 Soviet expansionism might have been driven in substantial measure by insecurity and an almost paranoid tendency to view the outside world as hostile, but there was little that the United States could do quickly to ameliorate these causes. If there was going to be peace, expansionism would have to be “contained” actively, and this demanded a more competitive balance of power. But for

15. See Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, pp. 14–19. In a major foreign policy address given on 16 June 1945, Truman pronounced that “unless there is complete understanding between [the] three great powers there will be no peace” and that the alternative, competition between two great powers, would end up “a truce-armistice, which will be just like the one we had in 1920.” Truman is quoted by Larson in Origins of Containment, p. 141.

Kennan and others around him, it was equally important for the long term that the balance not be bipolar but multipolar. The consensus in and around the State Department was that the United States could not and should not try to balance Soviet power more or less on its own.  

Why not? After all, a "realist" power calculation (and Kennan certainly saw himself as a paramount realist) led inexorably to the conclusion that only the United States was in a position to balance Soviet power and that the West European states could at best play a supporting role. Indeed, a 1944 analysis performed by the U.S. Office of Strategic Services predicted that the Soviet Union would likely place the East European states in precisely this kind of subordinate role and extract as many resources from them as possible in an attempt to maximize its own power vis-à-vis that of the United States.

Kennan, however, did not believe that the United States could sustain a bipolar balance of power with the Soviets over time; and he was convinced that if it tried, the result could very well be war. The logic behind this position began with the fear, common to both Roosevelt and Truman, that a stark bipolar confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States would encourage ideological extremism, which could take the form not only of an ambitious internationalism but also isolationism on the part of Americans. Kennan argued further that the constraints of a world with more than two centers of power would be favorable because the presence of other "poles" in the system would restrain both the Soviets and the Americans from taking too many foreign policy risks and from indulging in crusades to reshape the world in their own image. Kennan recognized that to put this argument into practice meant countenancing a powerful Germany, since without a revitalized German center the group of West European states could not be expected to play a substantial independent role in the balance of power. He also recognized the deep anxiety of the British and the French regarding Germany, but he was resolved to work


19. Of course, Kennan did not believe that the United States was as vulnerable to this as was the Soviet Union, but he did not view the United States as immune. See, for example, "George Kennan to Cecil B. Lyon, 13 October 1947," Department of State Policy Planning Staff Records, Chronological File, Box 33, Diplomatic Branch, National Archives, in which Kennan argued that the "first and primary element of 'containment' ... [is the] encouragement and development of other forces resistant to communism" and that "it should be a cardinal point of our policy to see to it that other elements of independent power are developed on the Eurasian land mass as rapidly as possible." John D. Hickerson, director of the State Department Office of European Affairs would later write that the notion was to foster a European "third force," which he characterized as "a real European organization strong enough to say no both to the Soviet Union and to the United States." See "Hickerson Memorandum, 21 January 1948," FRUS 1948, vol. 3, p. 11.
toward overcoming their reluctance as the necessary price for peace. In his mind, the bipolar alternative was worse because it meant a divided Europe locked into the front lines of a face-to-face U.S.–Soviet confrontation, with World War III a nearly inevitable result.20

Kennan, like Roosevelt, also went beyond geopolitics in his belief that a multipolar international system would safeguard the domestic character of the American state and polity. He worried that if the United States on its own attempted to balance Soviet power, this would lead to the establishment of spheres of domination. In its sphere of dependent states, each superpower could then dictate its vision of how to organize a society. For Kennan, attempts at forcibly imposing American political institutions abroad would eventually threaten the character of those institutions at home, since democracy rested precisely on a willingness to tolerate diversity.21 The multipolar alternative offered a unique convergence between the demands of realpolitik and the peculiarities of American democracy. It would allow the United States to serve its interests in both spheres by encouraging what John Gaddis describes as the evolution of a “world order based not on superpower hegemony but on the natural balance only diverse concentrations of authority, operating independently of one another, could provide.”22

Kennan’s policy recommendations for “containment” followed closely on this logic. The United States was to play a facilitative role in constructing a balance of power and then a key supporting role once other centers of power were in place. But in no sense did the containment strategy prescribe that the United States attempt on its own to balance Soviet power. In fact, Kennan’s policy arguments through most of 1948 were aimed precisely at avoiding that outcome. Kennan stressed economic and political instruments as a way of restoring European confidence that the continent could take care of itself in large part for this reason. He also stood firmly against formal American military commitments in the interim, and he did not give up that position until quite late in the game.23 The general ends of this balance-of-power design were quite

20. Kennan’s memos show that although he had few illusions about the resistance which his ideas concerning the restoration of German power would encounter, he viewed the alternative of a bipolar world as certainly more dangerous. In that vein, Kennan would later write somewhat sardonically that “the only thing wrong with Hitler’s new order was that it was Hitler’s.” See “George Kennan to Dean Acheson, 18 October 1949,” Policy Planning Staff Records, Box 32, Diplomatic Branch, National Archives. Kennan thought that the U.S. government could successfully combine reassurance, persuasion, and gentle coercion to convince others to accept German power in the context of a united Europe.

21. The toleration of diversity was a key theme in Kennan’s fundamental optimism about the United States and the strategy of containment. As Kennan stated in his October 1948 speech to the Naval War College, the Soviet government’s inability to tolerate diversity would turn out to be the “weakest and most vulnerable point in the Kremlin armor”; quoted by Gaddis in Strategies of Containment, pp. 43–44.


23. See John Lewis Gaddis, The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 43, 57–58, and 64. I discuss the State Department’s evolving position on military guarantees in the next section of my article.
clear. The principal goal was to avoid bipolarity by preventing a division of the world into Soviet and American spheres. Instead, the United States would encourage the evolution of a “limited” multipolar international system—a system consisting of a small number of spheres but not just two—by promoting the emergence of independent centers of power in Europe and in Asia as well. This was not just a new kind of isolationism; Kennan and those around him did not argue that the United States could leave the balance of power in the hands of others. Nor was it an attempt to promote a world of free-wheeling alliances that would operate more like the Europe of the nineteenth century. The flexibility that was sought in the new multipolarity was partial—enough to ensure the presumed benefits of restraint and to avoid the excesses of a bipolar world. The critical thing was that the United States not make the mistake of sacrificing long-term advantages and objectives in this multipolarity for the sake of “quick fixes” to security and other problems, made alluring by the possibilities of American power and the constraints of Soviet power.

Implementing the plan

As these constraints and the apparent Soviet threat loomed larger through 1947, the Truman administration was compelled to involve the United States more directly in the European balance of power. Yet it was careful to do so in ways that were calculated to preserve the multipolarity scenario as much as possible. Central to that vision was the idea that policies which might encourage the dependency of European states on the United States for security would be systematically avoided. This remained a guiding principle for American foreign policy in Europe as long as two assumptions held sway in Washington. The first was that the “real” Soviet threat in Europe was not the prospect of a blitzkrieg launched by the Soviet army but was instead long term and political in nature. The second was that alliances in the postwar world would in fact be at least moderately flexible and that the inevitable spheres of influence would be loosely held “areas of association,” not tightly dominated and controlled “regions of subservience.”25

24. Kennan fully expected that an “independent” Europe would find its interests coincident with those of the United States on most of the important issues. The vision was of a U.S.–West European partnership of sorts, one that would be robust enough to withstand the Soviet threat but still sufficiently contingent to restrain the United States. For a different view that places stronger emphasis on the importance of lingering American isolationism, see Michael Howard, “Introduction,” in Olav Riste, ed., Western Security: The Formative Years (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 11–22.

25. Both of these assumptions underlay Kennan’s argument in the “long telegram.” They were also consistent with the U.S. military’s assessments of Soviet army capabilities following the war. See Walter S. Poole, “From Conciliation to Containment: The JCS and the Coming of the Cold War, 1945–6,” Military Affairs 42 (February 1978), pp. 12–15.
Two important policy innovations in early 1947 reflect this conception. The first was the Truman Doctrine, announced to Congress on 12 March. While the President declared that “it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures,” his powerful rhetoric camouflaged crucial limitations of the “support” he was advocating. It was to be carried out with dollars and with advisers but not with American military forces; and there was no explicit commitment to preserve governments or territory, despite the deep sense of gravity with which most U.S. policymakers and bureaucrats viewed the threat of a communist takeover in Greece. It became clear in subsequent communications that the doctrine did not establish a precedent for similar action elsewhere. The objectives of the policy were limited: to prevent communist control (and, by implication, Soviet control) of Greece and Turkey but not to establish American control of these countries. While the establishment of U.S. control would have offered the most assurance that additional territory would not fall to the Soviets, it would have compromised the multipolarity scenario. As one of the committees in charge of drafting the 12 March speech reported, “The present power relationships of the great states preclude the domination of the world by any one of them. Those power relationships cannot be substantially altered by the unilateral action of any one great state.”

The second policy innovation, the Program for European Recovery or “Marshall Plan” of June 1947, reflected similar designs for the rest of Western Europe. The threat here was not seen as a “matter of days,” but it was no less serious for that. As Undersecretary of State William Clayton put it, there was a near-term risk that “economic, social, and political disintegration will overwhelm Europe.” Clayton himself believed that this situation left the United States no choice but to step into a power vacuum and take up the challenge of a bipolar world. In a series of imploring memos, he wrote that “the United States must take world leadership and quickly, to avert world disaster” and that

26. In late February 1947, Acheson told his journalist friend Louis Fischer that he was convinced that “the thing is not so urgent in Turkey but in Greece it is a matter of days”; quoted by Larson in *Origins of Containment*, p. 303. On 26 February 1947, Marshall gave Truman a memo reporting a similar consensus among the Departments of State, War, and Navy and indicating that “we should take immediate steps to extend all possible aid to Greece”; see *FRUS* 1947, vol. 5, pp. 58–59. It was also agreed that the fall of Greece to the communists would probably not be an isolated event. Marshall, for example, warned congressional leaders in late February that “we are faced with the first crisis of a series which might extend Soviet domination to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia”; quoted by Larson in *Origins of Containment*, p. 306.


when it came to Western Europe’s future, “the United States must run this show.”

American policy did not follow Clayton’s prescription. In the speech given on 5 June 1947, Secretary of State George Marshall explicitly stated that the initiative for recovery had to come from Europe, and he suggested that the European states join together to examine their needs and draft proposals. This was a consequence of a growing concern in the State Department that “the extension of U.S. economic aid was becoming a substitute for European efforts.” Kennan was keen on this point. When he finally overcame his ambivalence about the Marshall Plan in the autumn, it was with the caveat that “it should be a cardinal point of our policy to see to it that other elements of independent power are developed on the Eurasian land mass as rapidly as possible, in order to take off our shoulders some of the burdens of bipolarity.”

Congressional hearings on the Marshall Plan in January 1948 showed that Kennan’s views were widely shared by U.S. policymakers. From their perspective, the Marshall Plan was supposed to reconstitute a European community that could play an independent role in a multipolar balance of power without a security guarantee from the U.S. government. These were not just pious statements. Had the United States sought to maximize its influence over the states of Western Europe or encourage their dependency, it could have unilaterally set the terms for recovery aid in a series of bilateral deals with each individual state. Instead, the terms were set by the Europeans as a group in cooperation with the United States, via the newly formed Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), which included sixteen participant states.


31. It is notable that Marshall bypassed Clayton, who as Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs had at least equal claim to the assignment, and instead called on Kennan and the policy planning staff to head the central study on the Program for European Recovery. The policy planning staff argued that the European countries should themselves author the plan. See John Gimbel, *The Origins of the Marshall Plan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1976), pp. 199–203.


33. “George Kennan to Cecil B. Lyon, 13 October 1947,” Department of State Policy Planning Staff Records, Chronological File, Box 33, Diplomatic Branch, National Archives; emphasis added.

34. See U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *European Recovery Program*, 80th Congress, 2d sess., January 1948. There were few objections to this scenario during the hearings. For an isolated example, see the comments of Senator Bourke Hickenlooper (p. 490), who doubted that the Europeans could sustain the requisite military capabilities under any circumstances.

35. Many of the factors favoring bilateralism that I discussed in the previous section would have applied to Marshall Plan aid as well. Apart from the gain to the United States of being able to differentiate among aid recipients, the bilateral alternative would have significantly reduced transaction costs, since the multilateral solution required getting sixteen states to agree on a comprehensive plan. As it turned out, an agreement to establish the OEEC (the forerunner to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD) was not completed until
The U.S. design in fact ran against the preferences of many European elites. The British in particular wanted an explicit American security guarantee and were willing to pay a substantial price in terms of accepting a subordinate role to U.S. power in exchange for it. In January 1948, Ernest Bevin proposed that the United States join a “Western defense union” to be constructed through a network of bilateral alliances along the lines of the Dunkirk Treaty. In February, he scaled down his ambitions and floated the idea of a simple bilateral security pact between Britain and the United States. Truman and the State Department in particular balked at both propositions. France, for its part, was generally more direct about the fear of a revitalized Germany. When it became clear after the London conference of November and December 1947 that three zones of Germany would be rehabilitated as a part of the West, France redoubled its efforts to engage the United States in a formal security plan. Truman turned back these demands as well. As late as spring 1948, the United States would accept only minimal compromise to the vision of a multipolar balance of power with an independent Europe, which now clearly entailed forcing recalcitrant allies to accept a central role for a powerful German state.

Assumptions undermined

One of the two key assumptions behind the American vision was that alliances in the postwar world would be flexible and that spheres of influence would be relatively loose. After the dramatic Czechoslovak coup in February 1948, this assumption no longer seemed tenable. Stalin looked intent on creating a tight sphere of influence in which the Soviet Union could dominate the domestic politics as well as the foreign policy alignments of its East European “allies.” The argument that the communist sphere could not maintain itself as a monolith over time, an argument set forth by Kennan and others in the State Department, was greatly weakened by these developments.

April 1948. For a different view, see A. W. DePorte, Europe Between the Superpowers (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), chap. 7.

36. In The Long Peace, p. 69, Gaddis quotes Bevin telling his cabinet that “the closest association with the United States is essential” for defense, despite the fact “that such a policy might well require the subordination of British and European interests to those of the United States.”


39. The United States made only minor concessions in the interest of bolstering a fragile government in Paris. See ibid., pp. 50 and 60–63.

40. In less than a year, Soviet-backed communist parties had gained nearly exclusive control over governments in Budapest, Sofia, Bucharest, Warsaw, and Prague. While substantial influence over foreign policy might have been consistent with the American view of “loose spheres,” the
The Czechoslovak coup was also a critical turning point in the perceptions of Secretary of State Marshall, who for the first time conceded that the United States might have to formally associate itself with a European security organization.41 Belgium, Britain, France, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands were already moving forward with precisely such a plan. On 17 March 1948, these states concluded negotiations on the Brussels Pact, which carried with it a barely implicit message to the U.S. government: Europe was ready to organize for defense, but it needed the United States to play the central role in holding a balance of power against the Soviet threat.

Kennan’s staff and allies in the National Security Council (NSC) were unconvinced. In several reports examining options for linking the United States with the Brussels Pact, both groups argued strongly that the United States should offer an “informal association” based on a unilateral declaration of support for the treaty by the President and nothing more.42 The British called this insufficient and continued to push for a formal U.S. commitment, claiming that only a legal treaty approved by the Senate would still the lingering fears of American isolationism which were felt on the Continent.43

The U.S. government demurred. On 27 April 1948, it offered only to declare its support for the principle of “effective self-help and mutual aid” by associating itself informally with the Brussels Pact.44 The very next day, Canada’s Foreign Minister, Louis St. Laurent, raised the stakes by proposing a single mutual defense system that would supersede the pact by binding the United States and Canada to it. This plan was welcomed in London but not in Washington. Bevin continued to push the United States through the end of May. In a fervent letter to Marshall, he reminded the Secretary of the immediacy and magnitude of the Soviet threat and argued that declaring support for the Brussels Pact without offering more specific and explicit

infiltration and exclusive control of domestic politics by forceful subversion, secret police activity, and the reorganization of the military under the Soviet army was not.

41. In an emergency telegram sent right after the coup, Marshall said that he now envisioned a long-term and direct U.S. involvement in Europe, including “protracted security guarantees.” See “Marshall to Douglas, 28 February 1948,” FRUS 1948, vol. 2, p. 101. Marshall was supported by Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett and by Hickerson, both of whom now agreed that the time had come for the United States to take on formal security treaty obligations in Europe. See Ireland, Creating the Entangling Alliance, p. 80.


43. And, most important, only a formal U.S. commitment would calm the French about eventual German involvement. See Ireland, Creating the Entangling Alliance, pp. 83–85.

44. This language was a compromise outcome of discussions between Marshall, Lovett, John Foster Dulles, and Senators Arthur H. Vandenberg and Tom Connally. Vandenberg worried that even this much would encourage European dependence on the United States, but he nevertheless came close to accepting the administration’s preferences, as put forward in an NSC report of 13 April 1948. See “Souers to the NSC,” FRUS 1948, vol. 3, pp. 86–87. The Vandenberg resolution, which passed the Senate on 11 June 1948, incorporates similar language.
commitments from the United States might not deter the Soviets and certainly would not inspire adequate confidence in Europe.\textsuperscript{45} But the United States continued to resist on principle anything more than an informal association; and when the Vandenberg resolution passed the Senate on 11 June 1948, the road was paved for this “solution” to be put into place.

Less than two weeks later, the Soviets closed all routes of supply except air traffic to West Berlin. The first U.S.–Soviet cold war crisis in Europe brought the other assumption underlying the U.S. government’s multipolarity scenario under severe pressure. For the moment at least, it seemed as if the Soviet threat might in fact be imminent and military, not long term and political. With both assumptions weakened, the “deterrence scenario,” the need to prevent a victory for the Soviets that was achieved by force in Western Europe, took immediate precedence over a continuing commitment to avoiding European dependency.

But while moving to fill the emergency gap in military capabilities, the U.S. government still went as far as it could to preserve its longer-term vision. In July, Robert Lovett informed the Brussels Pact nations that the United States was now prepared to move ahead on a “loose” association agreement more explicit than that envisioned several months before, but it would still decline any formal commitment or an obligation for an “automatic” response to attack.\textsuperscript{46} Through a series of intricate negotiations over the summer, the United States continued to resist pressure from Britain and particularly from France for a “more precise and definite mutual obligation.”\textsuperscript{47} The talks produced a compromise working paper in early September 1948, but the precise terms of U.S. commitment were still vague.\textsuperscript{48} The working paper used the words “formal treaty,” but the United States held to its position that any military commitment would depend on American constitutional processes and would not be automatic in case of attack. The U.S. government stressed that it saw itself only as a marginal supporter of what had to be primarily a European effort. Instead of a formal guarantee, it offered “continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, to strengthen . . . the capacity of the parties to resist aggression.”\textsuperscript{49} The


\textsuperscript{46} Even this was qualified: Lovett, following policy recommendations set out in an NSC report of 28 June 1948, told the British that the United States would not offer even an informal commitment until the Western Union (the defense organ of the Brussels Pact) moved to organize itself more effectively. See Ireland, \textit{Creating the Entangling Alliance}, pp. 100–103; and Kennan, \textit{Memoirs}, 1925–1950, p. 407.


\textsuperscript{48} “Memorandum by the Participants in the Washington Security Talks, July 6 to September 9, Submitted to Their Respective Governments for Study and Comment,” \textit{FRUS} 1948, vol. 3, p. 239.

\textsuperscript{49} The compromise draft reflected the American position almost entirely on these important points. For a comparison of the Europeans’ preferred wording, the Americans’ preferred wording, and the eventual compromise, see Ireland, \textit{Creating the Entangling Alliance}, p. 106.
United States did not take charge of the military affairs of the evolving alliance (which it could have readily done at this juncture) or even promise a continuing American military presence on the Continent. In late September, when the West European states set up the Western Union, a formal military body to coordinate defense activities, it did not include an American.

One month later, still dissatisfied with the U.S. response, the powers of the Western Union formally requested negotiations with the United States on a North Atlantic treaty. Kennan lent his support reluctantly to this in November, with the strong caveat that tight ties between the United States and the defense of Europe should be seen as a short-term exigency driven by the immediate Soviet threat. In his view, the long-term interests of the United States still lay in promoting the military and political cohesion of a European “third force” that would facilitate the withdrawal of the superpowers’ troops from the Continent “and absorb and take over the territory between the two.” The U.S. government’s position paralleled the substance of Kennan’s logic on what became the central point of principle in the treaty negotiations.50 Over vehement British and French protest, the U.S. government rejected a December 1948 draft treaty that seemed to imply a formal obligation to commit troops in response to attack. When the final version of the treaty was completed in February 1949, it included an important caveat about domestic constitutional processes that explicitly left each signatory free to take whatever action its own government deemed appropriate in case of war. The treaty also described armed force as a “possible” response to aggression, not a necessary one.51

The United States bound itself into the European balance of power when it signed the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949, but it did so in ways calculated to maintain as much of the multipolarity scenario as was possible at the time. Nothing in the treaty gave the United States a privileged position within the military or political structures of the alliance. For political governance, the treaty established the North Atlantic Council, which was to consist of the foreign ministers of member states and was to follow the “one-country, one-vote” rule. When the council met for the first time in September 1949, it established a number of subordinate political bodies with the same voting rule. It also set up several permanent military bodies, including the Defense Committee, which was made up of the defense ministers of member states, and the Military Committee, which consisted of the chiefs of

50. See “Considerations Affecting the Conclusion of a North Atlantic Treaty,” FRUS 1948, vol. 3, pp. 284–88. Kennan continued to argue this line until he left the policy planning staff at the end of 1949. As late as April 1949, he initiated a new study aimed at determining “whether the emergence of a unified Western Europe postulates the formation of a third world power of approximately equal strength to the United States and the Soviet Union.” Kennan was quoted by Gaddis in The Long Peace, p. 67. See also “Bruce to Acheson, 22 October 1949,” FRUS 1949, vol. 4, p. 343.

staff of member states and absorbed the functions of the Western Union Defense Organization. The decision-making structure of both committees was one vote per state. The first four-year defense plan for NATO, which came into force in April 1950, preserved the principle of national command for military forces and included no special privileges, command or otherwise, for the United States. The notion of an integrated force under a centralized or supreme commander would come later, under different circumstances. For the moment, the alliance scored high as both a multilateral organization and an institution of multilateralism.

The Korean War

It was not until the invasion of South Korea in June 1950 that the predominance of the deterrence scenario was confirmed in Washington, prompting a reorganization of NATO institutions and a shift away from the principle of multilateralism that the United States had fought so tenaciously to maintain.

Events now moved quickly. In late July, the administration announced that it would ask Congress to appropriate an additional $10 billion for defense, about half of which would be earmarked for the alliance. A few days later, the NATO Council Deputies elected Charles Spofford, an American, to be their permanent chairman. In early September, Truman made public his plans to send additional American troops to Europe. Shortly thereafter, the North Atlantic Council adopted the principle of defending alliance territory along a line as far to the east as practicable.

This was a critical decision. The principle of forward defense for Europe demanded a reorganization of NATO, simply because of the level of forces and the kind of coordination between them necessary to carry it out militarily. Recognizing this, the North Atlantic Council instructed the Defense Committee to develop plans for “the establishment at the earliest possible date of an

52. The United States even rejected pleas from the French government to participate in defense planning groups for the western Europe region, northern Europe region, and southern Europe—western Mediterranean region, limiting its activities to the groups that would draw up defense plans for the North Atlantic Ocean region and the Canada–U.S. region. See “Report of the Working Group on Organization to the North Atlantic Council,” FRUS 1949, vol. 4, pp. 322–36.

53. The invasion lent some credibility to the argument that the West might anticipate a surprise attack in Europe once Soviet army capabilities had been adequately expanded. On this point, see “NSC-68, United States Objectives and Programs for National Security, 14 April 1950,” FRUS 1950, vol. 1, pp. 251 and 267. For at least a short time in June and early July 1950, the notion that Korea might be a “feint” devised to lure American forces and tie them down in the periphery while the Soviets prepared for an attack on Europe was taken seriously in Washington and elsewhere. See Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 110.

54. The Council Deputies, made up of deputies to the foreign ministers of each of the NATO countries, was established in May 1950 to meet in continuous session and act essentially as a secretariat for the North Atlantic Council.

integrated force under centralized command and control."\textsuperscript{56} This crucial step away from multilateralism was consummated in December 1950, when the council formally approved the establishment of an integrated military force under central command. An American, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, was appointed Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), and the United States immediately pledged a substantial increase in the number of American ground forces stationed in Europe.\textsuperscript{57} Further reorganizations over the next year included merging the Western Union Defense Organization into NATO's unified command, establishing the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), and reaching agreements concerning the status of forces and civilians stationed in a NATO member country other than their own and operating under NATO auspices.\textsuperscript{58} In February 1952 came the final recognition of NATO as a permanent organization.

The new institutional structure of NATO met several immediate needs. It provided a framework for a substantial expansion of forces-in-being and promised greater efficiency in their use by placing them under integrated command.\textsuperscript{59} It also provided the means to keep the French and the Germans together in a security institution. This was no small feat. Until the summer of 1950, the United States had hoped to bring about a gradual easing of French fears about incorporating the Germans as partners in European defense. But after Korea was invaded, the demands of the deterrence scenario meant that the United States could no longer wait for the French (and the British, to a lesser degree) to grow strong and confident enough to join together with a revitalized Germany, as the multipolarity scenario had foreseen. Instead, the United States had to commit itself as a predominant actor in the European balance of power and in so doing reassure the French government that it would not face a Faustian choice between subservience to the Soviet Union and subservience to Germany.

Arguments about promoting multipolarity and avoiding the dependency of Europe took second place, for the moment. Although there were alternative institutional forms that could have been adopted at this juncture, they would have been even more damaging to the multipolarity scenario. The United States did not have to force the rearmament of Germany on France or accept the concessions it did in order to keep these two countries together under its


\textsuperscript{58} The reorganizations took place in December 1950, April 1951, and June 1951, respectively.

terms. It could have sided with France on the question of German military status and relied on the French plan for partially integrating the Federal Republic into Europe through economic and political means. But the United States still viewed security and specifically NATO as a formula for promoting the integration of Europe. NATO's new institutional structure was in part a means to accelerate Germany's return to semisovereign status. In the short run, German resources would minimize the defense burden on the United States; but in the longer run, a NATO that contained both Germany and France still held out the promise of an integrated independent Europe taking care of its own defense without direct American involvement. In effect, the United States acted to meet the exigencies of power and threat in Europe, but it did so in ways calculated to preserve as much of the multipolarity scenario as was possible at the time.

The partial "victory" of the deterrence scenario in any case proved short-lived. Once the fear that the Korean War was a prelude to an invasion of Europe dissipated during 1951, the U.S. Congress sliced $4.3 billion (about 9 percent) from Truman's military budget for fiscal year 1953. The British raised a call to scale down the ambitious Lisbon force goals for NATO's conventional armies, and these were essentially rescinded by the North Atlantic Council in December 1952, less than a year after they had been agreed upon. When Eisenhower took office the next month, his administration quickly picked up the momentum.

**Eisenhower's vision**

The new administration's designs for Europe were driven at one level by economics and by the President's fervent interest in cutting American expenditures for defense. This had two important consequences for NATO. The first was a determined effort to incorporate West Germany fully into the alliance and make efficient use of its resources for NATO's military posture. That issue was settled with the Paris agreements in October 1954, which recognized the status of the Federal Republic as a sovereign state and paved its way for NATO membership. The second was a decision to massively increase U.S. reliance and by implication NATO reliance on nuclear weapons. In

60. The French preferred to use the European Coal and Steel Community, rather than NATO, as a way of incorporating West Germany into Europe. Another alternative at this juncture would have been for the United States to cut bilateral deals with Germany and with France on separate terms, as I suggested earlier. See Robert McGeehan, *The German Re-armament Question* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 161.

61. It is well known that Eisenhower feared that inappropriately large defense expenditures threatened to cripple the U.S. economy. At the same time, the new president had a strong desire to regain a level of positive initiative in American foreign policy, which he felt had deteriorated under Truman. See, for example, Samuel Huntington, *The Common Defense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 64–88; and Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 146–47.
October 1953, the NSC issued report no. 162/2, a document that served as the basis of the “New Look” and in principle called for the use of nuclear weapons in any future conflict in which they might be deemed advantageous. In December 1954, the North Atlantic Council agreed to bring “NATO strategy into line with American strategy and authorized SHAPE to base its military planning on the assumption that nuclear weapons would be used in future conflicts.”62

Assimilating the Federal Republic was a clear prerequisite to the multipolarity scenario. But the New Look seemed to cut in the opposite direction. A priori, the decision to rely on nuclear weapons for the defense of Europe might have sealed the fate of NATO, putting both multilateralism and the vision of multipolarity to rest, at least for as long as the alliance’s critical weapons were owned and controlled by just one member. The United States would now occupy a privileged position within the alliance. And if the Europeans could rely on the United States and its nuclear weapons to maintain the balance of power and ensure their security, they would have even less incentive to take on burdens for their own defense or to make the difficult choices on integration. Yet none of these suppositions were correct.

There was a second level to Eisenhower’s designs, a deeper political vision that recapitulated the multipolarity scenario of previous administrations. Like Truman and Roosevelt, Eisenhower feared a continuing bipolar face-off between the United States and the Soviet Union; and like Kennan, he worried that America’s democratic institutions would suffer severely under the pressure of prolonged and inconclusive cold war.63 Eisenhower’s preferred scenario looked much like Kennan’s vision of a stable multipolar international system in which the balance of power would rest on the principle of denial. For Eisenhower, as for Kennan, this would do more than just effectively contain the Soviet Union and “world communism.” By encouraging other states to independently develop capabilities and the determination to resist the Soviet threat, the United States would bolster its own domestic character and set the stage for broader progress beyond the stark necessities of cold war competition.

Europe was the central focus for these aspirations. First as NATO SACEUR and later as President, Eisenhower consistently portrayed the U.S. role in defending Europe as a temporary role, a compromise to “bridge the crisis


63. Eisenhower used phrases such as “general mobilization,” “regimentation,” and “garrison state” to capture his concerns about the impact that a prolonged bipolar cold war might have on U.S. democratic institutions. He worried that “all that we are striving to defend would be weakened and . . . could disappear” under the unmitigated pressure of this kind of confrontation. Gaddis quotes Eisenhower in a summary discussion in Strategies of Containment, pp. 133–35.
period during which European forces were building up."64 The sentiment was not built on economics alone. Like many of his generation, Eisenhower held strong views about the traditional place of Britain, France, and even Germany as great powers in world politics. The current position of these states as secondary actors caught in the middle of a U.S.–Soviet struggle was simply unnatural and did not make sense from a political perspective.65

This had important implications for NATO. In a general sense, Eisenhower did not believe that the United States should go on "treating its trusted allies as junior members."66 He was troubled by what he saw as a growing dependency in which the Europeans had come to rely with relative comfort on the United States to maintain the balance of power.67 Over and over again, Eisenhower stressed the point that the Western alliance was held together by trust, confidence, faith, and, most important, a shared sense of purpose among peers. Formal institutions that had been set up to meet an emergency were no excuse for free riding.

Wasn't this a paradox? After all, these political ideas would have been hard to reconcile with the place that nuclear weapons had come to hold in the military plans of the alliance. In effect, the Europeans' junior partner status followed from the fact that the U.S. government had been asking its "trusted" allies to supply and pay for infrastructure and conventional forces, when security in the end rested on strategic nuclear weapons that only the United States would control.

But this was precisely the "paradox" that Eisenhower was anxious to resolve. Answering a reporter's query about NATO's arrangements for ownership and control of nuclear weapons and how these fit with the President's view of the alliance overall, Eisenhower stated simply that "from the very beginning . . . I have always been of the belief that we should not deny to our allies what the enemies, what your potential enemy already has."68 John McConne, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, offered a similar assessment, to which Eisenhower heartily agreed: "We would not be able to have vitality on the part

64. "Memorandum of Conference Between the President and Andrew Goodpastor, 2 October 1956," White House Office (WHO), Office of the Staff Secretary (OSS), International Trips and Meetings (ITM), Box 3, Eisenhower Presidential Library (EPL), Abilene, Kansas.

65. As Steinbruner put it, Eisenhower firmly believed that a situation in which "nations which had long dominated world politics had been eased into subordinate relationships and no longer controlled the forces upon which the defense of their people and sovereign territory rested . . . did not square with the tradition of Europe and its historical sense of identity." See John D. Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press), p. 171.


67. In the President's view, the Europeans' ability to free ride on the American security commitment had in fact led to some of the consequences that Kennan had predicted and feared. Eisenhower saw the French rejection of the European Defense Community, which he had "swore, prayed, almost wept for," as a critical turning point in this story. See "Memorandum of Conversation Between the President and Paul-Henri Spaak, November 1959," WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, EPL.

of our European partners as long as we refuse to give them the weapons."  

Because Eisenhower was convinced that "our allies were not going to be willing to fight with bows and arrows while we have guns," he agreed that the United States should "be prepared to provide what the NATO nations truly need for their defenses." This was a thinly disguised code for the President's interest in sharing nuclear weapons within the alliance. As his secretary reported of a discussion on the problems of intra-alliance cooperation in 1957, "He [the President] does not believe that this can be accomplished if we deny control over the missiles, with their warheads, to the recipient nations. Denying such control, in his opinion, will result in rejection of the U.S. program."  

Eisenhower's view of nuclear weapons and the NATO alliance began with a simple political logic: nuclear weapons were thought to be of sufficient importance in world politics that great power states would want to have their own. The British and the French of course gave the U.S. President good reason to think so. In London, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan spoke of the bomb as the ultimate guarantor of self-reliance and as the "ticket of admission" to great power status. The French were even more explicit about their view of nuclear weapons as the critical "currency of power" in the modern world. In 1955, Prime Minister Pierre Mendes-France declared his support for the French nuclear weapons program with the comment that "one is nothing without the bomb in international negotiations." Charles de Gaulle had a more ambitious world role for the French in mind, and it was the force de frappe which would make it possible. In his words, "France cannot be France without greatness." And it was clear that nuclear weapons were a necessary source of that "greatness." Eisenhower was for the most part sympathetic to these arguments. Although he often found de Gaulle's nationalist rhetoric unsettling, he frequently expressed "consider-

69. "Memorandum of Conference with the President, 13 September 1960," WHO, OSS, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Box 4, EPL. Goodpaster added that Eisenhower stood firm for "the collective handling of nuclear weapons" within the alliance because he "thought it clear that we must carry out cooperation of political significance with the others if we wish the alliance to be healthy."

70. See the President's communication of 11 June 1957, in U.S. Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Report on Foreign Policy and Mutual Security, 85th Congress, 1st sess., 1957; and "Committee Report," WHO, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (OSANSA), Special Assistant Series, Subject Subseries, Box 7, EPL.

71. "Memorandum for Goodpaster of Meeting with Congressman Carl Durham, Chairman of the JCAE, 7 December 1957," WHO, OSS, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Box 4, EPL.


73. Mendes-France is quoted by John Newhouse in War and Peace in the Nuclear Age (New York: Knopf, 1989), p. 131.

able sympathy" for the substance of the French leader’s position on nuclear weapons. More than once, Eisenhower expressed his conviction that “we would react very much as de Gaulle does if the shoe were on the other foot.”

This political logic pointed in a single direction: the United States should share nuclear weapons with its allies. What is central for understanding Eisenhower’s initiatives is that the political logic meshed comfortably with Eisenhower’s own beliefs about the weapons and about the conditions for stable nuclear deterrence. It is important in this not to project backwards in time strategic reasoning and doctrines that were developed later and for different reasons.

The New Look and the doctrine of massive retaliation for Eisenhower did not rest on delusions about the ability of the strategic air command to carry out a disarming first strike against Soviet forces or on notions of fighting “limited” or “protracted” nuclear wars in Europe. Quite the contrary: the President knew from the day he entered office that Soviet nuclear strikes would bring intolerable destruction to the American homeland. But he was quietly certain that this war would never be fought. The New Look depended on Eisenhower’s nearly absolute confidence in the efficacy of nuclear deterrence for Europe. For Eisenhower, massive capabilities and the possibility however small that the weapons might be used were sufficient to deter Soviet moves against the NATO alliance. Credibility would not be a major problem, since the punishment for misjudgment would be so severe. Nuclear weapons, at least for interests as vital as those of NATO, came close to providing an existential deterrent.

75. “Memorandum of Conference with the President, 8 August 1960,” WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, EPL. Eisenhower went on to remind NATO SACEUR Lauris Norstad that the nuclear weapons issue was not in his mind different from any other in alliance relations and that “we should be as generous with our allies in this matter as we think they should be in other questions regarding the alliance.”

76. “Memorandum of Conference with the President, 12 December 1958,” WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 2, EPL.

77. In January 1953—seven months before the Soviets tested an H-bomb—the NSC issued report no. 141, in which it informed the President that the Soviet Union would have from three hundred to six hundred bombs by 1955 and “that the net capability of the Soviet Union to injure the United States must already be measured in terms of many millions of casualties.” See Richard Betts, Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1987), p. 150. See also pp. 164–69, in which Betts notes that Eisenhower never showed much confidence in the ability of a preemptive strike to reduce American casualties. In any event, Eisenhower severely doubted that he or any other American leader would ever be willing to launch a first strike: “This would not only be against our traditions but it would appear to be impossible that any such thing would occur.” See the private diary entry on 23 January 1956, p. 2, Ann Whitman File, Dwight David Eisenhower (DDE) Diaries, Box 12, EPL.

78. In Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance, Betts gives a balanced assessment of the doctrine of massive retaliation without cartooning it. In public, Eisenhower sometimes claimed that limited nuclear war was in fact possible. But in his private diaries and in the notes of his meetings, he consistently argued that any use of nuclear weapons would escalate to general war. He was particularly adamant on this point when it came to Europe. See George B. Kistiakowsky, A Scientist at the White House: The Private Diary of President Eisenhower’s Special Assistant for Science and Technology (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 400; Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 175; and John Duffield, “The Evolution of NATO’s Conventional Force Posture,” Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., 1989, chap. 5. In a discussion with NATO Secretary-General Paul-Henri Spaak in October 1960, the President waived off questions about
The nuclear sharing issue among the European allies was thus not fundamentally about strategic stability, the credibility of extended deterrence, or other matters concerning military doctrine. The abstract arguments of the strategic thinkers who would set out demanding criteria for fulfilling these conditions were not a major consideration for the President. Nuclear deterrence was credible. And it would be no more or no less credible if the U.S. allies had their own nuclear weapons, provided only that they were able to control them responsibly. The issue did not really belong in the military realm. It was first and foremost a political question; and for political reasons, the United States should not deny its allies’ legitimate aspirations to possess nuclear weapons. To do that would be to try to block a natural evolution in the status of states destined to be great powers and thereby confound a deeper logic of politics and history.

There was an alternative. If the United States were willing instead to act courageously and get out in front of the trend, it now had a singular and alluring opportunity to reshape the postwar balance of power in a desirable way. Eisenhower believed that nuclear aspirations, properly channeled, could be the crucial spur to European integration that would place the U.S. government’s multipolarity scenario back on track. By nurturing schemes for the Europeans to cooperate in a nuclear force, the United States could foster the process of European integration, avert tensions that might arise from further proliferation of independent national nuclear forces, and solve the problem of Germany’s special status. This could reassert the principles of multilateralism that had been diluted within NATO’s formal structure in 1950. Most important, an integrated nuclear force would take Europe one critical step closer toward unification as a “third force” and thus toward the fulfillment of the multipolarity scenario.

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nonnuclear or limited conflicts in Europe as “academic.” See “Memorandum of Conference with the President, 3 October 1960,” WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, NATO 1959–60, EPL.

79. Consider, for example, Dulles’s argument that while European security and safety were ensured by American nuclear weapons, “psychological and morale factors” demanded something more. The political value of “countries which themselves are subject to . . . intermediate missiles having their own intermediate missiles with which to hit back is an element that has to be weighed in the scales.” See “Dulles Background Briefing for American News Correspondents, 15 December 1957,” WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 4, EPL.

80. Eisenhower saw “Atoms for Peace” as an important part of this blueprint, but the European Atomic Energy Agency, founded in February 1957, was only a first step: “If the six countries set up an integrated institution possessing effective control . . . in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy, control over military uses of atomic energy by these six countries would be simplified.” See “Memo of Lewis L. Strauss (Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission) to the President, 25 January 1956,” WHO, OSS, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Box 5, EPL; and “Dulles to Eisenhower, ‘European Integration and Atomic Energy,’ January 1956,” WHO, OSS, Alphabetical Series, Atomic Energy Commission, Box 3, EPL.

81. Eisenhower was supported in this vision most deeply by members of the State Department, although sometimes for different reasons and with different emphases. Dulles generally shared the President’s view that a European nuclear force was the best alternative to either independent national arsenals or “neutralism” on the part of the allies. See, for example, Dulles’s statement of
Nuclear sharing under Eisenhower

The North Atlantic Council’s December 1954 decision to substitute tactical nuclear weapons for large conventional forces in Europe brought NATO doctrine into line with America’s New Look. According to SACEUR Lauris Norstad, the main task of NATO shield forces now was to act as a “tripwire” for U.S. strategic nuclear forces and “hold an attack until the total weight of the retaliatory power could be brought to bear.” Eisenhower’s confidence in this doctrine was not universally shared. As early as 1954, U.S. civilian and military strategists were engaged in open and sometimes rancorous debate about the credibility of massive retaliation as a military strategy. But it was the political implications that came to the fore first, during the Suez crisis of autumn 1956. Faced with the uglier side of their dependence on the United States, the British and the French drew lessons about how the current arrangements in NATO complicated their aspirations to pursue independent foreign policies in areas of vital interest. Leaders in Britain and France also expressed new doubts about the credibility of the American guarantee to retaliate for Soviet aggression in Europe. At the December 1956 meeting of the North Atlantic Council, the British (with support from Germany, Holland, and Turkey) called for more extensive sharing of short-range nuclear weapons within the alliance in order to reinforce the U.S. guarantee. The French went

17 April 1958 to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, reported in Department of State Bulletin, 5 May 1958, pp. 741-42. Europeanists in the State Department were particularly worried about Germany, and they took seriously Adenauer’s protestations that his country was being singled out as less than equal. The possibility that a frustrated Germany might seek an independent nuclear force and then repudiate the West in favor of a separate peace with the Soviet Union was viewed seriously. European integration was the most promising way to solve the German problem, and the sharing of nuclear weapons in a multilateral force was one way to bring that about. See the “Bowie Report” of August 1960, officially entitled “The North Atlantic Nations: Tasks for the 1960s,” WHO, Office of the Special Assistant for Disarmament, Box 9, EPL; NSC doc. no. 5727, 1959, “Draft Statement of U.S. Policy on Germany,” WHO, NSC Series, Box 23, EPL; NSC doc. no. 6017, 8 November 1960, “NATO in the 1960s,” WHO, NSC Series, Box 11, EPL; and Catherine McArdle Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), pp. 21-29 and 90–94.


further, asking the United States to give up its exclusive control over atomic warheads and transfer them to national forces.\textsuperscript{85}

Eisenhower, sensitive to the political rationale behind these requests, was neither surprised nor dismayed. Even before the Suez crisis, he had given enthusiastic support to Norstad's proposal that the United States offer delivery systems to the allies and create a stockpile of warheads that would be under the SACEUR's authority and could be released to NATO armies on the command of the North Atlantic Council. John Foster Dulles called this an "act of confidence which would strengthen the fellowship of the North Atlantic Community."\textsuperscript{86} In fact, the administration had already considered going further and moving toward a full transfer of nuclear weapons control to the allies.\textsuperscript{87}

Eisenhower's expressed interests in moving in that direction were viewed nervously from several different places in his own administration.\textsuperscript{88} The strongest opposition, however, came from the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (JCAE), which under the McMahon Act of 1946 and subsequent revisions was entrusted with a de facto veto on transfers of nuclear technology. Historically, this committee had been a reservoir of sentiment against the sharing of nuclear weapons technology, dating from its origins in the "atom spies" scandal of February 1946. In part because the suspected Soviet spy ring was operating in Canada and because British scientists were implicated as key figures, the committee's resolve to inhibit dissemination of nuclear know-how came to include the countries of the developing Western alliance as well as those of the Eastern bloc.\textsuperscript{89} After the Suez crisis, the JCAE warned the President that it would continue to oppose efforts to go very far toward the


\textsuperscript{86} Dulles is quoted by Stephen E. Ambrose in \textit{Eisenhower} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), p. 405. As reported in \textit{The New York Times}, 17 July 1957, p. 6, Dulles later justified the stockpile plan with the argument that the allies should not be left "in a position of supplicants . . . for the use of atomic weapons. . . . We do not ourselves want to be in a position where our allies are wholly dependent upon us. We don't think this is a healthy relationship." Eisenhower quickly defended Dulles on this point, saying that the Europeans "ought to have the right, the opportunity, and the capability of responding in kind" to a nuclear strike. See \textit{Public Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1957} (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1958), p. 550.

\textsuperscript{87} Steinbruner notes that "military planners had seriously considered directly providing the allies with both missiles and warheads as a logical extension of liberalization of weapons control in the United States." See \textit{The Cybernetic Theory of Decision}, p. 175; emphasis added.


\textsuperscript{89} See Gregg Herkin, \textit{The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War} (New York: Vintage Press, 1982), pp. 114–36. Originally drafted to secure civilian control over atomic technology that would promote peaceful applications and international cooperation, the McMahon Act was later amended as a result of the spy scandal and increasing concern about Soviet–American relations in the summer of 1946. Herkin notes, indicative of the change in mood surrounding the bill, that a section earlier entitled "Dissemination of Information" was changed to "Control of Information" and that the military was left with greater responsibility for the stockpile of fissionable materials than had been originally planned.
sharing of nuclear weapons with the NATO allies.\textsuperscript{90} The administration put together a compromise acceptable to the committee, in what became known as the “dual-key” stockpile concept. This meant that the Europeans would purchase delivery systems and station them with their NATO forces, while the United States would retain physical custody over nuclear warheads and the right to veto firing.

The United States and Britain moved quickly toward implementing the stockpile plan. At the Bermuda summit meeting in March 1957, Macmillan agreed to purchase sixty Thor intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) and station them with the British air force under the dual-key arrangement. In April, Eisenhower offered to discuss similar deals for short-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and air defense systems (all under dual key) and to extend the arrangement to other allies.\textsuperscript{91} But the launch of Sputnik in October 1957 dramatically changed the context of the discussions.

In December, Konrad Adenauer told Dulles of widespread fear in Europe that “there might be a change of U.S. sentiment due to the fact that [U.S. territory] would come under fire from Soviet ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles]” and that “this might even lead to the United States exercising its right to withdraw from NATO.” These fears were taken seriously in Washington. Dulles reassured Adenauer and others that the coming of Soviet ICBMs would not really change the military situation very much, since the United States “had already assumed that Soviet bombers with megaton weapons would be able to inflict massive destruction on the United States.”\textsuperscript{92} At the same time, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Adviser acknowledged that from a political perspective the “European doubt was rational” and that the crisis in the alliance was real. Eisenhower’s faith was not going to inspire sufficient confidence in Europe. The allies were “demanding a surer strategic concept.” If the United States did not provide it, the consequence would probably be a move by the allies to “try to develop their own nuclear stocks so as to create nuclear war, if they wish, without the United States.” The other possibility was a turn to neutralism and a withdrawal from NATO to cut separate deals for peace with the Soviet government.\textsuperscript{93}


\textsuperscript{92} Dulles seems to have believed that Adenauer’s feelings were on the whole representative of the mood in other European capitals. See “Memorandum of Conversation with Chancellor Adenauer, Paris, 14 December 1957,” Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memos, Box 1, EPL. Trachtenburg discusses German nuclear aspirations and American responses in \textit{History and Strategy}, pp. 180–85.

\textsuperscript{93} See “Memorandum of Conversation with Chancellor Adenauer, Paris, 14 December 1957,” Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memos, Box 1, EPL; and “Memorandum of Conference with Secretary of Defense, Service Secretaries, Joint Chiefs, and Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, 17 June 1958,” WHO, OSANSA, Special Assistant Series, Subject Subseries, Box 7, EPL.
One option for the United States at this point would have been to sacrifice notions of multilateralism within the alliance and contract instead to protect the most important and powerful of the European states through selective bilateral deals. This was never considered seriously by the President. Instead, Eisenhower called an unprecedented meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of heads of government. The purpose of the meeting, which took place in Paris in December 1957, was to reaffirm the multilateral principles of the alliance. The United States offered two concrete initiatives in that direction. The first was a formal resolution to establish a nuclear stockpile throughout the alliance. The second was an offer to extend the Bermuda summit deal to any other ally that wished to accept American IRBMs. The U.S. government, however, found so little interest in the nearly obsolete Thor system that Dulles had to reassure the allies that the United States would not “press these missiles in the hands or on the territory of any country that doesn’t want them.” At Paris, the heads of government tiptoed over the issue, agreeing to a lukewarm endorsement of further “Bermuda deals” in principle and directing Norstad, the SACEUR, to explore the possibilities.

Norstad had already raised the ante. By the middle of 1957, SHAPE was arguing that the stockpile and the Thor even together were inadequate for European defense. The SACEUR instead wanted a new force of mobile, medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) under NATO command. This was a significant step because the MRBMs would have been the first nuclear weapons of strategic range based in Europe and explicitly given over to NATO. In February 1958, SHAPE responded to the North Atlantic Council’s directive with a comprehensive plan that went even further. Under the new proposals, American-supplied Thor and Jupiter IRBMs under dual key would be replaced as soon as possible by a new MRBM to be built by a consortium of NATO countries using U.S. blueprints. The next step would be for the NATO consortium to design and build its own follow-on systems with more advanced technology. According to John Steinbruner, “The proposal was understood as a first step toward giving the allies a nuclear capability by arming not the individual countries but the NATO military apparatus.” It was clearly consistent with Eisenhower’s determination to use the crisis in the alliance as a

94. The resolution was vague on operational details, leaving it to NATO military authorities to “prepare a general plan for the posture of these weapons to be decided upon by the council later.” See “Heads of Government Meeting in Paris, 18 December 1957,” WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, EPL. After a heated domestic debate, the Federal Republic agreed in the summer of 1958 to take a large number of tactical nuclear systems under the dual-key arrangement. See Mark Cioc, Pax Atomica: The Nuclear Defense Debate in West Germany During the Adenauer Era (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), chap. 4.

95. Dulles is quoted by Armacost in The Politics of Weapons Innovation, p. 188. With limited range (about 1,500 miles), liquid fuel, and above-ground basing, the Thor had all the disadvantages of being a vulnerable and tempting target for preemption by Soviet missiles.

96. The set requirement was for between three hundred and seven hundred of such missiles. See Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision, pp. 176–77.

97. Ibid., p. 184.
means to advance the larger vision of an integrated Europe independent of the
United States for its nuclear defense.

In fact, Eisenhower had already tried to take a number of steps in that
direction through other channels. In January 1958, the administration launched
an initiative to amend the McMahon Act so as to permit greater sharing of
information on weapons design and nuclear propulsion. Following the Presi-
dent's logic, administration officials justified this venture before the Congress
on political grounds. Dulles, for example, argued that the proposal was
designed specifically to restore the allies' confidence in a way that would
promote European integration at a critical juncture in that process.98 The
JCAE balked predictably, but not because it was opposed to the administra-
tion's larger political goals. The committee simply stuck to its long-standing
fixation with stopping the dissemination of U.S. nuclear technology. As a result,
the McMahon Act was revised only marginally in 1958. The JCAE lent
provisional approval to the stockpile arrangement but with severe regulations
designed to ensure tight American control of warheads.99

When it came to putting this arrangement into practice, the administration
would interpret those provisions quite loosely. A JCAE team visiting NATO
bases in Europe during 1960 found that "dual key" operationally meant
"fighter aircraft loaded with nuclear bombs sitting on the edge of runways with
German pilots inside the cockpits and starter plugs inserted. The embodiment
of control was an American officer somewhere in the vicinity with a revolver."100
In effect, the stockpile served as a way to provide the NATO allies and
particularly the Germans with a large number of tactical range nuclear systems
under tenuous American control.

This was by no means the administration's ultimate goal. As the nuclear
stockpile plan went into place, SHAPE was continuing its negotiations with the
allies over Norstad's more ambitious mobile missile plan. By summer 1959, the

98. Dulles also argued that if the United States did not act soon, additional European states
would almost certainly develop national nuclear forces on their own, and this would signal the end
of both NATO and the emerging plan for European integration. Dulles's arguments are reported
in Department of State Bulletin, 5 May 1958, p. 741. See also the testimony of Robert Murphy, in
U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, Hearings Amending the Atomic Energy Act of

99. The JCAE authorized the administration to transfer only enough information that allied
troops would be ready to fit warheads to missiles and fire them under dual-key control in the event
of war. It approved minimal substantive sharing of weapons design information, and then only with
Britain. Of course, the cat was already out of the bag, since Britain had just tested its own H-bomb
in 1957. See Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 181; and the comments by Senator
11927.

100. See Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 182. In a briefing immediately
following the December 1957 NATO meeting, Dulles had foreshadowed the administration's
intentions with regard to the stockpile when he commented that the United States would retain
control over the warheads for legal purposes and would retain the right to withhold consent but
added that in "certain unspecified contingencies consent is automatically given." See "Dulles
Background Briefing, 20 December 1957," WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, EPL.
discussions had come to focus on a compromise plan by which the United States would provide a British–French–West German consortium with blueprints and technical data to produce a mobile missile that would be deployed under the SACEUR's command and supplied with American warheads under dual key.  

For Eisenhower, the dual-key caveat was an interim arrangement. The President endorsed the plan because he saw it as an important step toward an integrated European nuclear force that would soon graduate to full independent status. In the meantime, the President told Norstad, "we are willing to give, to all intents and purposes, control of the weapons. We retain titular possession only." Norstad agreed, declaring in a public speech of December 1959 that going forward with the consortium plan would be the critical step in making NATO "a fourth nuclear power" of the first rank.

By January 1960, the question of nuclear sharing within the alliance had jelled around two specific initiatives. The first was the nuclear stockpile plan in which the United States would maintain some control over tactical systems through the dual key. The second was the consortium plan under which the Europeans would produce the most advanced American strategic missiles for the SACEUR's command. While the details of control over this force were never fully spelled out, it was understood that NATO's ability to fire these missiles would rest to some extent on the U.S. President's authorization as long as the warheads were provided by the United States. Eisenhower, however, would soon make it even more obvious than he already had that this was only a form of window dressing and a temporary one at that. He intended that the consortium evolve into an integrated and independent nuclear force for the European NATO allies.

101. The negotiations were stuck over two issues. The first was whether the consortium would have a mandate to produce additional missiles for national forces once the SACEUR's requirements had been met, and the second was whether the United States would be committed to supplying warheads for any such missiles. See Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, pp. 76–77; and Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision, pp. 184–85.

102. See "Memorandum of Conference with the President, 9 June 1959," WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, EPL. The NSC endorsed the plan in August 1959, despite some expressed concerns about proliferation. The argument was that the allies were quite likely to attain nuclear weapons in any event and that the best outcome from the U.S. perspective was for this to happen in the context of "NATO arrangements . . . for holding custody of and controlling the use of nuclear weapons." See NSC doc. no. 5819, "Status of Mutual Security Programs as of 30 June 1958," WHO, OSS, NSC Series, Status of Projects Subseries, Box 8, EPL; and NSC doc. no. 5906/1, 5 August 1959, "Basic National Security Policy," WHO, OSANSA, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 27, EPL.

103. See "Pasadena Speech, 11 December 1959," Papers of General Lauris Norstad, Policy Papers, Box 1, EPL. In the summer of 1959, the President's Committee to Study the U.S. Military Assistance Program, a committee under the chairmanship of U.S. Ambassador to NATO William Draper, argued that the SACEUR's requirement for a NATO IRBM would be best met by Polaris. This long-range, solid-fueled, submarine-launched ballistic missile had been developed by the United States and could readily be adapted to land-mobile launching platforms. SHAPE agreed with the committee's argument, and by the end of 1959 the plan was for the European consortium to produce Polaris missiles from American blueprints and deploy the missiles on trucks and railroad cars. Polaris could easily strike targets deep within the Soviet Union from deployment sites in the Federal Republic.
The JCAE was not blind to these intentions. Early in February 1960, it challenged the administration on the current state of nuclear sharing within the alliance. Eisenhower responded sharply at a press conference the following day. Asked directly if it was his intention to give nuclear weapons over to the allies’ control, the President said that he felt the United States should arm its allies with what they needed to defend themselves. Pressed further, he said that the McMahon Act currently blocked him from transferring weapons but that he strongly favored a change in the law. Over the next few days, Eisenhower fleshed out these statements in a series of conversations with Andrew Goodpaster and Christian Herter, leaving little doubt about his designs. He even informed Nikita Khrushchev.

The JCAE reaction was equally sharp. The chairman of the committee, Senator Clinton P. Anderson, warned that he would oppose any revision of the McMahon Act, while other members promised “massive and obstructive opposition” to Eisenhower’s plan. In fact, the JCAE did propose a change in the McMahon Act in June 1960. The change would have tightened U.S. control over stockpiled warheads, replacing what the committee referred to as “fictional custody arrangements.” Eisenhower responded in kind. He proclaimed that the McMahon Act, a “terrible and defective law,” should be rescinded and the JCAE dissolved so that it could no longer obstruct the President’s most important foreign policy initiatives in Europe.

In public, administration officials backed off just slightly, but the President continued to push his plan forward. In April, Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates presented Norstad’s MRBM plan to the defense ministers of NATO countries for their immediate consideration. The allies were interested,

106. In a letter to Khrushchev on 12 March 1960, Eisenhower wrote that “states with major industrial capabilities cannot be expected to be satisfied indefinitely with a situation in which nuclear weapons were uncontrolled and they themselves do not have such weapons for their defense.” For a summary of Eisenhower’s letter, see “Telegram from Herter to U.S. Mission to NATO, 16 March 1960,” Norstad Papers, Atomic-Nuclear Policy, Box 85, EPL. The President also told Goodpaster that “he had simply said in the press conference what he believed and what he said before.” See “Memorandum of Conference with the President, 10 February 1960,” WHO, OSS, Presidential Subseries, Box 4, EPL. When Herter reminded Eisenhower of the need for “new legislation to authorize transfer of atomic weapons to our allies,” the President responded with the “fixed idea that we should treat our allies properly” and that the JCAE’s opposition was a source of “great trouble” in this. See “Memorandum of Conference with the President, 5 February 1960,” WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 4, EPL.
107. See The New York Times, 5 February 1960, pp. 1 and 12; and The New York Times, 10 February 1960, p. 4. Representative Chet Hollifield, the senior Democrat, warned the President that he was facing “the greatest debate of our generation.”
108. See “Memorandum of Conference with the President, 12 September 1960,” Ann Whitman File, DDE Diaries, Box 53, EPL.
109. Herter said that the White House had not finalized “concrete intentions” for sharing weapons with the allies; and Norstad, while admitting that the MRBM plan was designed to transform NATO into “a multilateral fourth nuclear power,” portrayed it as an “idea for discussion rather than a firm proposal.” See The New York Times, 11 March 1960, p. 1.
particularly when it was made clear to them that the U.S. government intended this scheme as a prelude to an even larger and more independent nuclear role.110

With the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense behind Eisenhower's initiative and with serious expressions of interest from Europe, the inertia behind the MRBM plan intensified. This created a new current of worry in the State Department and particularly among the policy planning staff, headed now by Gerard Smith.111 Smith largely shared Eisenhower's convictions about European integration and agreed that the nuclear sharing issue was a critical one, but he doubted Eisenhower's strategy for bringing it about. The stakes were being set too high. Smith worried in particular that if Eisenhower's bold initiatives were to fail, the Germans would be sharply humiliated and frustrated by their treatment in NATO and that this would be a tremendous setback for Europe.112 In the spring of 1960, he asked his predecessor, Robert Bowie, to head a comprehensive study of the defense needs of the alliance and explore ways to avoid this problem.

Bowie's report reaffirmed the argument that NATO's minimal task of preventing Soviet aggression should be met in a way that would promote a continuing process of European integration, so that Europe would assume the leadership role of a great power on a scale nearly equal to that of the United States. The report also stated that NATO's current nuclear posture was an impediment to that end.113 The major proposal on this score envisaged a two-step move toward a NATO strategic nuclear force of Polaris submarines. At first, the United States would simply assign five submarines to the

110. See "Talking Paper for Secretary Gates: MRBM for NATO, 1 April 1960," WHO, OSS, Subject Series, Defense Department Subseries, Box 2, EPL. According to Herter, the United States here "made a specific offer in fulfillment of the 1957 offer to aid in a second-generation IRBM program for NATO." See "Telegram from Department of State to Embassies in London, Paris, Bonn, 4 June 1960," WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, EPL. Eisenhower intended for launch authority to rest with the SACEUR but in "discussing the possibility that Congress might seek to stipulate that the post of Supreme Allied Commander be reserved to an American as a condition for providing nuclear weapons, the President said such a condition could not be justified and should not be contemplated." See "Memorandum of Conference with the President: NATO Atomic Force, 4 October 1960," WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 4, EPL.

111. In the Defense Department, there was early concern over the details of military arrangements for the MRBM force, such as details concerning its possible vulnerability to preemptive strike or to seizure. Later, the Defense Department would press for greater precision on the questions of control, ownership, and authorization to fire the missiles.

112. See Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 188. Others in the State Department also worried that this might be just enough to push Germany toward a national nuclear effort, imitating the French. On Smith's logic, a Germany that was "forced" to acquire its own nuclear weapons in opposition to U.S. and NATO policy might go further than de Gaulle and actually turn away from the West to make a separate deal with the Soviet Union.

113. See Bowie's report of August 1960, entitled "The North Atlantic Nations: Tasks for the 1960s," WHO, Office of the Special Assistant for Disarmament, Box 9, EPL. A more fully declassified version of this report is at the National Archives, although much of the detail on nuclear strategy and nuclear sharing has been removed.
SACEUR. Later, additional submarines would be launched by crews consisting of sailors from at least three NATO countries.\textsuperscript{114}

This was a more gradual approach toward creating a multilateral force (MLF) for Europe than was Eisenhower's MRBM consortium. Bowie's proposal looked like it would sidestep early and excessive liberalization of weapons control and in so doing would reduce the possibility that such control would ever rest solely in German hands. The President recognized the domestic political value of these modifications and seized on Bowie's plan as a practical alternative that he thought would be more saleable to Congress. In a set of meetings with Bowie and others, Eisenhower repeatedly diverted discussion away from the practical military rationale for the MLF and away from the details of warhead control and launching authority.\textsuperscript{115} He reassured his advisers that the British and German leaders would be interested in the plan, and he was even confident of his ability to convince de Gaulle. The major concern in his mind was still how to get the plan past the JCAE; but he was convinced that if he could do so, the creation of the MLF might turn out to be the critical event in the drive to unify Europe.\textsuperscript{116}

During the autumn of 1960, the mood in the White House concerning the nuclear sharing issue was approaching one of urgency. An NSC policy paper of early September set the tone, arguing that a crisis in NATO was imminent and that the nuclear question would be the central factor determining how it was resolved.\textsuperscript{117} Eisenhower seemed bent on closing a deal with the Europeans before he left office in the new year. The President told the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission that "interallied cooperation with respect to atomic weapons" was the most important issue on his agenda and that he fully

\textsuperscript{114.} There were several ambiguous conditions attached for moving on to the second stage, including the notion that the participating states would have to agree on a precise formula for authorizing a launch in a manner that would make the weapons invulnerable to being commandeered by any one country. In a later discussion, Bowie added the phrase "should the Europeans desire it" as an important condition for moving to the second stage. See "Memorandum of Conference with the President, 3 October 1960," WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, EPL. The report itself suggested that fulfillment of new goals on conventional forces should also be a prerequisite.

\textsuperscript{115.} Where Eisenhower was consistently specific was in his rejection of any unilateral alternatives for nuclear sharing. He told Norstad in no uncertain terms that "Germany, France and Britain would all want such weapons. They should be handled as NATO weapons." See "Memorandum of Conference with the President, 3 August 1960," WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 4, EPL. See also "Memorandum of Conference with the President, 18 August 1960," WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 4, EPL.

\textsuperscript{116.} The President told Bowie that he could "easily convert Adenauer" and that he could sell the plan to the British "in terms that they would be going back to the balance of power, contributing their wisdom, experience, and sturdiness to European affairs." He noted that de Gaulle would be more difficult, but with an "intensive effort" he might also be brought on board. See "Memorandum of Conference with the President, 3 August 1960," WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 4, EPL; and "Dillon to American Embassy in Paris, 19 August 1960," WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, EPL.

\textsuperscript{117.} See "NATO in the 1960s: U.S. Policy Considerations—9 September 1960 Draft, European Region," WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, EPL. This paper favored the MRBM plan as a political gesture and a "symbol of NATO unity" to "assure that nations gain the self-respect and stamina to withstand Soviet bloc threats."
agreed with Norstad’s approach to “collective security, including the collective handling of atomic weapons.”118 Meanwhile, Norstad had been sent to lobby Adenauer and NATO Secretary-General Paul-Henri Spaak on the nuclear sharing plan, with the promise again being that the United States would make NATO “the fourth atomic power.”119

The pace of events picked up further in October. In two meetings on 3 October 1960, Eisenhower approved a slightly modified version of Bowie’s MLF proposal and informed both the State Department and the Defense Department that he would push forward with this plan on “an urgent basis.” When reminded of likely JCAE opposition, Eisenhower responded in frustration that “we must get it understood in the Congress that we must have faith and confidence between allies if we wish our alliances to work.”120 At a breakfast with Spaak the next morning, the President seconded the Secretary-General’s argument that if the vital interests of the European allies were threatened, they must “be able to respond with atomic weapons, if need be without the concordance of the United States.” Eisenhower proposed an “integrated nuclear strike force” as a “kind of foreign legion under exclusive NATO control.”121 Spaak was enthusiastic, and he agreed with Eisenhower’s assessment that Adenauer would accept the plan and that de Gaulle could be convinced. In the President’s mind, the only serious impediment left was the

118. See “Memorandum of Conference with the President, 12 September 1960,” Ann Whitman File, DDE Diaries, Staff Notes, Box 53, EPL. Chairman McCona agreed with Eisenhower “that we would not be able to have vitality on the part of our European partners as long as we refuse to give them weapons.” He also told the President that a carefully designed multilateral scheme might be acceptable to the JCAE. Eisenhower complained in response about the JCAE’s power to intervene, saying “if the President had in the field of nuclear affairs the same authority the Commander in Chief has in other security affairs, the problem could be readily resolved.”

119. See “Telegram 1024 from Paris, 10 September 1960,” WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, EPL. Adenauer told Norstad directly that “Europe must have something in the atomic field.” Norstad responded that the “U.S. people are not going to turn over atomic weapons to any country for independent use” but offered the MRBM consortium plan as the obvious alternative. Adenauer “demonstrated great enthusiasm for the scheme.” When Spaak questioned Norstad about operational details of control over the MRBMs, Norstad reminded him that this was unimportant, since the plan was primarily a political initiative rather than a military one. He “pointed out that NATO had made much progress without answering unanswerable questions of exactly how the alliance goes to war and thought still further progress could be achieved without doing so.”

120. See “Memorandum of Conference with the President: NATO MRBM Force, 3 October 1960,” WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 4, EPL; and “Memorandum of Conference with the President, 3 October 1960,” WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5, EPL. On Eisenhower’s continuing frustration with the JCAE, see “Memorandum of Conference with the President, 8 November 1960,” WHO, OSS, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Box 4, EPL.

121. See “Memorandum of Conference with the President: NATO Atomic Force, 4 October 1960,” WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 4, EPL. Eisenhower brushed off Spaak’s queries about operational issues for the force. These were unimportant, since “the obligation for the United States to act under NATO provisions specifying that an attack on one was an attack on all was clear and there was no doubt it would be observed by the United States.” His focus remained squarely on the “psychological benefit to more specifically reassuring arrangements” and on how this would “raise the morale of the NATO members.” See also “Memorandum of Conference with the President: NATO MRBM Force, 3 October 1960,” WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 4, EPL.
JCAE. Eisenhower left Spaak with the clear impression that if it were not for this so-called intrusion on the President's power (which he told Spaak he considered "nonconstitutional" in any event), he would have acted to bring a NATO MLF into being on his own initiative and without any delay.  

The President backed off only slightly after John F. Kennedy's victory in November. On 17 November 1960, Eisenhower told the NSC that the United States would formally propose the MLF plan to its NATO allies in December. Two weeks later, he sent Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Dillon to London, Paris, and Bonn to brief European leaders on the plan. In early December, he approved a draft statement of policy on the NATO MRBM force and authorized Secretary of State Christian Herter to present it to the North Atlantic Council summit meeting in Paris. On 17 December 1960, Herter made the formal offer: five Polaris submarines for a NATO MLF that would later be supplemented with additional submarines to be purchased from the United States by the European allies. The United States would promise to "commit" the warheads to NATO, implying that launch authority would rest with the SACEUR and not be contingent on the U.S. President. In case there were any doubts about the larger objectives of the U.S. government, Herter stressed that its decision to share its most sophisticated strategic systems should be seen as just "the first step towards broader sharing in the control of nuclear weapons." The goal was to create a nuclear force "truly multilateral, with multilateral ownership, financing, and control . . . that would have immense political significance for the cohesion of the NATO alliance."  

Like others before him, Eisenhower had hoped to lay the groundwork for transition to a multilateral alliance in which the European states as an integrated unit would be fully responsible for their own defense. Ironically, it was nuclear weapons combined with a set of ideas about sharing them which seemed to put within Eisenhower's grasp at the end of the 1950s what had evaded Kennan, Truman, and others at the end of the 1940s. Eisenhower discounted military arguments about credibility, but he was deeply sensitive to

122. As it was, Eisenhower told Spaak that he would work to get congressional approval for the plan, although he again remarked in frustration that this was only necessary because "Congress had reserved for itself as far back as 1947 certain prerogatives which should belong in the executive branch." See "Memorandum of Conference with the President: NATO Atomic Force, 4 October 1960," WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 4,  EPL.  

123. While he professed reluctance to paint his successor into a corner on the issue, Eisenhower did make a concerted effort to set the terms of the debate for Kennedy in a way that would force the new president to confront the question of nuclear sharing early in his term.  

124. See "Record of Action, NSC Meeting 467, Action no. 2334, 17 November 1960," WHO, NSC Files, Meetings with the President, Box 5,  EPL. The President also sent a personal note to Adenauer on the subject. See "President Eisenhower to Chancellor Adenauer: Cable to American Embassy, Bonn, no. 961, 26 November 1960," WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 6,  EPL.  

125. See "Memo by Herter for Upcoming Ministerial Meeting," WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5,  EPL.  

126. The only caveat was that "a suitable formula to govern decision on use would have to be developed to maximize the effectiveness of this force as a deterrent and to establish its multilateral character." See "Secretary's Statement at NATO Ministerial Meeting Under Long-Range Planning, 7 December 1960," WHO, OSS, ITM, Box 5,  EPL.  

the political sources and implications of the Europeans' lack of confidence. He saw it as natural that the former great powers of Europe would want to reclaim that status when their recovery from World War II permitted. But to be a great power now was also to have nuclear weapons, and the United States could only damage its longer-term interests by denying those trappings to its allies. The crisis in the alliance presented a unique opportunity for the U.S. government to seize the initiative and channel nuclear ambitions into institutions that would facilitate European integration. The crisis, if seized, could be used to reinstate multilateralism in NATO. This was instrumental to a larger goal, the multipolarity scenario that had been the most basic principle behind American thinking about the alliance since its inception.

Could Eisenhower have succeeded in this quest? The allies reacted cautiously to the December 1960 proposal, but this was in large part a result of the U.S. administration's lame-duck status. The MLF became much less attractive to them later on, when the Kennedy administration reconfigured the plan to add strict American veto power on launch authorization. But it was never Eisenhower's intention to dupe the Europeans into paying for an American-dominated nuclear force, as the later MLF plan would appear. At each point in the story I have recounted, the President went as far as he could to share nuclear weapons with the European allies and transfer control of these weapons to them.

Eisenhower ultimately failed in his quest, but not because of any constraints that follow from structural theories of international politics. He failed because of historical accidents that were disconnected from the major stream of events. The most important was strong opposition from a congressional committee that a decade earlier had been endowed with power over nuclear transfers and had adopted a set position against the sharing of nuclear technology. The position had come about originally in 1946 as part of an effort to stem the flow of basic nuclear know-how to the Soviet Union. By the late 1950s, however, this issue was moot. In the interim, the JCAE held to its doctrinaire position against nuclear sharing even among the NATO states for reasons that had little to do with the power of the United States vis-à-vis that of its allies and were thus separate from what Eisenhower was trying to accomplish in Europe. Had these highly contingent conditions been different, the issue of nuclear sharing would have been "solved" by the President long before December 1960. And the evolution of the NATO alliance past that point would have also been radically different.

Kennedy and the triumph of the deterrence scenario

John F. Kennedy entered office with his own rhetoric about a "grand design" for European integration and a revitalized Atlantic partnership. But rhetoric

128. See Boutwell, Doty, and Treverton, The Nuclear Confrontation in Europe, p. 34.
aside, Kennedy held a more restrained and “pragmatic” view than did Eisenhower of European states as presumptive great powers either separately or otherwise. Kennedy was also more concerned than Eisenhower had been with military strategy when it came to the credibility of extended deterrence. Kennedy’s top advisers and particularly Secretary of State Dean Rusk shared his concern, and Rusk argued that something had to be done on this score forthwith. Within two weeks of his inauguration, Kennedy asked former Secretary of State Dean Acheson to chair a small committee that would reevaluate the basis of U.S. military strategy with special attention to NATO.

Acheson brought in Robert Bowie to work with him on this project. But he also brought in Albert Wohlstetter, the RAND strategic analyst who had recently published his influential critique of massive retaliation, “The Delicate Balance of Terror.” Wohlstetter represented a developing school of strategic analysts who were using game theory and other tools to explore new doctrines for nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence in an era of mutual vulnerability. Unlike Eisenhower, these strategists took seriously the idea that the United States might actually have to fight a war in Europe and use or at least threaten to use nuclear weapons. They also reasoned that no American administration would follow that route if by doing so it was necessarily choosing armageddon. Since the Soviet leaders could reason as well, the U.S. government needed more than just a capability for massive retaliation. In order to deter the Soviet Union effectively, it would have to have a strategy and the necessary capabilities to make limited use of nuclear weapons for tactical purposes and for bargaining, which meant a closely controlled process of raising the risks of escalation. These arguments about the military and

129. See, for example, Kennedy’s speech reported in The New York Times, 9 February 1961, pp. 1 and 5. Sorensen labeled Kennedy’s attitude as “pragmatic,” which meant that the President “did not look upon either the alliance or Atlantic harmony as an end in itself. . . . [Europe was] a necessary but not always welcome partner whose cooperation he could not always obtain, whose opinions he could not always accept, and with whom an uneasy relationship seemed inevitable.” See Theodore C. Sorensen, Kennedy (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 562–63.

130. By 1960, the broad consensus held by members of the national security community working inside and outside the U.S. government was that something had to be done to revamp massive retaliation and add “flexibility of response” to U.S. strategy. Eisenhower, through his last days in office, was a holdout. See “Memorandum of Conference with the President, 29 November 1960,” WHO, OSANSA, Special Assistant Series, Presidential Subseries, Box 5, EPL. Kennedy had long been a critic of massive retaliation. As a presidential candidate in 1960, he labeled it a dangerous and incredible doctrine that put the United States “into a corner where the only choice is between all or nothing at all, world devastation or submission.” See John F. Kennedy, The Strategy of Peace, ed. Allan Nevins (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 84.


132. See Albert Wohlstetter, “The Delicate Balance of Terror,” Foreign Affairs 37 (January 1959), pp. 211–35. Wohlstetter roundly criticized Eisenhower’s position and argued that the United States had to think seriously about and act on the requirements for fighting a nuclear war in order to maintain deterrence.

doctrinal requirements of deterrence had profound implications for the U.S. defense posture in Europe.

The recommendations of Acheson and his committee were presented to Kennedy in March 1961, were slightly modified, and were adopted as official U.S. policy in National Security Action Memorandum 40 (NSAM-40) on 21 April 1961. Under the new doctrine of flexible response, NATO strategy was to be reoriented away from the emphasis on general war and toward "preparing for the more likely contingencies" short of nuclear or massive nonnuclear attack. The first priority, of course, was to strengthen and modernize the alliance's conventional forces.

On nuclear forces, NSAM-40 was much more of a watershed. According to this memorandum, the U.S. government should have exclusive control over any potential use of nuclear weapons in Europe, including (if possible) use by the national forces of Britain and France. This demanded an immediate revision of Herter's December proposal to the North Atlantic Council. While the U.S. government would still offer to commit five and eventually several more Polaris submarines to NATO for the life of the alliance, the offer was subject to a new provision that all missiles would remain under the exclusive launch authority of the U.S. President, with the North Atlantic Council having only an "advisory and consultative" input. The directive was quite severe in setting conditions for moving past this stage:

If the European NATO countries wish to expand the NATO seaborne missile force, after completion of the 1962–66 non-nuclear buildup, the United States should then be willing to discuss the possibility of some multilateral contribution by them. The United States should insist, in any such discussion, on the need to avoid (i) national ownership or control of MRBM forces; (ii) any weakening of centralized command and control over these forces; (iii) any diversion of required resources from non-nuclear programs. The United States should not facilitate European production of MRBM or procurement of MRBMs for European national forces, whether or not these forces are committed to SACEUR.

This represented a fundamental shift in U.S. policy on the control of nuclear weapons by the European allies. But what caused this shift? It was driven


135. NSAM-40 labeled it "most important" to the United States "that use of nuclear weapons by the forces of other powers in Europe should be subject to U.S. veto and control." It also indicated the following: "The United States should urge the UK to commit its strategic forces to NATO . . . and over the long run, it would be desirable if the British decided to phase out of the nuclear deterrent business . . . The United States should not assist the French to attain a nuclear weapons capability, but should seek to respond to the French interest in matters nuclear in the other ways indicated above [i.e., the ways indicated for the British]."

136. See "NATO and the Atlantic Nations, NSAM-40, 21 April 1961."

137. Accordingly, Kennedy began quickly to back off from Eisenhower's MLF proposal. Speaking at the Canadian Parliament in May, the President offered to commit five Polaris
most directly by a new set of ideas about nuclear strategy and requirements for maintaining deterrence or fighting a limited nuclear war. Flexible response meant more than just an increase in the number and variety of conventional forces. It also meant planning to use nuclear weapons in a limited and precisely controlled manner, in “strategic games” of signaling, bargaining, intrawar deterrence, and raising the level of shared risk. Each move in these strategic games would require exact control and thus centralized control over the targeting and use of any weapons. One decision maker would have to govern the carefully plotted nuclear bargaining game, and that decision maker would be the U.S. President. For the moment, as Richard Betts puts it, strategy—particularly nuclear strategy—seemed to overwhelm politics.\(^{138}\)

The Berlin crisis brought these new ideas to the fore in a dramatic way and confirmed their ascendance in U.S. policy for NATO. Convinced that Khrushchev’s June 1961 ultimatum was a test of the U.S. government’s broader commitment to Europe, Kennedy found himself stuck with few desirable military options.\(^{139}\) The President quickly called for a rapid buildup of NATO conventional forces to expand his range of choices. But he also had to consider strategies for the use of nuclear weapons if hostilities were to break out.

The nuclear strategists now had a chance to make their arguments at the highest levels. In July 1961, Thomas Schelling, for example, prepared a memo arguing that if nuclear weapons were to be used in Berlin, “their purpose should not be ‘tactical.’ . . . We should plan for a war of nerve, of demonstration, and of bargaining. . . . Success in the use of nuclears will be measured not by the targets destroyed but by how well we manage the level of risk.”\(^{140}\) Schelling was quite direct about what this meant for control of the weapons: “Control over nuclear weapons in Europe must be tight and centralized . . . and designed to permit deliberate, discriminating, selective use for dangerous nuclear bargaining. . . . Particular weapons will be fired from particular locations to particular targets at particular times.”\(^{141}\)

This was the language of a nuclear strategist and not of a political decision maker. Yet the implications of this kind of thinking were evident in Kennedy’s

submarines to NATO at once but only to “look to the possibility of eventually establishing a NATO seaborne force which would be truly multilateral in ownership and control, if this should be desired and found feasible by the allies, once NATO’s non-nuclear goals have been achieved.” See The New York Times, 18 May 1961, p. 12.

138. See Betts, Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance.

139. See Arthur M. Schlesinger, A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), pp. 370–88; and Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 584–86. Existing contingency plans for defending Berlin were built on the assumption that nuclear weapons would come into play early. McNamara had thought about this problem before the crisis started and had warned the President in May that a defense of Berlin meant almost immediate resort to nuclear war.


141. Ibid.; emphasis in original text. Schelling argued that any use of nuclear weapons outside the “master plan” would constitute “noise that might drown the message” and thus could not be tolerated.
When NATO planning nuclear crisis responded but reins that Secretary nuclear deter allies Atlantic moved. This Tight proliferation In Intrawar "indivisible" Restricted "electronic locks".143

The United States formally presented its new strategic perspective to the allies the following spring at a NATO ministerial meeting in Athens.143 Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara assured his colleagues at the meeting that the United States was now close to attaining a secure second-strike force but that this, according to the new perspective, would not in itself suffice to deter war in Europe. Flexible response also demanded the ability to use nuclear weapons selectively, in limited attacks, for signaling (as outlined in Schelling's memo) as well as for tactical strikes against Soviet military targets. In either case, however, it was essential to the strategy that the selective use of nuclear weapons not escalate more or less automatically to general war. Intrawar deterrence, as it was called, rested in turn on tight and precise control over every decision to use a nuclear weapon. The strategy demanded an "indivisible" targeting plan for the alliance, a plan that would ensure "unity of planning, concentration of executive authority, and central direction" for the nuclear bargaining game.144

National nuclear forces in Europe were anathema to this reasoning, and an MLF under NATO was not much better. The argument was simply that any proliferation of "decision centers" would complicate the problem of implementing a precise nuclear strategy and thus undermine the logic of flexible response. Tight control was the sine qua non, and that control belonged in Washington. This was not just a change in declaratory policy. The Kennedy administration moved first to tighten U.S. control over tactical nuclear systems under the dual key by installing permissive action links (PALs) on many of these weapons.145 It then moved to undermine the MLF.

In June 1962, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Thomas Finletter told the North Atlantic Council that the United States no longer saw any need for a NATO

143. See "Remarks by Secretary McNamara, NATO Ministerial Meeting, 5 May 1962, Restricted Session," pp. 18–19, a document released on 17 August 1979 under the Freedom of Information Act. In June 1962, McNamara presented a version of this argument in a speech at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
144. These excerpts from McNamara's speech at the University of Michigan were quoted in The New York Times, 7 June 1962.
145. See Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons, p. 161. PALs are basically "electronic combination locks" that inhibit the arming of warheads without proper authorization.
MRBM force. The logical move would have been for the United States to withdraw the MLF proposal entirely, but what Eisenhower had already done to advance the plan could not be immediately or easily undone. The allies’ and particularly the Germans’ expectations had been raised more than a little. At the same time, influential officials in the State Department continued to argue the political “imperatives” of going ahead with some scheme for nuclear sharing.

Kennedy and his close advisers understood the trade-offs. The political stakes riding on the MLF were high. But at each important decision point after 1961, nuclear strategy won out over politics. At the end of 1962, the MLF proposal was formally revised to include the conditions that Kennedy had raised in May 1961 as well as new conditions attached to the issue of launch authority. Rather than falling under the command of the SACEUR, the MLF would now take orders from the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT), an American admiral with headquarters in Virginia; and the United States would retain effective veto over launch decisions for the indefinite future. In essence, the MLF plan was recast as an American proposal to get the Europeans to pay the lion’s share for some variant of an MRBM force which they had been told they did not need and which in any case would remain under American control. It is not surprising that there was little enthusiasm for the plan in most of the capitals of Europe.

John Steinbruner’s *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision* chronicles the fate of the MLF plan over the next several years. The plan underwent manipulation at the hands of American bureaucracies with rival and sometimes inconsistent goals, but one thing stayed constant: the U.S. President would not relinquish control. The MLF proposal was finally and formally dropped by the Johnson administration in 1965. It was, in effect, the last substantial effort to address the relationship between nuclear strategy within NATO and the prospects for European integration.

The deterrence scenario won out in 1961. This time, however, its victory was sustained by a new set of ideas about nuclear deterrence and the requirements

146. Finletter tried to reassure the allies that U.S. strategic forces would meet the requirements for nuclear deterrence. To deploy MRBMs in Europe would be expensive and at best redundant; the force was said to be unnecessary if it did not devolve control and positively dangerous if it did. See Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision*, p. 207.

147. Henry Owen, the deputy director of the policy planning staff, became a central voice in this debate when he prepared an April 1962 paper arguing that Kennedy’s speech before the Canadian Parliament the previous year could provide a basis for a new MLF proposal.

148. The administration continued to offer the vague promise that it would relinquish American control over the force at some point in the future should the Europeans achieve an unspecified degree of unity. See, for example, the statements made by Rusk and McNamara before the December 1962 NATO meeting, as quoted in The New York Times, 15 December 1962, p. 1.


for fighting nuclear war. Aspects of those ideas would change, sometimes dramatically, over the next thirty years. But there were certain constants in American strategic thought, the most important being the rationale for centralized control over any decision to use nuclear weapons. That control would stay in the hands of the Americans. And as long as the defense of the alliance depended on nuclear weapons and on the decision to launch them, the United States would have a privileged position within NATO. Eisenhower had hoped that nuclear weapons could be used to promote European integration and to advance and channel the transition to a multipolar world. Instead, nuclear weapons ended up as an impediment to both. Multilateralism and the multipolarity scenario to which it was instrumental became victims to nuclear strategy.

They did so not because of any objective or concrete characteristics of the weapons themselves. The victory of the deterrence scenario under Kennedy did not reflect any enduring realities of power or of structural theory, any more than the predominance of the multipolarity scenario had under Eisenhower. Both were the products of sets of ideas about politics and about nuclear weapons that were complementary in the earlier case and conflictual in the later one. To explain the character of NATO requires an understanding of the consequences of these ideas for the decisions that the leaders of powerful states took at critical junctures in the evolution of the alliance. Events that were traveling in different streams and were separate from the ideas at play set the context of the critical junctures and affected the degree to which these ideas made their mark on the alliance. But the ideas themselves did make a mark.

**Conclusion**

States ally to increase their security against potential adversaries. But the principles on which an alliance is constructed and the institutional form of the alliance are blind spots for neorealists. The history of multilateralism in NATO, both as a dependent and an independent variable, challenges their stark version of the security problem facing states.

*Multilateralism as a dependent variable*

If the choice of institutional form were determined by objective features of the environment, there would be no need to go further in explaining it. That was not true of NATO, even at the end of the 1940s. A choice-theoretic analysis of possible institutional forms for an alliance leads to indeterminate predictions, and this indeterminacy is reflected in history. To the extent that functional or utilitarian logic points in any direction at all, it points away from multilateralism as an institutional form for managing the West’s security problem at the end of World War II.
But the institutions that emerged were those near the opposite end of the range of possibilities, much closer to the multilateral form. Generally, U.S. policymakers did what they could to foster multilateralism within the alliance. Specifically, at critical points of decision, they took steps that were either the most consistent with multilateral principles or the least damaging to them, given the exigencies of deterrence.

The explanation for this behavior lies in a set of ideas held by decision makers in a powerful state. These ideas rested on beliefs about multipolarity with historical roots in American foreign policy thought. The ideas were political in the traditional sense instead of microeconomic, and they relied heavily on “second-image” reasoning. They also inverted neorealism’s arguments about the conditions for stability in international systems. Most American policymakers believed that bipolarity would pit the United States and the Soviet Union against each other in an ideologically charged, competitive struggle that would be at best a temporary interlude to war. Multipolarity, in contrast, would induce caution and restraint in the external behavior of states, and this would cause stability in the international system. Living with diversity at the international level would also do good things to states domestically, making them more tolerant and cooperative at home and with one another.151 This was a world in which the United States could and would flourish.

Naturally, the strength of these ideas varied across individuals within the decision-making elite. This meant that when the multipolarity scenario came under pressure from the exigencies of deterrence, policymakers disagreed about how much compromise away from multilateralism was necessary. Yet it would be wrong to conclude from the controversy that multilateralism was only an institutional form for “low politics” or that the ideas supporting multilateralism only came into play under conditions of low threat.152 The conditions during the Eisenhower decade cut strongly against this argument. The 1950s were not generally a time of low threat perception in Washington. And Eisenhower’s commitments to multilateralism within the alliance were not noticeably weakened by periods of increased threat, including periods marked by U.S.–Soviet crises, the Suez debacle, and the Sputnik launch. If anything, these crises and events reinforced the President’s determination to transform NATO through the sharing of nuclear weapons with the allies. Because Eisenhower’s determination was driven by ideas about politics and not by

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151. This reflects, I think, a standing tradition (frequently associated with John Stuart Mill among Americans) in liberal thought about the inherent virtues of diversity, more than a direct transplant from what we now call economic liberalism.

152. If we look only at the case of the late 1940s, this conclusion might seem tempting. The interpretation would go something like this: Once U.S. policymakers recognized that the Soviets were creating an inflexible alliance structure and that the threat to the West might be immediate and military, even the U.S. government, with its vast power resources, had little freedom to pursue multilateral ideals in its relations with the West European allies. Multilateralism was an easy victim to the imperative of providing the most security in the most efficient way possible.
military considerations or abstract strategic arguments about the credibility of extended deterrence, multilateralism could do more than just survive high threat and high politics under Eisenhower; it was positively aided by it. The Kennedy administration reversed Eisenhower's policy on nuclear sharing. But the reasons for this were not that new threats pushed the issue of multilateralism in NATO from low politics into high. Instead, multilateralism was overwhelmed by a new set of ideas about nuclear weapons that set fresh requirements for maintaining deterrence and planning for nuclear war. This set of ideas maintained itself, in different manifestations and again with varying levels of strength, for the better part of thirty years while threat perceptions underwent several cycles. Multilateralism neither came in with low politics nor went out with high. Its movements are better explained by the movements of sets of ideas that were disconnected from any objective exigencies of security.

Multilateralism as an independent variable

In the world of neorealist theory, a state does not normally make conscious efforts to disperse its vital resources of power among other states or even among fellow members of a coalition. Yet that is precisely what the Eisenhower administration hoped to do with respect to the West European states at the end of the 1950s. This impulse was based on long-standing and widely held beliefs about the advantages of living in a multipolar international system. It was also based on a set of ideas about nuclear weapons that were held by the President, ideas that were shared with less conviction by some elites and were totally rejected by others.

Yet acting on his own ideas, Eisenhower came close to transferring full control of nuclear weapons to the NATO allies. If he had succeeded, there would certainly have been a major transformation of NATO with important implications for U.S.–European and East–West relations during the 1960s and beyond. Other, more dramatic outcomes were possible. If Eisenhower's plan had led to an integrated European security organization with an independent nuclear deterrent in the 1960s, this probably would have greatly accelerated the change from a bipolar international system to a multipolar one. This, I think, challenges some basic neorealist premises about power. How can a "unit-level" actor or even a single decision maker transform the structure of the international system by choice, influenced by a set of particular ideas? The answer to this question goes back to a blind spot in neorealist balance-of-power theory: it neglects the role of alliance principles and institutions that "shape" the balance of power and affect its evolution over time.

153. For an interesting argument specifying conditions under which a hegemon is likely to make more limited investments of power resources in its allies, see Joanne Gowa, "Rational Hegemons, Excludable Goods, and Small Groups," World Politics 61 (April 1989), pp. 307–24.
My challenge rests on a counterfactual, since Eisenhower did not in the end succeed in his quest. Does that conspicuous fact rescue realism’s austere perspective? It is important to keep in mind why Eisenhower failed.\textsuperscript{154} His initiative was frustrated principally by a congressional committee that had acted as a repository of simple antiproliferation sentiment since its founding in the late 1940s. This committee, the JCAE, barely responded to the realities imposed by the demonstrated independent ability of the British and later the French to acquire the bomb. Its effort to block Eisenhower came from an alternative set of ideas centered on the belief that proliferation of nuclear knowledge was undesirable under any circumstances. But these ideas were no more logically grounded in or linked to the causal arguments of neorealist theory than were Eisenhower’s ideas, nor did they respond more directly to changes in the environment.

Kennedy’s reversal of Eisenhower’s policy was similarly driven by a new set of ideas derived from something other than objective or structural factors. What if the logic of the new strategic theories had not been thought through and available to decision makers, so that McNamara could adopt it as his own in 1962? It is quite possible that the Kennedy administration might instead have followed through in Eisenhower’s footsteps. In time, JCAE restrictions would have likely been overcome or circumvented.\textsuperscript{155} It is important to acknowledge that none of these things happened. But the reasons for their failure to happen should not give much comfort to proponents of the stark neorealist perspective on power.

The case for multilateralism as an independent variable does not rest entirely on counterfactuals. As history actually turned out, the character of the balance of power in Europe has been and will, I think, continue to be substantially different than it would have been in the absence of an American commitment to multilateralism. This is because multilateralism in NATO created a new set of possibilities for the provision of security in Europe, possibilities that the actors did not previously envision.

The most important of these came out of the way in which NATO dealt with the Franco–German relationship. If U.S. leaders had chosen the bilateral alternative and “split” the security of France and Germany, all sorts of configurations that we now take for granted would have been heavily disfa-

\textsuperscript{154} Structural theories do not accumulate confirmation simply by correlation with historical outcomes. To claim that an historical event is explained by a theory or that a case supports a theory’s claims, the process or causal chain that takes independent variables to dependent variables in the theory should be demonstrably reproduced in the empirical case. Otherwise, the most one can possibly say is that the evidence does not disconfirm the theory, and this is an extremely weak claim when a theory permits a wide range of outcomes. I discuss this in more detail in my \textit{Cooperation and Discord in US–Soviet Arms Control} (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), chaps. 1, 3, and 7. For a different position, see Christopher Achen and Duncan Snidal, “Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies,” \textit{World Politics} 61 (January 1989), pp. 143–69.

\textsuperscript{155} Indeed, Nixon and Kissinger later circumvented restrictions with regard to the sharing of nuclear information between the United States and France. On this point, see Richard H. Ullman, “The Covert French Connection,” \textit{Foreign Policy} 75 (Summer 1989), pp. 3–33.
vored, the most important being the European Community. NATO also caused
security to become linked with the domestic characteristics of states according
to a set of additional propositions that go far beyond security per se. In this
conception, security institutions have a broad mandate for peace management,
economic and social progress, and other kinds of positive cooperation among
states.\textsuperscript{156} Within NATO, security became linked to political standards of
multiparty democracy, human rights, and economic freedom.

This linkage was more than just a reflection of American power, and it is
being propagated into the next generation of security institutions in Europe.
The ties are not overdetermined. The world may no longer be bipolar, but
multilateralism is not a necessary outgrowth of multipolarity. In 1992, even
more so than in 1949, alternative institutional forms for providing security are
available in Europe. In the abstract, European security could become a game
played by "clubs" of several states, by bilateral alliances, or by individual states
protecting their borders with small arsenals of nuclear weapons. Again on
abstract logic, the bilateral alternative should look particularly attractive to
second-tier European states that fear de facto subordination to Germany even
in peace. And for all the reasons that it would have been so at the end of the
war, the United States would still make a nearly ideal bilateral ally.\textsuperscript{157} The point
is that multilateralism is not in any sense a necessary outcome of the changing
security and power environment in Europe; take away the peculiar principles
that are the legacy of NATO's forty years, and it appears an unlikely outcome
at the very least.

But none of these alternative institutional forms seems likely to take root in
Europe. Expectations converge instead around NATO and the Conference on
Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) as the appropriate forums for
managing a new set of security problems, but not because of their formal
organizational structure. The July 1990 London Declaration on a Transformed
North Atlantic Alliance calls for NATO to act "as an agent of change . . .
supporting security and stability with the strength of our shared faith in
democracy [and] the rights of the individual." These ideas are now being
developed into reformed institutional structures of a new NATO that has given
up forward defense and heavy reliance on nuclear weapons in the theater and is
instead in the process of negotiating new relationships with the states of the
former Warsaw Treaty Organization. Similar ideas are being grafted onto new

\textsuperscript{156} By "positive cooperation," I mean cooperation that is more than simply avoidance of
shared aversion. See my "Realism, Detente, and Nuclear Weapons," \textit{International Organization} 44
(Winter 1990), pp. 55–82. There were always some compromises, most obviously in the case of
Turkey.

\textsuperscript{157} That is, the United States is powerful and ideologically compatible, yet relatively far away
and lacking in imperial pretensions. It has nuclear weapons. Finally, it has over the course of the
cold war established a firm reputation for a willingness to make sacrifices for allies when necessary.
I discuss further the desirability of having the United States as a bilateral ally in "The US, the
Soviet Union, and Regional Conflicts After the Cold War," in George W. Breslauer, Harry
Kriesler, and Benjamin Ward, eds., \textit{Beyond the Cold War: Conflict and Cooperation in the Third
institutions beyond NATO, institutions that will incorporate more states and will have to deal with markedly different security problems. The CSCE is to "set new standards for the establishment and preservation of free societies," including "the right to free and fair elections, . . . commitments to respect and uphold the rule of law, . . . the development of free and competitive market economies, and . . . cooperation on environmental protection."158 If the European Community goes on to construct its own security apparatus through the Western European Union or otherwise, whether tightly linked to NATO or not that institution will almost certainly embody similar principles. New tests of this argument, for better or for worse, are on the way. I expect, for example, that the terms under which new states to the east and south are incorporated into these institutions will continue to depend at least as closely on their adherence to principles as on their power resources per se.

The linkage between security and the domestic characteristics of states in the new Europe reflects a legacy of how the United States shaped a balance of power and a security system in Europe over the past four decades. The package may contain strong evidence to favor at least a "liberal" and possibly a "reflective" interpretation of international institutions over the more restricted, "rationalistic" approach.159 Even in security, institutions did more than just affect the strategies that states could pursue with predetermined or exogenous preferences. Institutions have created new possibilities and have changed states' conceptions of self-interest in fundamental ways. Important parts of those conceptions are now being reproduced and spread to other emerging states through new and modified institutions developed under the legacy of the old.

From the U.S. perspective, there is continuity in the two sets of ideas that governed the ways in which the United States shaped the postwar balance of power in NATO—but there is an important change in the environment. Nuclear strategy and deterrence may recede further into the background in the 1990s than ever before. In that case, the multipolarity scenario should gain additional force as a central feature of American foreign policy behavior. If similar ideas guide the behavior of the other powerful states in the system, it is at least possible that together they can create a relatively cooperative multipolar international system.

158. See the London Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance, which was issued by the heads of state and government who participated in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in London on 5 and 6 July 1990. I discuss NATO's reformulated strategy and evolving institutional structures in "Does NATO Have a Future?" in Beverly Crawford, ed., The Future of European Security (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of International Studies, 1992).