Largely because the Kennedy administration acted in time to shore up the deteriorating situation, this divisive strategy debate was to give way to a more constructive search for solutions, a subject to which this narrative now turns. The solutions being sought, at least at first, were nuclear in nature. The alliance’s efforts to find an acceptable nuclear sharing arrangement, however, helped set the political stage for NATO’s later movement to a new military strategy calling for greater conventional strength while not eroding nuclear deterrence. These events are so intertwined that they cannot be explained in each other’s absence.\(^1\)

By late 1962, it had become apparent to Washington that mounting allied distrust over U.S. intentions meant that no movement could be made toward a revised NATO strategy until Western Europe’s nuclear apprehensions first were laid to rest. This realization, reinforced by growing concern over NATO’s unity, led the Kennedy administration to begin shifting its political strategy within the alliance. While it did not abandon its hopes for eventual strategy reform, it recognized that success could come only after passions had cooled, political cohesion had been restored, and several building blocks first had been put into place. Accordingly, it decided to temper its public rhetoric and instead to address strategy and posture issues primarily in the privacy of NATO’s planning councils, where a sober dialogue was more possible. Equally important, it decided to place primary emphasis on finding a nuclear solution that would quell allied fears about the U.S. commitment to extended deterrence. The task of forging a NATO consensus behind a conventional buildup was temporarily set aside until the divisive nuclear problem was settled.\(^2\)

This approach did not mean that conventional defense was discarded completely from Kennedy’s agenda. In a quiet way, McNamara continued his dialogue with the allies about the conventional balance. He also launched an effort to reform NATO’s force planning machinery by introducing the techniques—systems analysis and the PPBS—that he had developed in the Pentagon. Further, he began working closely with NATO’s military commanders and allied governments to find practical, low cost ways to improve U.S. and West

---

\(^1\) Good chronologies of NATO’s troubled internal politics in the mid-1960s are presented in the annual volumes, *The United States in World Affairs*, published by the Council on Foreign Relations, New York. See the 1961–66 volumes, written by Richard Stebbins and Jules Davids.

European forces. But he temporarily set aside his vocal advocacy of a strategy change that linked stronger conventional defenses to reduced reliance on nuclear weapons. To some degree, then, he finessed the problem. This tactic disappointed some of his aides, who felt that a continued pursuit of the hard sell was best. But as a practical matter, he had little choice but to proceed through consensus building from the bottom up. Especially in this sensitive area, alliance politics was, after all, the art of the possible.

In the Kennedy administration's parallel efforts to pursue a nuclear accord, attention focused on specific forces and institutional arrangements. But these were surface manifestations of a deeper, more subtle issue. Washington's new strategy promised to make escalation a conditional matter of judgment, rather than an automatic feature of NATO's war plans. On this matter of judgment, important transatlantic differences seemed capable of arising in a crisis. The underlying issue, therefore, was one of determining how responsibility could be shared for high-level political decisions among potentially disagreeing partners. American desires to retain firm control over these decisions needed to be reconciled with the allies' growing insistence on establishing a strong measure of control for themselves. The following three years were consumed largely in an effort to find a solution that would be acceptable on both sides of the Atlantic.

NUCLEAR ALTERNATIVES

NATO's first attempt to find a satisfactory mechanism for meeting its nuclear requirements had been made in 1957–1959 when 104 American IRBMs were emplaced in the United Kingdom, Italy, and Turkey (but not West Germany). At the time, these weapons were a valuable addition because they provided NATO a modest capability to strike Soviet targets while helping reassure the West Europeans. However, these missiles also suffered from important operational drawbacks. They were deployed at fixed sites above ground, which made them vulnerable to a preemptive strike, and had low readiness since they were liquid-fueled. Also, too few of them were deployed to meet SACEUR's need for 300–700 missiles to cover the most important Soviet targets. As a result, they were regarded as an interim measure, and the United States intended to withdraw them as soon as ICBMs became available.

In particular, once the IRBMs had been withdrawn, the U.S. government intended to meet NATO's missile needs with ICBMs and SLBMs under its own control, and it was not enthused about the idea of permanently deploying a follow-on long-range missile on the European continent. However, SACEUR and a growing number of West Europeans, less content with exclusive U.S. control over NATO's retaliatory forces, already were beginning to see things differently. As a result, in the late 1950s General Norstad proposed deployment of a force of several hundred mobile MRBMs that would be placed under his own command. This idea represented a marked departure from the IRBM model. The Jupiter and Thor missiles had remained entirely under U.S. control. By contrast, Norstad's MRBM scheme promised to make NATO itself a nuclear power. Technical studies at SHAPE fastened on the Polaris as an appropriate
missile: Solid-fueled and adaptable to a land-mobile launcher, it could reach targets well inside the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{3}

Norstad's proposal never got beyond the design stage, primarily because the U.S. government expressed little interest in supporting it. One reason for Washington's cool stance was that the MRBMs, when deployed forward to reach a maximum number of targets, could become ensnared in ground combat and might either be captured or prematurely released. Also, even with as many as 700 MRBMs, SACEUR still would be dependent upon U.S. strategic forces to accomplish all his targeting missions. From the American standpoint, little purpose seemed to be served by making SACEUR independent enough to initiate a strategic nuclear war but not capable of prosecuting it to completion.

Norstad's proposal, however, had whetted West European appetites for a missile force that would help reduce NATO's complete dependence on U.S.-controlled systems. Mounting pressure from the allies led Washington to begin searching for a compromise. In December 1960, outgoing Secretary of State Christian Herter made a new proposal that was intended to help substitute for Norstad's scheme. He expressed an American willingness to place five Polaris submarines and their 80 SLBM missiles under SACEUR's control for targeting purposes. He also suggested that the alliance might band together to create a seaborne NATO nuclear force. Herter further indicated that, assuming agreement could be reached on control over launch authority, the United States would be willing to provide this force some 100 MRBM missiles. Coming on the eve of Eisenhower's departure from office, Herter's proposal was not directly acted upon, but it nonetheless marked an important political step. By officially stating that some way should be found to "couple" U.S. forces to NATO's defense plans and even to provide NATO a retaliatory force of its own, it expressed U.S. acknowledgment that the old nuclear command and control arrangements were no longer adequate for preserving alliance unity.\textsuperscript{4}

It was against this background that the Kennedy administration began addressing the troublesome nuclear sharing issue shortly after it assumed office. The new administration soon found itself divided internally between two broad alternatives on how to proceed.\textsuperscript{5} The first alternative aimed at establishing what might best be called a "federated multinational" NATO nuclear force. This concept called for a collection of existing national forces that would remain under the control of their parent nations but would operate, to one degree or another, under NATO's command. The goal was to give NATO a de facto nuclear force that it could draw upon in a crisis, without making the alliance itself an independent nuclear power. The structure was to be brought to life through intensified coalition planning in such areas as force development, doctrine, and targeting procedures. The United States was to contribute to this enterprise by more extensively coordinating its nuclear planning with NATO Headquarters

\textsuperscript{3}Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas.
\textsuperscript{5}Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, provides an appraisal of these alternatives. See also Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, Chaps. 32 and 33.
and by assigning a number of its Polaris SLBM submarines to SACEUR. The British and, it was hoped, the French—the only other NATO powers aspiring to strategic forces of their own—were to follow suit.

The second alternative was a good deal more ambitious and controversial. It called for the creation of a “Multilateral Force” (MLF) under NATO’s control. This was to be an entirely new force that would supplement existing national postures to give the alliance itself—as opposed to its members acting individually—an independent nuclear capability. A variety of options were considered in the 1960s, the most prominent being an MLF composed of a fleet of 25 NATO-assigned surface ships armed with a total of 200 Polaris missiles; each ship was to carry a multinational crew. It was to be operationally assigned to SACEUR, but launch authority was to be controlled by a senior NATO political committee composed of representatives from each contributing nation. Launch decisions were to be taken by unanimous vote. This meant that the United States, or any other member nation, would be able to exercise veto power over the use of the MLF’s missiles.

The MLF gained its inspiration primarily from political and diplomatic concerns and drew its support in Washington principally from senior State Department officials. Its sponsors saw it as a convenient vehicle for reassuring the NATO allies in a highly visible way and thereby discouraging further proliferation, while keeping nuclear missiles off the European landmass and still under effective U.S. control. In particular, the MLF promised to help keep West Germany tightly bound to NATO and the United States. Beyond this, the MLF would compel the West Europeans to work together on a highly important common defense enterprise. In this way, its advocates believed, it could be a useful mechanism for encouraging further West European political integration.6

The MLF, however, did not go down well in the Pentagon, which was primarily concerned with the military feasibility of any nuclear sharing arrangement. McNamara’s own views, which were tilted against MLF, can best be understood when seen in a larger context. McNamara adamantly believed that NATO needed to be capable of conducting its nuclear operations in a swift and coordinated fashion. To achieve this, strategic forces needed to be kept under a unified command structure that could establish a coherent doctrine and make sound, timely employment decisions. He particularly worried that U.S. efforts to confine initial strikes to Soviet military targets would be undermined by the targeting doctrines of individual allies, which would probably be focused on Soviet cities. As a result, his overriding goal was not to block the MLF per se, but rather to discourage national nuclear forces, which would be of limited effectiveness and produce fragmentation.7

He also opposed allied development of independent nuclear forces for budgetary reasons. For the United States, strategic forces were not especially costly, only about 10% of the DoD budget. But each ally would be compelled to spend 25–50% of its much smaller budget for even a modest nuclear posture and thus

---

7See McNamara’s public statements and Congressional testimony on the MLF and allied national nuclear forces.
would have to sharply pare back spending on other defense programs. France was already doing this, as was the United Kingdom. The result inevitably would have been an unbalanced alliance posture: one overly insured in nuclear capability but even weaker than before in the conventional defenses that McNamara believed needed to be strengthened.

In an ideal world, McNamara would have preferred to retain all strategic nuclear matters under American control. In justifying this stance, he argued that since the United States was committed to Western Europe’s security as a matter of its own national interests, it could be relied upon to employ its strategic forces on the NATO allies’ behalf. Although opposed to uncoordinated national efforts, he did acknowledge that an integrated all-European missile force might become desirable in the event that the allies achieved sufficient political unity to perform the required command and control functions. But European political integration of this sort, he asserted, was far off in the future. In the interim, the present system was best.

McNamara was well aware that existing allied national forces and allied insistence on some form of improved nuclear sharing with the United States were realities that could not be ignored. For this reason, he maintained that he was not opposed to sharing nuclear control with the allies if they wanted such an arrangement. But this goal, he insisted, would have to be achieved in a manner that was consistent with operational requirements. The trick was to create a command structure that both satisfied political concerns on both sides of the alliance and was militarily feasible.

The MLF, McNamara believed, failed the test of military feasibility. Its small size added little to NATO’s nuclear arsenal. With only 200 missiles, it fell far short of being able to execute NATO’s war plans alone and thus could not be used independently of U.S. forces. Its cumbersome command arrangement, requiring unanimous consensus from its members, threatened to inhibit swift operations. And its multinational crew and funding arrangements promised to cause many practical problems in procuring the force, training it, and operating it. As a result, McNamara wanted to seek an acceptable sharing arrangement through the “federation” alternative—an avenue that he believed could help satisfy the allies while maintaining a command structure, doctrine, and force posture that made military sense.⁸

The White House was in accord with him on important fundamentals: The United States should strive for an acceptable sharing arrangement that would discourage further proliferation and keep long-range nuclear missiles off the European continent. The State Department, however, by no means shared McNamara’s specific priorities since it was more impressed by the MLF’s political advantages than its military drawbacks. The Kennedy administration thus found itself divided internally. Despite continuous internal study, it was unable to resolve its disagreements on exactly what kind of solution should be advocated to the allies. Consequently, it ended up tabling both alternatives to NATO, without fully endorsing either one. This approach was not wholly in

⁸See annual reports to Congress and associated testimony, multiple volumes.
consistent for the simple reason that these alternatives were not mutually exclusive: Both conceivably could have been implemented. But it had the effect of granting a broad range of choice to the allies, who themselves were internally divided and prone to developing their own options. The result was a prolonged period of dialogue, debate, and indecision that delayed the alliance’s ability to settle on a concrete course. A prolonged alliancewide debate ensued, one that pushed strategy matters into the background.9

RISE AND FALL OF THE MLF

Throughout 1961, most West European nations had voiced little interest in either American proposal. In a May 1961 address at Ottawa, Kennedy offered a combination of both solutions: the commitment of U.S. Polaris submarines to NATO and U.S. help in establishing an MLF provided that NATO first met its nonnuclear force goals. His proposal elicited only a lukewarm response. In the wake of McNamara’s 1962 Athens address and mounting European fears of American nuclear disengagement, however, interest began picking up. In particular, Bonn, now expressing interest in entering the nuclear club, floated a design proposal for an MLF that would be entirely European and would not include the United States. Although the British were cool to the MLF idea and the French adamantly opposed it, the Belgians voiced interest along with the Italians, Greeks, and Turks. Canada, Portugal, Norway, and Denmark turned the idea down directly.10

As debate mounted steadily in the following months, with participants divided between the MLF and some version of the multinational option, outside events played an important role in guiding things along. In October that year, the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred. In many ways this crisis, which was resolved successfully but badly strained nerves everywhere, proved to be a watershed in European security affairs. For the United States, it was a resounding victory. Years later analysts would ascribe the outcome to the U.S. superiority in strategic nuclear weapons, which at the time was marked because the Soviets still lacked a large and invulnerable ICBM force. To some participants in the Kennedy administration, however, the U.S. nuclear advantage was a factor of less importance than the local U.S. superiority in conventional forces. What unquestionably did matter was that the United States, acting independently, was able to exert a large element of control over its actions throughout the crisis. This reinforced Washington’s belief that management of any confrontation with the Soviet Union, especially decisions regarding use of conventional or nuclear forces, must be kept under tight central control.11

9Stanley Hoffmann presents a sharp critique of the American style in handling the MLF and NATO’s nuclear problems. See Gulliver’s Troubles, pp. 137–174, 256–330.
11Evidently the Soviets themselves believed that the adverse nuclear balance (from their standpoint) was an important factor in the crisis. For an insightful account, see Graham Allison, The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis. Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1971.
In Western Europe, Kennedy's skillful handling of the crisis got positive reviews, but the entire incident left ambivalent feelings on how future crises should be managed. The crisis graphically illustrated to the allies how a U.S.-Soviet confrontation elsewhere on the globe could trigger a nuclear war that easily might engulf Europe. To them, it increased the importance not only of maintaining close collaboration with the United States, but also of achieving a nuclear sharing arrangement that would ensure an influential role for them in any future crisis. With respect to nuclear command and control, the crisis thus led the allies to draw lessons that were somewhat at odds with what Washington had concluded.

The Cuban Missile Crisis also proved to be a watershed in U.S.-Soviet relations that was to have an indirect, in some ways negative effect on the nuclear sharing debate. The crisis, which brought the two sides perilously close to war, led Kennedy to conclude that the time had arrived for an effort to reduce tensions with Moscow. From that point forward, he began emphasizing the need for stable relations, a goal that was best exemplified in his landmark speech at the American University the following spring. The Soviets reciprocated, and the two nations began searching for ways to reach concrete agreements.

The West Europeans generally shared Washington's growing interest in exploring the prospects for better relations with the Soviets, especially if this could ease tensions in Europe. But some allies began to be concerned that purely bilateral U.S.-Soviet negotiations might produce deals at their expense. In particular, de Gaulle, who had long warned of a superpower condominium, intensified his complaints about American domination of the alliance. Similarly, the West Germans, perpetually nervous about the U.S. stance on such issues as Berlin and American force levels in Europe, began growing wary. This further strengthened the allies' determination to impart their own stamp to any NATO nuclear sharing agreement.

Matters had begun coming to a head late in Fall 1962, when Kennedy, acting on McNamara's advice, canceled plans to develop the nuclear-tipped Skybolt missile. This missile had been intended for emplacement on U.S. strategic bombers as a means of penetrating Soviet air defenses. It was canceled on cost and effectiveness grounds when operational testing showed it to be flawed. This step promptly triggered a serious crisis in U.S.-British relations. The United States previously had promised to sell Skybolt to the British, and the Macmillan government had made it a centerpiece of its efforts to build an independent, bomber-oriented British nuclear deterrent. Not fully consulted in advance by the Americans, Macmillan found himself in a deeply embarrassing position.12

Kennedy and Macmillan met in Nassau in late December 1962 and discussed the Skybolt problem in depth. After reviewing several options, they ultimately settled on a plan in which the United States agreed to sell Polaris missiles to the British, and the U.K. would install them in submarines built by itself and

---
equipped with its own nuclear warheads. In turn, these submarines, along with an equal number of U.S. Polaris submarines, would be assigned to NATO and targeted in accordance with NATO plans. The British reserved the right to withdraw these submarines and to use them of their own accord when the United Kingdom's supreme national interests were at stake. The Nassau accord, which helped heal the rift in U.S.-British relations, had the effect of taking the first formal steps toward creation of the multinational structure.\textsuperscript{13}

NATO formally endorsed the Nassau decision the following May, when the ministers met in Ottawa. There, the ministers adopted procedures to better coordinate NATO's nuclear planning and to provide SACEUR adequate assets to execute his nuclear strike plans. Although the formal communiqué contained ambiguous language that kept the MLF idea alive, the Ottawa meeting took no formal action to endorse further progress on it. Most participants returned home believing that because of its military drawbacks, which increasingly had become apparent in recent months, the MLF concept had fallen from favor in both Washington and West European capitals.\textsuperscript{14}

The MLF, however, was by no means dead. It gained a new lease on life in early 1963 when Charles de Gaulle, angry at both Washington and London, rejected a similar American offer to sell Polaris to Paris and refused to participate in any kind of NATO nuclear force. In addition, he vetoed British entry into the Common Market, thereby throwing EEC integration into disarray, and shortly afterward signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with West Germany. These steps were to bring the alliance to the brink of an internal crisis, one in which the MLF became embroiled.\textsuperscript{15}

De Gaulle's actions stemmed partly from purely military motives. Believing that the United States would never place its own cities at nuclear risk to protect its overseas interests, he had come openly to discount American nuclear guarantees to Europe. He believed that only West Europeans could credibly threaten nuclear retaliation in response to a Soviet invasion of West European soil. Nor did he see any purpose in conventional defense and graduated nuclear response, American ideas that to him were aimed at avoiding intercontinental war rather than protecting Western Europe. These conclusions led him to pursue a French "force de frappe," a small national nuclear posture aimed directly at Soviet cities that would be employed upon a decision by Paris that French supreme interests were at peril. They also motivated him to oppose NATO nuclear command arrangements that strengthened American control over Europe's nuclear decisions while conveying the false impression that U.S. guarantees were reliable. To him, the proper solution was a command arrangement outside NATO that brought the West European nations together,


\textsuperscript{14}See Schwartz, \textit{NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas}.

preferably under French leadership. Nassau and Ottawa were steps in the opposite direction, and he refused to take any part in them.\textsuperscript{16}

De Gaulle's rejection of the Nassau/Ottawa Accords also stemmed from larger political and economic motives that went well beyond the specific nuclear issues at stake. At the time, important elements of the Kennedy administration were openly endorsing a "Grand Design" for Europe.\textsuperscript{17} This concept envisioned the evolution of a politically and economically integrated West European pillar, one that could stand alongside (but not replace) the United States as a source of strength in a troubled world. Traditional European national identities were to decline in importance as this unified Western Europe emerged. In this concept, the Atlantic partnership was to be maintained not only through close political and economic ties, but also by the continued existence of NATO and its integrated military structure, and by continued West European nuclear dependence on the United States. De Gaulle's actions in 1963 were aimed at striking a death blow to the heart of this idea.\textsuperscript{18}

In de Gaulle's eyes, Washington's design looked anything but grand. He believed that in its emphasis on integration in Europe, it both misunderstood Europe's history and unacceptably subordinated France's own self-identity and grandeur as an independent nation. To de Gaulle, the "Grand Design" was anchored on American objectives rather than West European interests. Rather than erecting a united Western Europe that behaved independently in response to its own goals, the grand design seemed aimed at preserving a Western Europe that continued to take its instructions from Washington. To him, NATO was Washington's primary instrument of control, and allied nuclear dependence on the United States was the lever that enabled the Americans to employ this instrument to its own advantage.

As a result, de Gaulle's nuclear stance was an outgrowth of a far-reaching political campaign aimed at challenging U.S. domination in Europe and weakening the control that the Americans exercised through NATO. As part of this campaign, de Gaulle was endeavoring to keep Britain, which he dismissed as Washington's Trojan Horse, out of Western Europe's efforts to achieve integration on its own terms. Beyond merely removing France and Western Europe from Washington's grasp, he also was offering an alternative source of leadership on the continent. In his design, Western Europe was to achieve a separate identity through the combined effects of economic integration under the EEC's auspices and military coordination that would rest on a French-German axis led by Paris.

De Gaulle also had a uniquely French view on how European security affairs as a whole were to be managed. Resentful of the United States but suspicious of

\textsuperscript{16}A key point here is that while the British nuclear force was intended for integration within NATO's command structure, the French force was deployed with wider political goals in mind. Bundy's \textit{Danger and Survival} provides an appraisal of White House views on relations with France, as well as with West Germany, Chap. 16, pp. 463–517.


the Russians, de Gaulle proposed to create a Europe stretching "from the Atlantic to the Urals." His concept aimed to build more harmonious relations with the USSR by acknowledging the Soviet Union's vital security interests in Eastern Europe. For this reason, he did not support Bonn's quest for unification. At the same time, he was no accommodationist, and believed that the West needed to maintain a military counterbalance to Soviet power. This counterbalance, however, was to be provided by Western Europe, not by a U.S.-led NATO.

Although de Gaulle recognized the need for West European unity and strength, he stopped well short of endorsing the visionary idea of a fully integrated EEC. He saw the Common Market as an economic entity and did not want it to grow into the kind of politically integrated body that would erode French sovereignty. Nor did he favor any integrative scheme that would result in Germany's becoming Western Europe's leader. The essence of his vision was a loosely connected group of West European nations, with France as its leader and West Germany in a subordinate position, that would operate independently of both Washington and Moscow.

The key to de Gaulle's vision was the FRG, and in Bonn de Gaulle got a mixed reception. West Germany's willingness to sign the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty was an indicator that the conservative Adenauer government shared some Gaullist sympathies. However, the Germans were unenthused about the idea of sacrificing their security relationship with the United States in exchange for dependence on France. De Gaulle's design implied that West Germany would play a secondary role to France, a concept not inherently different from the American domination that de Gaulle so strongly opposed. Also, de Gaulle's nuclear guarantees to Bonn were no more credible than Washington's promises. The chief difference was that the United States possessed vastly more nuclear power than France, enough to match the Soviets in all phases of nuclear warfare rather than merely threaten mutual suicide. These considerations led the Germans to favor a flirtatious relationship with de Gaulle but one that fell short of serious courtship, much less marriage.

Nonetheless, de Gaulle's démarche to Bonn made enough headway to ring alarm bells in Washington. Accordingly, Washington revived the MLF, notwithstanding its still-unresolved military deficiencies, as a way to restore German confidence in American leadership. During the following months, American officials canvassed Western Europe in an attempt to mobilize support for prompt action on it. By late 1963, this effort had gained some ground. The United States and key allies had agreed to begin formal negotiations on an MLF, and the United States had offered a surface vessel to serve as a pilot project to test the concept. This progress led the MLF's supporters in Washington to conclude that the way finally appeared clear for getting an MLF actually deployed in the next year or two.

---

19See Richardson, *Germany and the Atlantic Alliance* and Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*. 
The events of 1964 were to prove otherwise. Discussions with the allies revealed less enthusiasm than MLF advocates had hoped to elicit. The French remained strongly opposed to any form of nuclear cooperation that would compromise their national force. In London, Macmillan was willing to participate; but support for MLF did not run deep in the British government, which valued its independent nuclear status and its unique relationship with Washington. With the other allies politely supportive at best, this left the West Germans as the MLF's main enthusiasts. But even in Bonn, the picture was murky. Support for the MLF was concentrated primarily among CDU politicians, who ran the government. Although they favored the MLF because it would give the FRG some access to strategic nuclear forces, their interest was tempered by the realization that the United States would retain veto power over it. Meanwhile the SPD largely opposed the MLF, and the professional military harbored reservations based on the same operational difficulties that McNamara had pointed out.20

As 1964 unfolded, even the CDU's support began to wane. An important contributing factor was de Gaulle's intense opposition to the MLF. The same CDU figures who favored the MLF also were pro-Gaulist; they began displaying reluctance to support an American initiative that France opposed and regarded as a test of its relations with the FRG. Events in London reinforced Bonn's hesitancy. In October, Macmillan left office and was succeeded by Alec Douglas-Hume, and in 1964 by Harold Wilson of the Labour Party, which was even more lukewarm to the MLF than were the Conservatives. With London becoming increasingly ambivalent, Bonn backed away even further.

These trends in Europe were matched by important developments in the United States. Kennedy's assassination in November 1963 had propelled Lyndon Johnson to the presidency, and he was neither thoroughly versed on the MLF nor committed to it. Congress showed no special interest in the MLF, and when Johnson became aware that the Europeans themselves were losing interest, he began backing away. In late 1964, he decided to cease advocating the MLF and to support it only if the Europeans actively pushed it. When they failed to do so, he decided to abandon the idea altogether.21

TOWARD A NUCLEAR ACCORD

The MLF's demise left the way open for a resolution of the nuclear sharing debate on the basis of the Nassau/Ottawa Accords. This implied further steps in the direction of integrating U.S. nuclear forces into NATO's defense plans and establishing better transatlantic consultative mechanisms. The exact terms of agreement, however, remained to be determined. Especially given France's

20See Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas.

21From this point forward, the MLF slipped steadily into the background. It was to continue under examination in several quarters, but lacking White House support, it no longer was a serious candidate in NATO's reviews.
continued naysaying, substantial discord still existed within the alliance and consensus formation did not promise to be easy.

Fortunately, by late 1964 nuclear politics in Europe had started to simmer down from the boiling point that had been reached two years earlier. This process had begun in May 1963, when the United States agreed to establish a staff liaison relationship between SHAPE and SAC Headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, in order to achieve better coordination of strategic targeting. SHAPE officers were assigned to SAC’s Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff there. In addition to accomplishing its technical purposes, this step had the beneficial effect of inspiring greater confidence among allied capitals that U.S. strategic forces remained committed to Europe’s defense.

Moreover, McNamara by 1964 had begun to alter his public rhetoric about how a nuclear war should be conducted, a step that further helped ameliorate transatlantic tensions. In particular, McNamara steadily backed away from his earlier endorsement of the “no cities” or “counterforce” doctrine that had so inflamed many West Europeans. The reasons why he took this step were controversial then, and remain so today. One obvious reason was that the counterforce doctrine’s emphasis on restraint and escalation control had directly contributed to the upswing in allied doubts about the continued credibility of extended deterrence. By deemphasizing this doctrine, McNamara was trying to calm allied fears on this score.22 An equally important, more fundamental reason was that the counterforce doctrine was contributing to confusion on both sides of the Atlantic regarding McNamara’s basic message about the unacceptability of nuclear war. McNamara had not changed his belief that U.S. nuclear forces must continue to provide multiple war-fighting options. But he also had come to conclude that the counterforce doctrine was creating the impression that Washington seriously believed a nuclear war could be fought and won. This was exactly the opposite of what McNamara, who believed that nuclear war should be avoided at almost all costs, had wanted to impart.23

McNamara also had become concerned about a related problem with the counterforce doctrine: its unattractive fiscal implications. By early 1964, he had come to the conclusion that since the American nuclear buildup was now firmly in place, DoD’s funding priorities should be shifted more toward conventional defenses. Within the Pentagon the counterforce doctrine tended to create an open-ended requirement for large strategic forces that left him in a poor

---

22See Kugler, “The Politics of Restraint.” Neitz, From Hiroshima to Glasnost, also provides an account of why counterforce was replaced by assured destruction. McNamara’s annual reports failed to provide a full explanation. Assured destruction and its twin, damage limitation, made their appearance with little analysis of the implications for counterforce and flexible response. Within DoD’s internal studies, the forces needed for these two missions were regarded to be subsumed within the requirements for the two parent strategic concepts. In other words, the offensive forces needed for assured destruction and damage limitation were regarded to be fully adequate to execute any of the lesser demanding options that counterforce and flexible response might require. In essence, the Pentagon proceeded to size its forces according to the new concepts, but to design them—along with war plans and associated programs—in ways that accommodated the need to respond in limited ways and to strike enemy targets. Later in his tenure, McNamara was to acknowledge this important distinction during congressional testimony.

23See Kugler, “The Politics of Restraint.”
position for turning aside programs that he believed were unnecessary. While this particularly applied to service pressures for more ICBM missiles and strategic bombers, it also was the case for controlling deployment of an expensive antiballistic missile (ABM) system, pressures for which were beginning to build in 1964. For this reason also, a deemphasis on counterforce made sense.24

From 1964 onward McNamara ceased talking publicly about the counterforce doctrine and the use of nuclear forces as a political instrument for crisis management. In the private councils of government, he continued to support planning efforts to achieve greater flexibility in nuclear targeting and employment doctrine.25 But in public, he began justifying the Pentagon’s offensive nuclear programs under the rubric of a new, entirely different doctrinal concept: “assured destruction.” This concept postulated that the dominant goal of ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers was to deter nuclear war through their ability to conduct a retaliatory attack against enemy cities. In marked contrast with its predecessor, it said nothing about their role in conducting other kinds of operations, including the targeting of enemy forces. Nor did it say anything about the requirement for multiple options or about the need to control escalation. The vision of nuclear war that it sketched was one of a massive, city-busting exchange from the onset, the kind of conflict that, given the vulnerability of cities, could be waged with a fairly small number of nuclear missiles.

Accompanying the downplaying of counterforce came a second major change in U.S. nuclear strategy, also orchestrated by McNamara, that had huge implications not only for alliance politics but also for the future course of the Cold War: abandonment of ballistic missile defense. By 1963, U.S. efforts to develop an ABM system had reached the point of technological maturation where deployment was becoming feasible. From the military services, the defense industry and Congress, intense pressures began mounting for a nationwide system of Spartan and Sprint missiles, supported by sophisticated radars, that could protect the entire United States from Soviet nuclear attack. In principle, an ABM system could be extended to cover Western Europe as well, thereby restoring NATO’s nuclear supremacy and rendering MC 14/2 still valid.

McNamara, however, had doubts about the technical feasibility and affordability of an ABM defense. Tests in the South Pacific had proven that a single interceptor could knock down an incoming ICBM, but another matter entirely was deploying an affordable ABM that could shoot down several hundred incoming missiles in the short span of a few minutes. Beyond this, he feared an-

24 The assured destruction concept was anchored on a small and vulnerable urban target system that led to a “curve of diminishing marginal returns” for calculating U.S. nuclear force needs. As a result, requirements were relatively small (i.e., 400 megaton-equivalents) because additional weapons would have inflicted little damage beyond the 75 percent of the target system already destroyed. See McNamara annual reports to Congress, 1964–1967. For accounts of how defense priorities were changing, see Roswell Gilpatric, “Our Defense Needs: The Long View,” Foreign Affairs, April 1964; Hanson Baldwin, “Slowdown in the Pentagon,” Foreign Affairs, January 1965.

25 When queried on this point in congressional testimony, McNamara acknowledged his continuing emphasis on flexibility. In 1966, he said, “We have had at least since 1962 a series of options that the Commander-in-Chief would select from in the event of need, and they have always included city target systems and non-city target systems.” Testimony to Senate Armed Services Committee on FY 1969 DoD procurement, p. 153.
other hugely expensive round of the nuclear arms race that would leave the United States and its allies no better defended than before. Politically unable to make a decision against ABM deployment that might be portrayed as arbitrary, McNamara in 1963 commissioned an in-depth Pentagon study under the auspices of his Directorate for Development, Research, and Engineering (DDR&E) but involving the military services. The ostensible purpose of the study was to determine how the nuclear defense mission could best be pursued through a program mix combining together the best of several alternatives: ABM, civil defense, bomber defense, and offensive systems that might destroy Soviet weapons before launch. Immediately thereafter, one of the most conceptually ambitious and heavily quantitative defense studies in history got under way, portending enormous consequences for American defense strategy, the Pentagon’s budget, and the Cold War.26

After several months of intense study and computer modeling, marked by bitter internal fighting over methods and recommendations, the results of this “Damage Limitation Study” became available. True to its original purpose, the study concluded that nuclear defense was a technically feasible solution and that an across-the-board investment strategy, with a large ABM system as the centerpiece, made best sense. But the study also revealed fatal flaws in the underlying concept that were quickly apparent to any sharp-eyed analyst not committed to the enterprise. Even if the ABM system passed technical muster, it would be hugely expensive, and therefore it would unbalance the defense budget and eat away at the Pentagon’s manifold other endeavors. Equally important, the strategic feasibility of ballistic missile defense appeared highly uncertain if the Soviet Union, perceiving a threat to its own nuclear deterrent, responded in an offsetting manner. The United States could aspire to protect against a limited attack, but against a determined adversary who took the necessary countermeasures, it could not hope to meet a full-scale attack and avoid massive destruction of its urban areas and population. If the United States tried to offset these adversary countermeasures by expanding its defenses, the Soviet Union could trump the American effort with a far less-expensive investment of its own.27 McNamara, who had a sharp eye and a clever mind, pounced on the study, turned it upside down, and employed it as a Pentagon-endorsed refutation of nuclear defense. Vigorously using the study as his analytical bible, he branded an ABM system as too expensive, doomed to strategic failure, and counterproductive to the larger purpose of restraining the U.S.-Soviet arms race. Indeed, McNamara saw in the study an embedded rationale for nuclear arms control negotiations. The study showed that, if the contestants failed to cooperate, each nation would spend itself into the pothole in quest for defenses that were made infeasible by the deterrent strategy of its opponent. By

---


27 Stated in technical terms, the core arguments against ABM defense were technological uncertainty, explosive cost growth, diminishing marginal returns, and adverse cost-exchange ratios.
cooperating through negotiations, however, the two nations had an opportunity to save a great deal of money while bringing greater stability to East-West relations.

Citing these arguments, McNamara slammed the brakes on ABM investment within the Pentagon, and sallied forth to convince the Congress of his rationale. There, he confronted enormous opposition from conservatives, the defense industry, the military establishment and technical experts who read the data differently. McNamara, however, enjoyed high prestige in these pre-Vietnam years, and he had the backing of President Lyndon B. Johnson, who commanded great political strength on Capitol Hill. A wild political battle ensued, and it was to ebb and flow for the next four years. In the end, McNamara largely won. Especially when the rapidly escalating Vietnam War began consuming the Pentagon's budget, spending on nuclear weapons plummeted and stabilized at a level too low to permit vigorous investments in either defensive or offensive systems. Besieged by mounting criticism over Vietnam and weakened by his declining stature, McNamara was finally compelled to bow to political pressures by approving a thin ABM system that even he acknowledged as a reasonable idea. But even so, he had driven an analytical stake into the heart of a thick ABM system, and his arguments held sway not only during the Johnson years, but in succeeding administrations.\(^28\)

Because McNamara's quest for sound defense planning not only had a huge impact on U.S. nuclear strategy but also triggered larger consequences, it proved to be a critical turning moment of the Cold War. Prior to him, the two sides were pointed toward an upward spiral of nuclear competition in pursuit of an unachievable supremacy and air-tight military security. McNamara re-fashioned American nuclear strategy to accept the irreversible reality of mutual nuclear deterrence. The prospect of unending vulnerability was sobering, but with intelligent management, the situation could be maintained under stable conditions, thereby reducing the risk that nuclear weapons might ever be used. Moreover, McNamara pulled the USSR along with him. The Soviet government initially ridiculed the idea of a nuclear balance that allowed for potent offensive weapons but prohibited defense. In time, however, the Kremlin came to see the bizarre yet irrefutable logic of his position. Out of this exchange came the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) negotiations and growing East-West efforts to bring the nuclear arms race under control.

On the surface, McNamara's new nuclear strategy seemed to run strongly against the proclivities of West European thinking. McNamara's initiative deflated hopes for a NATO strategy anchored on impenetrable defenses in ways permitting offensive nuclear attacks launched with impunity against invading Warsaw Pact armies. Indeed, the new strategy squared with McNamara's ceaseless and still-controversial efforts to devalue nuclear weapons and retire them to the backwaters of modern military strategy. By casting a skeptical eye on further nuclear investments, moreover, McNamara's strategy implicitly

\(^{28}\)For a critical review of the decision to deploy a thin ABM system, see Abram Chayes and Jerome Wiesner (eds.), *ABM: An Evaluation of the Decision to Deploy an Anti-Ballistic Missile System*, Harper and Row, N.Y., 1969.
ceded to the USSR the opportunity to pull even with the West in nuclear power and to profit from the greater influence parity might bring.

Beneath the surface, however, the West Europeans were coming to embrace a broader conception of nuclear deterrence that left them receptive to the McNamara doctrine. They too were coming to recognize that the nuclear game was not worth the cost. Mutual deterrence and eventual parity arguably were lamentable, but they were realities to which adjustments must be made. If the West undertook prudent measures to shore up its strategy and force posture in other areas, many allies were coming to feel, the situation could be tolerated. Indeed, a stable balance of terror anchored on weapons unlikely to be used might prove more acceptable than nerve-wracking competition that sometime could turn against NATO. Moreover, mutual deterrence provided a conceptual basis not only for arms control negotiations, but also for a diplomacy aimed at reaching a stable political accommodation with the USSR: a goal rapidly gaining greater status in allied capitals.

As the mid-1960s unfolded, McNamara employed the twin concepts of “Assured Destruction” and “Damage Limitation” to sell his nuclear strategy at home and abroad. His core argument was that, because each side would refuse to compromise its assured destruction (i.e., deterrence) objectives, neither could hope to attain the damage-limitation goal (i.e., effective defense). Although these two concepts had little to say about how nuclear operations would probably be conducted in an actual NATO-Warsaw Pact war, they proved to be useful instruments of rhetorical policy in McNamara’s hands. Within the Pentagon, they gave him a host of good arguments for turning aside service recommendations for new nuclear weapons. Publicly, they helped him convey the message that nuclear war could not be won. In effect, they said that since mutual destruction was assured and damage could only be limited, nuclear war and a continued arms race were a losing proposition for both sides. They thus helped McNamara underscore the centrality of deterrence. From 1964 onward, McNamara aggressively used these concepts in his efforts to shape both the American debate on nuclear policy and the transatlantic dialogue as well.

For all their controversy in the United States, McNamara’s twin concepts had a salutary effect in Western Europe. To military experts, assured destruction raised troublesome questions about how the U.S. strategic arsenal would be used to deal with a war in Europe. But in the public domain, McNamara’s new concepts signaled to the allies that the United States was getting its policy bearings straight, that it was coming to recognize that deterrence, not fighting a war, should be NATO’s main goal. The allies also raised no objections to McNamara’s stance against the ABM, a system that in theory could have protected Western Europe as well as the United States, but would have been expensive and, in the USSR’s hands, could have negated the British and French deterrent postures. In general they adopted an attitude of contentment toward a U.S. strategy that now had become anchored, in rhetoric if not in actual practice, on assured destruction alone.

Events in the arms control arena reinforced this trend toward U.S.-allied accord on nuclear doctrine. In the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis had come
important breakthroughs in East-West relations. The signing of the Limited Test Ban Treaty in 1963 was followed in 1964 by tentative efforts on both sides to signal a willingness to negotiate on further accords. The United States initially proposed a force reduction by mutual example; although this idea was rejected by the Soviets, it marked an important internal departure for the United States. The Soviets responded by issuing a vague call for improved overall security relations in Europe, one that lacked sufficient specificity to interest the West. But the Soviets also expressed a guarded willingness to expand the negotiating process that the limited Test Ban Treaty had started. Moscow's signals, in turn, led the United States and its allies to begin identifying negotiating options that looked promising.

It was here that the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entered the equation in a way that helped speed a U.S.-allied accord on nuclear sharing. At the time, there were few prospects for East-West negotiations on core political issues in Central Europe: Berlin remained insolvable and the West German government still clung to its Hallstein doctrine, which denied diplomatic recognition to the East German state. Prospects for initiating negotiations on strategic nuclear forces were a distant hope, but support had only begun to bubble up within the U.S. government, and the Soviets as yet were showing no interest. This left negotiations on a nonproliferation accord as the next obvious item on the arms control agenda.29

The West German government, feeling that it was being singled out, reacted negatively to a nonproliferation agreement. But apart from Bonn's hostility, the United States and most West European nations favored the idea not only for its specifics but also because it could help promote the cause of better East-West relations. When the Soviets were approached on this idea, they reacted ambivalently. They expressed willingness to enter formal negotiations, but only if NATO abandoned any plans to deploy an MLF or any other nuclear arrangement that might place strategic weapons directly in the hands of the West Germans. This response, in turn, put a final nail in the MLF's coffin. Equally important, it gave the United States and its West European allies an incentive to bury the hatchet on nuclear sharing. Before an NPT could possibly be signed, NATO needed to have its own internal house in order, thereby reassuring West Germany and other partners that they safely could forego any interest in going nuclear.30

As a result of greater transatlantic harmony on nuclear strategy and improving East-West relations, most West European allies began to conclude that they could accept a nuclear sharing agreement on the terms that the United States was offering. In particular, they slowly warmed to the idea that they could live

---

29Although East-West tensions in Europe began relaxing after the Cuban Missile Crisis, it was to be several years before negotiations on European issues—Berlin, postwar borders, and mutual balanced force reduction (MBFR)—were to begin. In the interim, control of proliferation was an issue on which both the United States and the Soviet Union shared interests. An NPT, however, promised to deny the FRG and other nonnuclear NATO powers permanent access to a national deterrent, something that they were not eager to endure in the absence of nuclear sharing guarantees from the United States.

30See Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas.
with continued American control over nuclear release authority provided they were given an opportunity to participate in development of U.S. forces, doctrine, and targeting plans. Eventually even the West German government, sensing that the MLF was dead and that an NPT was inevitable, decided to make the best of a distasteful situation by endorsing this course. The emergence of this new attitude, in turn, pointed the way toward adoption of institutional changes within NATO that helped bring about a satisfactory settlement of the alliance's nuclear controversies.

In reaction to the allies' more forthcoming stance, in mid-1965 McNamara proposed the establishment of a formal NATO committee to examine ways for achieving consultation on nuclear planning. Although the French dismissed this idea as trivial, the British reacted enthusiastically and the Germans, after initial hesitations, agreed as well. Once the other allies had followed suit, a Special Committee of Defense Ministers was created in November 1965, with all NATO members (minus France) participating. The work of this committee and its two subgroups gave rise a year later to establishment of a Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), a new body composed of the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, Italy, and three other members on a rotating basis. The NPG was assigned the task of engaging in extensive consultations on nuclear policy issues on a regular basis, with the particular mission of ensuring that the allies had a full opportunity to review U.S. plans and to participate in the development of new programs for NATO.

The NPG's efforts during 1966 and 1967 proved to be successful. This partially was due to McNamara himself, who went to considerable lengths to expose the allies to the details of American planning. He candidly discussed the doctrinal issues at stake, listened carefully to allied reactions, and was responsive to them. As a result, allied concerns lessened perceptibly and the thorny issue of control over U.S. nuclear forces faded into the background. The alliance's nuclear crisis that had been triggered in 1962 thus was finally on the way toward resolution. With this change came a greater willingness by the European allies to consider the strategy change on conventional defense that McNamara had originally advocated in 1962. 31

The nuclear sharing accord that emerged in the mid-1960s by no means was a perfectly satisfactory arrangement. But it did pass the important test of minimum acceptability to all partners except France, and it also provided room to grow in future years. It provided NATO a diverse nuclear posture capable of providing options along the ladder of escalation, thereby appealing to the protagonists for each rung. By the mid-1960s, NATO was well on the way to acquiring a large and diverse force of tactical nuclear weapons—tank artillery, atomic demolition munitions, tactical air bombs, short range missiles, and air defense weapons—that provided an impressive capability to wage a battlefield nuclear war. Since NATO's posture lacked medium/intermediate range missiles that the MLF would have provided, it was less impressively endowed with the capac-

31 See Stromseth, The Origins of Flexible Response; and Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas for discussions of events surrounding the NPG's creation.
ity to strike deep, including into the Soviet Union. But the impending deployment of U.S. F-111 bombers, coupled with Britain's medium bombers, did provide a capacity to perform this mission at least to a limited extent. The ongoing U.S. deployment of ICBMs and SLBMs, and Britain's SLBM program, rounded out NATO's emerging posture with a strong strategic retaliatory force.

NATO was still a good distance removed from developing a common employment doctrine and war-fighting concepts. But it had reached agreement on release of U.S.-controlled nuclear warheads in a crisis, and it was beginning to develop coordinated contingency plans for employing them flexibly in a crisis. Also, it was well on the way to developing operational plans for employing its theater and strategic strike systems, plans that responded to both American and West European concerns. Many questions remained unanswered. But the establishment of the NPG provided an institutional vehicle for addressing them in a forum conducive to agreement and compromise. NATO's nuclear sharing debate was not over; as events were to show, it continued to bedevil the alliance for many years, but it had been settled to the point where it no longer was dividing the alliance to such a degree that progress on other, equally important issues, was impossible.

THE SEARCH FOR CONVENTIONAL SOLUTIONS: INITIAL STEPS

Although the conventional defense issue had slipped from public view as nuclear problems rose to predominance, a great deal had transpired behind the scenes since McNamara's Athens Speech. In the months immediately following, the allies had turned a cold shoulder to McNamara's demand for stronger conventional defenses. By the time of the Ottawa meeting the following spring, however, they had begun to acknowledge that the idea had merit provided it did not become a vehicle for paring back the U.S. nuclear deterrent. Accordingly they agreed at Ottawa to commence an official review of NATO's strategy and requirements, including ways to make the best use of available resources to improve NATO's conventional posture.

McNamara and other U.S. officials set about to use this review, carried out through the vehicle of NATO's "Force Planning Exercise," to press their case for reforming NATO's strategy along the lines discussed at Athens. Force planning had been under way in NATO since the days of the Lisbon goals. During the 1950s, the alliance conducted an annual review, led by military authorities but with civilian participation, intended to harmonize allied contributions with NATO military priorities. In 1961, a "Triennial Review" was adopted. The pace of NATO force changes by now had slowed to the point where a formal review only every three years was deemed adequate, and the new procedure helped allow more time for sober thought, rather than paper-pushing. McNamara set about to breathe greater analytical life into this process by inducing the alliance to examine the interrelationships among strategy, force require-

---

32 For a description of NATO's force planning institutions and McNamara's role in them, see NATO Information Service, NATO: Facts and Figures, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium, 1984.
ments, and available resources. His goal was adoption of a five-year program that would steadily elevate NATO's conventional strength, thereby bringing about strategy reform from below.

Initially McNamara and his aides made some headway. Part of the reason was that they conducted their campaign outside the glare of publicity, thus making possible a more profitable dialogue with the allies. Operating within NATO's private councils during the summer and fall of 1963, they were able to begin persuading the allies that the NATO-Warsaw Pact conventional balance was closer than previously had been appreciated. This had the effect of somewhat softening allied hostility to a NATO conventional buildup.\textsuperscript{33}

Equally important, 1963 saw important strides toward a growing consensus between the United States and West Germany on the role of conventional forces in NATO's military strategy. FRG Defense Minister Strauss's departure from office in late 1962, brought about by his involvement in a political scandal, had cleared the way for a more forthcoming West German stance on McNamara's ideas. The German Army, which had long been skeptical of NATO's dependence on tactical nuclear weapons for battlefield operations, took advantage of the opportunity to nudge Bonn in the direction of an accommodation with the United States. Senior Bundeswehr officers believed that a conventional buildup would help bolster NATO's ability to protect the FRG's forward areas, a key goal of the West German government. This attitude increasingly led Bonn to look favorably on the idea of adopting a new NATO strategy midway between the two extremes, one that called for a combination of nuclear and conventional forces to achieve forward defense.\textsuperscript{34}

The FRG's growing emphasis on greater balance in NATO's posture did not mean that differences between the United States and West Germany had been entirely resolved. Disagreements still remained over such important issues as the nature of the threat, NATO's requirements, and sustainability goals. Moreover, at that time the nuclear sharing issue had not yet been resolved, which constrained Bonn's willingness to embrace conventional defense too wholeheartedly. But Bonn's new stance did mean that sufficient common ground now existed between the United States and West Germany to forge a workable blending of views.

As a result, in November 1963, the NATO Military Committee issued a new draft strategic appraisal, entitled MC 100/1, that seemed to lay the groundwork for adoption of a new NATO military strategy. MC 100/1 called for a forward strategy, rejected the trip-wire concept, and endorsed the principle of options at the conventional, tactical nuclear, and strategic levels. Included was a call for an initially restrained use of nuclear weapons should escalation become necessary. MC 100/1 recognized that NATO's options would depend upon the alliance's success in erecting adequate forces for this purpose. Accordingly, it challenged NATO to make a serious effort to reduce its reliance on nuclear

\textsuperscript{33}See Stromerth's account of how the consensus-building process unfolded within NATO during these years, \textit{The Origins of Flexible Response}.

\textsuperscript{34}See Kelleher, \textit{Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons}, Chaps. 6–8, for an especially thorough analysis of shifting FRG attitudes toward conventional defense in the 1960s.
weapons for dealing with limited aggression by building better conventional defenses.

Had MC 100/1 been formally adopted, NATO might well have gone on to rewrite MC 14/2 as early as 1964 or 1965. Its progress, however, quickly ran into a serious roadblock when the document rose to NATO's political levels for approval. Although many other NATO allies supported MC 100/1, the French, insisting that NATO should retain a trip-wire concept in which enemy aggression would be met by a total nuclear response, vetoed it. They also rejected a proposal to prepare two versions of MC 100/1: one reflecting their views and the other endorsing the Military Committee's draft. Refusing to participate in any exercise that prepared new NATO force goals without agreement on basic strategy, they insisted that the matter be debated by the North Atlantic Council and, if necessary, by the chiefs of state.35

Knowing that the French reaction came directly from de Gaulle and was not subject to change, the United States reacted to this rebuff by deciding to postpone a formal strategy debate, thereby avoiding a showdown with Paris. It decided instead to use the Force Planning Exercise to focus on the concrete details of NATO's conventional force plans. As he led U.S. efforts in this area, McNamara was partly motivated by a desire to achieve greater management efficiency in the use of alliance resources. But more important, he also hoped that by forging alliancewide agreement on the all-important programmatic details, he eventually could guide the alliance into a de facto acceptance of a new military strategy itself.

Given stubborn French opposition even to this enterprise, McNamara's efforts initially encountered tough sledding. But from 1964 onward, progress gradually was made. The Force Planning Exercise steadily developed into a valuable mechanism for ironing out practical disagreements over NATO's defense programs and for reaching consensus on future requirements, improvements measures, and budgetary guidelines. It also served McNamara in his efforts to achieve better coordination among NATO's disparate programs, to prune away unessential weapons, to focus on realistic goals, and to establish priorities. As a result, the greater sense of efficiency and coalition planning that developed within NATO itself helped foster greater enthusiasm for taking conventional defense seriously.36

Important changes were made in NATO's planning machinery during these years. Under McNamara's prodding, the ability of the NATO civilian and military staffs to develop coherent plans was strengthened, and the member nations were brought more intimately into the task of defining requirements, thereby helping ensure that they would be willing to pursue the programs that the alliance was calling on them to execute. By 1966 NATO's machinery had started to acquire some of the sophistication of McNamara's Pentagon, includ-


36In addition to his love for coherent strategy, McNamara was devoted to efficient use of resources, and NATO's posture provided a wealth of opportunities for weeding out redundancy, overlap, and duplication. McNamara made only limited headway but helped establish a precedent for efficiency enhancements aimed at strengthening NATO's defenses.
ing a formal planning process that used NATO's overall military requirements as a basis for providing guidance to the member nations on how to prepare their forces for the years ahead.\footnote{NATO formally credits McNamara with being the original architect of its defense planning process. See NATO Information Service, Nato: Facts and Figures, 1964, pp. 146-148.}

Equally important, the Force Planning Exercise came to give the NATO allies a better understanding of the practical implications of McNamara's ideas. While a complete consensus was still well beyond the realm of possibility, differences on substantive issues had narrowed considerably since 1964. The allies now had a more accurate understanding of the NATO-Warsaw Pact military balance, one suggesting that a viable conventional defense was not beyond NATO's reach. They also had a firm understanding of what stronger conventional defenses would cost and what returns on the battlefield they would provide. Along with this, they had credible reassurances from Washington that a conventional buildup would not result in either the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe or the erosion of extended nuclear deterrence. This left most nations, minus France, in a more positive frame of mind for accepting at least partial steps in the strategy directions that McNamara was advocating.

An especially important motivator was that McNamara had been leading an effort in the United States to refashion American forces to fight a conventional war in Europe. This effort played a huge role in helping him assert leadership in NATO's councils. Growing U.S. strength helped make conventional defense a far more feasible goal, thereby undercutting one of the most powerful arguments against strategy reform. Changes in weapons and doctrine within U.S. forces based in Central Europe often set the terms of reference by which allied plans and programs were developed. In essence, allied commanders tended to follow the lead of the Americans, and when U.S. forces started moving toward conventional defense, thereby opening up the prospect of exciting changes in weapons and tactics, the allies followed. Politically, the growing U.S. investment in conventional defense created enormous pressure on allied governments to follow suit lest Washington be offended and depart. Indeed, American pressures helped allied defense ministries pry money loose from tight-fisted finance ministries. Employing these instruments, McNamara pulled, prodded, cajoled and lured the allies into taking conventional defenses seriously. As the United States led, the allies followed: often far back, but at an accelerating pace nonetheless.

**SACEUR's ROLE**

McNamara's success in persuading the allies to come at least some distance by 1966 was a product of more than his personal efforts. For example, McNamara received useful help from U.S. Army General Lyman Lemnitzer, the new SACEUR. Lemnitzer had succeeded Norstad in early 1963. No nuclear advocate, he was not inclined to push Norstad's plans for nuclear partnership and he maintained a neutral stance on the MLF debate. In general, he agreed with
McNamara's strategic concepts. He believed that NATO should strive to strengthen its conventional forces while not sacrificing its nuclear deterrent, and he acted in this capacity during his tenure, which lasted until 1969.\textsuperscript{38}

In doing so, Lemnitzer represented the opinions of the professional military from most NATO countries. For the most part, NATO's military officers still saw deterrence benefits in a strategy whose public rhetoric stressed nuclear escalation. But they did not share the faith that NATO's political leaders often placed in nuclear weapons as actual instruments of defense. This especially was the case for army officers. Air commanders were more prone to look with favor on nuclear weapons and the greater destructive capacity they provided to the tactical air forces. But ground commanders were more preoccupied with such practical problems as holding terrain and consequently believed that NATO required larger conventional forces rather than just nuclear firepower. As a result, the professional military provided an important source of support for a flexible military strategy and a stronger conventional defense during these turbulent years.

This congruence does not imply that Lemnitzer, SHAPE, and NATO military officers were close allies of McNamara. Lemnitzer did not react favorably either to McNamara's efforts to downgrade NATO's assessment of the Warsaw Pact threat or to his increasingly sanguine views on the military balance. Lemnitzer's reaction partially stemmed from disagreements with McNamara on substantive grounds. In addition, he worried that McNamara's rosy interpretation was providing West European nations a convenient rationale for cutting back on their conventional defense efforts. Lemnitzer also was concerned about the mounting frictions in U.S.-French relations and Washington's growing animosity toward de Gaulle. Although not an admirer of de Gaulle, he tried to moderate between the two sides, and this occasionally led him to distance himself from Washington.

Llemnitzer, however, was knowledgeable about the military details of what was required to improve NATO's defenses in Central Europe and found himself in agreement with McNamara's programmatic thrust. Believing that NATO's forces needed greater firepower and cross-country mobility, he favored procurement of more medium tanks, self-propelled artillery, and armored personnel carriers. He also found NATO's logistic capability lacking and pushed for improvements in it. In short, he was an advocate of modernization, mechanization, and greater staying power, steps needed to configure NATO's forces for armored warfare against the Soviets' tank columns.

Lemnitzer also was a political realist who believed that NATO's future plans should focus on what was realistically achievable. SHAPE studies had concluded that in order to fund all desirable plans, NATO would have to spend at well beyond plausible levels. But these studies also concluded that NATO could remedy many of its deficiencies by pursuing a well-prioritized program costing

\textsuperscript{38}See Jordan, Generals in International Politics, Chap. 5, for details on Lemnitzer's role, pp. 93-121.
substantially less. On political grounds, Lemnitzer was more attracted to the latter approach and favored its incorporation into NATO’s planning. In this area, he and McNamara thought alike.

While Lemnitzer did not have McNamara’s reputation for activism, he made intelligent use of his position to pursue his goals. In NATO’s evolving defense planning process, SACEUR and SHAPE were responsible for interpreting ministerial guidance on military strategy and for coordinating NATO’s efforts to define and establish agreed-upon requirements covering all member nations. They also were responsible for monitoring NATO’s progress and reporting on it to the civilian ministers. This authority provided Lemnitzer important leverage for influencing not only NATO’s planning goals but also specific programs being implemented by individual nations. He used it to advantage by channeling NATO and its member nations in the direction of a focused, balanced, and realistic conventional improvement effort. Partly as a result of his efforts, NATO’s military forces in Central Europe slowly but steadily began moving in the directions that McNamara was urging. MC 14/2 officially remained in place, but the plans and programs required to lay the basis for a new strategy began to take shape.

Lemnitzer also encouraged this trend in other ways. During 1963–1965, he helped guide the formation of the ACE Mobile Force, a multinational unit of 5,000 soldiers that together formed the equivalent of a large brigade and six air squadrons. Contributions were made by the United States, Britain, West Germany, Canada, Belgium, and Italy. The purpose of the ACE Mobile Force was to provide NATO an ability to react quickly to a crisis, particularly in northern Norway and Turkey. While it was configured with nuclear weapons, its main purpose was to give NATO an early conventional option along the distant flank areas so vulnerable to the kind of limited Soviet incursion that McNamara and others feared. For parallel reasons, NATO in 1967 established a combined naval force under SACLANT. Named the “Standing Naval Force Atlantic” (STANAVFORLANT), this force was composed of destroyer class ships from several nations. Flying the NATO flag, its purpose was both to foster combined training in peacetime and to provide NATO maritime options in a crisis on the northern flank. A similar NATO force was to be established in the Mediterranean in 1969.

Lemnitzer also initiated the process of altering NATO’s tactical military doctrine in the direction of flexible response and conventional defense. This trend started in 1963, especially in command post exercises (CPX), which tested operational concepts and command and control procedures. Gradually it spread to NATO’s field training exercises (FTX), which involve field maneuvers by actual units. It became particularly noticeable in 1964, when NATO field exercises envisioned a first phase of fighting without immediate resort to nuclear

---

39 In particular, gains could be made by improving NATO’s existing forces through modernization, readiness, and sustainability measures, rather than a costly force expansion. For example, an existing army division could be improved at one-fourth the cost of fielding an entirely new division (my estimate).

40 For more detail, see NATO Information Service, NATO: Facts and Figures, 1964.
weapons followed by a graduated process of escalation once the threshold had been crossed. The following year, the French refused to participate in the "FALLEX" exercise, which openly departed from MC 14/2 by testing flexible response. Notwithstanding Paris's standoffish attitude, SHAPE's conversion to a conventional defense doctrine was not complete as of the mid-1960s. Senior NATO officers still believed that the Soviets would overrun their forces rather quickly and that NATO's edge in tactical nuclear warheads provided a means for staving off defeat. Their tendency to rely heavily on tactical nuclear defense plans did not change until the mid-1970s after NATO's strategy had been altered and the Soviets had finally deployed a full panoply of tactical nuclear weapons to their own forces. But the changes instituted under Lemnitzer helped launch NATO on the long road to flexibility in this critically important area.41

TRENDS IN ALLIANCE POLITICS

These efforts by McNamara, Lemnitzer, and others were aided by important changes in allied politics.42 In London, Wilson's Labour government was less prone than its predecessor to criticizing McNamara's logic. On the negative side, the Defence Ministry was entangled with budgetary problems brought about by Britain's need to fund not only its traditionally large navy and the BAOR, but also the new Polaris submarine program. Partly for this reason, Defence Minister Denis Healey was unenthusiastic about a conventional buildup that was budgetarily infeasible and would further compound his problems. But he also acknowledged the dangers of relying too heavily on tactical nuclear weapons and favored a limited effort to improve NATO's conventional defenses at least in the early stages.43

In Germany, politics had undergone an even greater transformation. In late 1963, Adenauer had resigned and was replaced by Ludwig Erhard of the CDU; Defence Minister Strauss was replaced by Kai-Uwe von Hassel. Less enamored with de Gaulle than Adenauer, both Erhard and von Hassel were oriented to maintaining close relations with Washington and were more receptive than their predecessors to McNamara's ideas. Like Strauss, von Hassel continued to insist that the purpose of NATO strategy must be deterrence rather than preparing to fight an actual war. But he did not openly question the American nuclear commitment and he acknowledged that in order to deter credibly, NATO's posture must be able to react to all levels of aggression with an appro-

41See Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, and Stromseth, The Origins of Flexible Response, for a discussion of French reactions to the introduction of flexible response concepts into NATO's military exercises in the 1960s.

42For in-depth appraisals of allied political trends in the mid-1960s and attitudes toward NATO, see Hoffman, Gulliver's Troubles, Chap. 11. See also Timothy Stanley, NATO in Transition, Praeger, New York, 1965.

appropriate military response. To Washington, this was a welcome breath of fresh air.\textsuperscript{44}

In late 1966, Erhard resigned and was replaced by Kurt-George Kiesinger, who headed a coalition government made up of the CDU and SPD. Gerhard Schroeder, a moderate, became defense minister and the SPD’s Willy Brandt was named foreign minister. Shortly thereafter Brandt began launching his controversial Ostpolitik, which was aimed at improving relations with the Soviets and resolving disputes over Berlin and Germany’s borders. At the same time, Brandt wanted to retain Germany’s anchor in NATO and to preserve close ties with Washington. As a result, he made important bows in Washington’s direction by deemphasizing Bonn’s earlier insistence on gaining greater control over NATO nuclear weapons, by showing a willingness to sign the NPT, and by adopting a receptive stance to some of McNamara’s ideas. These policies all helped facilitate Washington’s efforts to reform NATO’s strategy.

These political changes in key West European capitals were accompanied by growing frictions within the EEC that pushed Bonn closer to Washington. De Gaulle’s refusal in 1963 to allow Great Britain to join the EEC had been accompanied by growing frictions within the community over agricultural policy that led France in 1965 to withdraw its representatives from the Council of Ministers and other EEC institutions. Underlying the dispute was sharp disagreement over the EEC’s future. De Gaulle continued to seek a loose economic union that would not be enlarged, whereas the FRG was aspiring to a community that would be both enlarged and deeply integrated. The result was serious damage to the EEC, which was left in a stall pattern, and to Franco-German relations. Tensions were especially high while Erhard remained in office, but did not abate appreciably even when Kiesinger, a Francophile, assumed office. Estrangement from Paris left Bonn wanting to improve its ties with Washington, and more amenable to strategy reform.\textsuperscript{45}

Along with these political changes in 1963–1966 came an important evolution in official West German thinking about NATO’s military doctrine that further narrowed the gap between Bonn and Washington on strategy reform. A particularly important development was SHAPE’s announcement in September 1963 that NATO’s first line of defense was being moved forward to the demarcation line dividing the FRG from the GDR and Czechoslovakia. With this change, which had been approved only grudgingly by Britain and France, NATO had now officially committed itself to a forward defense of all of the FRG’s territory in ways that precluded an early resort to the fluid, mobile, retreat-oriented tactics of the 1950s. This shift was greeted enthusiastically in Bonn and led to a more relaxed stance on Washington’s strategy agenda. The new concept meant that a greater emphasis on conventional defense and flexible response would not be purchased at the expense of forward defense, one of the FRG’s most im-

\textsuperscript{44}Kelleher, \textit{Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons}, provides more detail on FRG political changes.

portant security goals. As a result, it cleared the way to a more cooperative relationship between Bonn and Washington.⁴⁶

Essentially, the United States traded its endorsement of forward defense for the FRG’s support of flexible response. While the new doctrine called for a strong defense effort at the inter-German border, it did not mandate the use of nuclear weapons until Soviet forces had ruptured NATO’s frontal positions and had advanced far enough to begin approaching the rear boundary of NATO’s forward corps sectors. This concept placed the point of escalation somewhere in the vicinity of the Weser-Lech river line, the same line that had been the location of NATO’s defense positions, and therefore the escalation trigger, under the old doctrine. As a result, flexibility was built into the new doctrine by allowing for tactical, localized loss of terrain before a nuclear response became necessary. Even in the worst of circumstances, NATO’s forward defenses seemed likely to hold out for several days before being operationally breached. Thus Washington’s emphasis on at least delaying escalation was not compromised by the forward defense doctrine.

The new doctrine left the United States beholden to the FRG to implement forward defense in ways consistent with the spirit of flexible response. But it also made the Germans dependent on the Americans for the successful construction of a forward defense posture. Although the other West European allies had finally relented to the FRG’s insistent calls for a forward defense, they did so with reluctance and with no visible intention of increasing their force contributions to NATO. Since West Germany’s force levels were frozen by the 1954 Paris Agreement and by budgetary realities, the FRG government was left with no other alternative but the United States as a source for the required force commitments. This dependence, in turn, gave Washington a certain amount of leverage over Bonn’s policy decision. Out of this mutual dependence and mutual influence came the seeds of a growing partnership on NATO’s future strategy.

The first signs of partnership began appearing in 1963 when the United States and the FRG initiated periodic exchanges on mutual defense matters. This process began with official meetings at the defense-minister and chief-of-staff levels but soon grew in scope and breadth. Eventually several joint study groups were created that brought American and German staff experts together in a forum encouraging detailed study and dialogue. One of the effects was to infuse the West German government with a host of operations research, analytical, and planning techniques that McNamara’s Pentagon had developed. More important, the process encouraged the kind of detailed analysis that could not help but promote a convergence of views.⁴⁷

One of the most important issues addressed in these years was the feasibility of conventional defense in Central Europe. By late 1963, the two governments

---

⁴⁶For further analysis of NATO operational doctrine in these years, see Karber and Whitley, “The Operational Realm,” in Golden et al. (eds.), NATO at Forty: Change, Continuity, and Prospects, Chap. 7.

⁴⁷See Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons, for further analysis. See also Stromseth, The Origins of Flexible Response.
were able to announce that the gap in their threat estimates had been largely closed. Nonetheless, the Germans continued to insist that NATO’s force levels were too low for a conventional forward defense. NATO’s peacetime posture by this time was beginning to approach the 30-division level that had long been mandated by official force goals for a nuclear strategy. But the Germans now insisted that the new doctrine would require 35–40 divisions. Without more forces, Bonn maintained, a purely conventional response would be feasible only against a limited Soviet attack. Against full-scale aggression, the Germans argued, NATO would be compelled to resort early to small battlefield nuclear weapons followed promptly by rapid escalation, including widespread strikes against Warsaw Pact mobilization centers and axes of advance.

The American response to this stance called for a more lengthy conventional resistance at least until Soviet goals had become known, a process that was likely to require several days. With respect to NATO’s force levels, the Americans did not refute German estimates of requirements but did point out that additional U.S. reinforcements might arrive in time to make up the difference and that, in any event, a modest expansion of German and allied reserve formations was not precluded by legal agreements, budgetary realities, or official force goals. The dialogue at this stage ended inconclusively, but favorably enough to nudge the Germans toward expanded conventional defense efforts. As evidence, Bonn agreed to bring the Bundeswehr up to authorized manpower levels, to equip its army units equivalent to U.S. standards, and to modestly enlarge its Territorial Defense Forces (reserves).

During 1964–1965, the Bundeswehr staff conducted a series of defense studies on their own that were briefed to their American counterparts. These studies upgraded Bonn’s earlier assessment of conventional defense prospects as long as NATO’s force improvement efforts were accelerated along required lines. With respect to nuclear doctrine, the West Germans now were talking in terms of a ladder of escalation that would begin with conventional resistance at the border and then would escalate selectively. Their concepts envisioned the limited use of atomic demolition munitions, air defense weapons, and nuclear tube artillery to slow enemy attacks and channel them with the twin goals of reducing the loss of territory and sending a last deterrent warning to the Soviets. Only then would full-scale theaterwide nuclear operations commence, leading to a strategic nuclear exchange.

The U.S. response was mixed, with American Army officers expressing skepticism about the viability of even limited nuclear operations. In the end, the gap was not closed entirely, but it was narrowed enough to make collaborative action possible. Moreover, the issues that were left open were largely theoretical and inherently irresolvable in the first place. In essence, both sides increasingly had come to the conclusion that NATO’s defense prospects depended heavily on whether the Warsaw Pact offense was executed efficiently, and whether NATO’s forces themselves responded effectively. These were uncertainties about which forecasts could not be made in advance because they were likely to be influenced not only by such physically measurable phenomena
as buildup rates and force levels, but also by such intangibles as morale, training, and leadership.

In other words, NATO might be a distinct underdog, but if it fought well, it stood a chance, and all the more so if the enemy fought poorly. In the event of a successful enemy attack against an ineffective NATO defense, the alliance's posture seemed likely to crumble quite early. But in the case of a clumsy, poorly executed attack against a well-performed defense, NATO's prospects appeared favorable. For this reason, neither early defeat nor a successful conventional campaign could be ruled out of NATO's planning framework. The risk of defeat compelled the alliance to preserve a strong nuclear option, while the prospect of success created a powerful incentive to strengthen NATO's conventional posture wherever feasible. Together, both prospects provided the Americans and the Germans common ground for agreement on NATO's strategy and force goals.

This movement toward accord was to some degree marred by growing U.S.-German friction over balance-of-payments problems, German armaments procurement in the United States, and overall economic relations. In 1963-1965, Erhard had expressed gratitude for the U.S. security guarantee by mobilizing an EEC agreement to permit American business to invest heavily in Europe. Additionally, his government helped spur the Kennedy round of GATT negotiations, which were moving steadily toward success in 1967 through a one-third cut in tariffs. In 1963, the FRG also agreed to continue purchasing U.S. military equipment and support systems to help offset U.S. defense expenditures in Germany. FRG purchases of U.S. F-104 fighters, naval frigates, and other systems had helped achieve this goal. Even so, the costs of stationing U.S. forces in Europe remained high, U.S. balance-of-payments deficits were on the rise again, and the U.S. economy was coming under serious strain because of the Vietnam War. The days when the United States could make major overseas security commitments oblivious of the economic costs were coming to an end, and Washington was beginning to turn to West Germany to power the world economy. Preoccupied with its own prosperity and mounting EEC obligations, Bonn reacted to Washington's growing demands with misgivings. Growing U.S. pressure for greater German offset purchases at this juncture collided with an economy drive by Bonn to rationalize its defense spending. The result was a visible rise in tensions that left both governments increasingly questioning their contribution to each other's security. These problems demanded early resolution.

The growing financial drain brought about by stationing American and British forces in West Germany led Washington and London to approach Bonn in 1966 with demands for greater German offset payments. Because the FRG's defense budget was no longer growing, Bonn demurred at the idea of buying more American weapons, thereby bringing about a temporary crisis. After prolonged negotiations, the matter was finally resolved when Bonn agreed to purchase U.S. savings bonds to offset the drain of dollars from the U.S. economy. Additionally, Bonn agreed not to dump U.S. currency on the international market in ways that might weaken the dollar. Britain's financial problems were
alleviated by a U.S. agreement to purchase British weapons. With this accord, West Germany and the United States found themselves closer on defense issues than at any time in the past four years.\footnote{For a detailed account, see Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, New York, 1971, pp. 776–792.}

Although these trends in U.S.-German relations were influential in expediting strategy reform, an equally important development, which had the effect of removing a formidable barrier to this step, was France’s withdrawal from NATO’s integrated military structure in March 1966. Although France remained in the alliance itself, NATO’s forces, headquarters, and logistic facilities in France were compelled to leave French soil. Meanwhile French forces were entirely removed from assignment under SACEUR’s command.\footnote{Harrison, *The Reluctant Ally*, pp. 134–166.} France’s withdrawal complicated NATO’s defense plans by removing, on paper, several divisions that were important to the conventional defense and by introducing a nuclear wild card into the strategy calculus. This dark cloud, however, contained a silver lining. De Gaulle had been a vocal critic of McNamara’s ideas in 1962 and had not softened his stance since then. France’s membership on NATO’s key military and civilian committees had given him a powerful lever for blocking any strategy change that did not meet his pleasure. By withdrawing from NATO’s military planning staffs, he largely deprived himself of this lever. He now was better able to exert complete control over French military doctrine, and he exercised this authority by realigning French forces to execute an independent military strategy; but he was no longer able to prevent the alliance from adopting a different strategy of its own.

The United States, albeit initially angered by de Gaulle’s rebuff, promptly recovered its political bearings and set about to take advantage of the opportunity. During the spring of 1966, Washington began stepping up its efforts to lead NATO in the direction of stronger conventional defenses and strategy reform. Freed from its most persistent critic, it now found itself facing a more amenable set of allies and a situation conducive to its policy goals. As events turned out, it was to be successful in 1967, and in a way that many found almost anticlimactic.
Coming in the wake of de Gaulle's withdrawal, the meeting of NATO's defense ministers in July 1966 was a more auspicious occasion than normal. In June, the North Atlantic Council had met in ministerial session to make decisions on how NATO would immediately go about adjusting to France's withdrawal. The July session of defense ministers was devoted to long-range defense planning issues. There, McNamara adopted a positive, upbeat stance. He underscored the U.S. commitment to a forward defense of West Germany and said that France's withdrawal need not cripple the alliance. He repeated his assertion that NATO's strategy required a strong conventional option and that the Soviet military threat was manageable. But he went on to say that NATO's defenses were deficient in many areas and that they needed strengthening.

The problem, he asserted, was not that the alliance's overall defense effort was grossly inadequate but rather that NATO was not applying its resources efficiently enough. Also, he claimed, the United States was bearing too large a share of NATO's defense burdens, and the allies had to do more. To help solve both of these problems, he proposed a two-phased NATO-wide improvement effort. In the near term, he urged, NATO should pursue moderate measures aimed at strengthening the quality of its present M-Day forces by improving air bases, buying larger war reserve stocks, and other measures. For the long term, he said, NATO should pursue plans to increase its mobilization capability and field larger reserve forces. The entire enterprise, he proposed, should cover a ten-year period.\(^1\)

At the end of the meeting, the ministers formally adopted new procedures, based on McNamara's management model in the Pentagon, for reviewing NATO's defense plans on a regular basis. The system they adopted called on NATO to develop a formal five-year plan that would identify both future force requirements and national programs to meet them. This plan was to be reviewed and updated regularly, thereby providing NATO a coherent basis for adjusting its military forces to evolving circumstances. The first plan, which was to draw on the NATO analytical review that had been under way since 1964, was to be formally approved the following year.\(^2\)

\(^1\)See McNamara's congressional testimony in 1966 and 1967, multiple volumes.
The results of this meeting helped raise NATO's spirits by conveying a sense of optimism and purpose. As the summer unfolded, however, events seemed to be leading NATO in the opposite direction. British defense minister Denis Healey announced that the United Kingdom, facing a growing budget crunch, wanted to cut back the BAOR. Also, the Belgians announced a plan to cut two of their six brigades from the active army. Similar political rumbles were heard from Bonn. Compounding things was the Vietnam War, which was causing personnel turbulence in U.S. forces in Europe. In Washington, growing complaints about balance-of-payment problems and overall dissatisfaction with allied defense efforts were leading influential congressmen to begin questioning the U.S. military presence in Europe. To further muddy NATO's waters, the Warsaw Pact that year issued a formal call for détente in East-West relations, thereby raising additional questions in many Western circles about NATO's raison d'être.3

U.S. officials grew worried that these negative trends might reinforce each other and bring about a downturn across the entire alliance. To help prevent this, President Johnson reached agreement with Prime Minister Wilson and Chancellor Erhard that autumn to embark upon a searching reappraisal of NATO's security agenda. In response, the NAC met again in December in ministerial session and agreed to undertake this study. The NAC called for a thorough analysis of East-West relations, inter-allied relations, NATO's defense policy, and relations with other countries. This effort became known as the "Harmel Exercise," named after the Belgian Foreign Minister.4

As 1966 came to an end, NATO thus was embroiled in formal reviews in two different but equally fundamental areas: broad security policy and future defense programs. It was in this context that McNamara and other U.S. leaders came to the conclusion that the time finally was appropriate to formalize a change in NATO's military strategy itself. The events of the past year had reinforced their judgment that MC 14/2 had proven to be a mistake because it allowed the allies not to take conventional defense preparedness seriously. Since strategy still lay at the heart of NATO's problems, they concluded, a new statement of purpose would be required to help turn the alliance around and restore energy to its defense efforts.5

The United States therefore drafted an internal proposal for a new NATO military strategy and shortly thereafter presented it to the alliance as a replacement for MC 14/2. While the allies did not agree entirely with the American draft, many were responsive to Washington's underlying concern. As a result, the alliance responded by agreeing to undertake a third study to run in parallel with the other two, to entail a formal review of NATO's military strategy with the

---

3Meeting at Bucharest, the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee articulated a vague concept of what détente would entail. But because tangible progress had been made on negotiating the Test Ban Treaty, the Hot Line Agreement, the NPT and other matters, the statement was taken to be more than hollow rhetoric.
5See accounts in Stromseth, The Origins of Flexible Response; and Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas.
American proposal as a basis for discussion. This effort was successfully conducted over the succeeding months by the NATO Military Committee. Its results started becoming manifest in May 1967, when the Military Committee draft was released and the Defense Planning Committee (DPC) issued new guidance to help shape preparation of NATO's upcoming force plan. The conclusion was reached at the landmark ministerial meeting of the NAC on December 12, 1967.

At this meeting, the ministers made three important decisions that were based on the results of NATO's three studies. First, they approved the Harmel Report, the final product of the Harmel Exercise. This report launched NATO on a dual-track policy course aimed at both pursuing détente with the Soviets and improving NATO's defenses. Second, the ministers formally endorsed NATO's first five-year defense plan, which laid out future directions for force improvement efforts through 1972. Third, they approved an entirely new "strategic concept" to replace MC 14/2. The document that they authorized bore the title "MC 14/3, Overall Strategic Concept for the Defence of the NATO Area." The strategy it contained was labeled "flexibility in response." Stated in more colloquial terms, the new strategy was one of flexible response.6

**FLEXIBLE RESPONSE: CONTENTS**

The strategy of flexible response can best be judged on the basis of its internal contents and its staying power rather than its shaky political origins and the widespread criticism that accompanied its adoption. MC 14/3, a document heavily laced with internal compromises and unresolved ambiguities, was a product of a stressful transatlantic political struggle that frayed NATO's edges during the 1960s. But once it had been created, it slowly began to develop a life force of its own. This became increasingly clear over the following two decades. During these years, the strategy debates of the 1960s receded into the background and NATO's members increasingly began to embrace the guidelines that flexible response laid down. As a result, MC 14/3 steadily gained acceptance in Western Europe, acquired an independent stature, and began driving NATO's defense plans in the directions that its supporters originally had envisioned. In retrospect, what stands out is not MC 14/3's difficult birth and fledgling childhood, but rather its remarkably long, stable adulthood.7

The reason MC 14/3 endured is that its roots were more deeply planted in military strategy and alliance politics than was apparent at first glance. MC 14/3 reflected American thinking in many ways, especially by endorsing stronger conventional defenses. But it also included a number of changes mandated by the allies, the main thrust of which was to preserve a strong role for nuclear deterrence. Because of these changes, MC 14/3 was not, as some

---


critics charged, a strategy that Washington had hammered down the throats of unwilling allies. Even in 1967, the general reaction across Western Europe was one of broad, if not visibly enthusiastic, endorsement. This included West Germany and other nations that originally had been highly critical of McNamara's ideas. Although these nations were left harboring some reservations about flexible response, the seeds of acceptance were planted deeply enough in them to grow. In particular, within a decade West Germany emerged as one of MC 14/3's principal exponents, as did the United Kingdom.

While MC 14/3 was influenced heavily by U.S. and NATO analytical studies during 1961–1967, it also was a product of outright negotiation and bargaining that took place during its formal alliancewide coordination. As a result, it often has been characterized as being a strategy erected on a foundation of political compromises. This portrayal is accurate in the sense that MC 14/3 bore the stamp of no single nation nor a preordained scheme of any single man, including McNamara. But to imply that MC 14/3 was an unintelligible strategy providing unusable guidelines for planning is wide of the mark.

The process by which MC 14/3 was forged undeniably was heavily political, but the compromise outcome, while not perfect by anyone's standard, was nonetheless coherent. Indeed, MC 14/3 turned out to be a rather insightful document, one that suggested careful strategic thought as well as compromise. This, at least, is how MC 14/3 generally came to be viewed in official NATO circles as the Cold War dragged on. The reason is that MC 14/3 reflected a synthesis of views on both sides of the Atlantic and a balanced treatment of the multiple objectives that were being pursued, to varying degrees, by all alliance members. MC 14/3 thus faced outward as well as inward, and it did more than merely preserve a facade of alliance unity. We can best illustrate how this result was achieved by first reviewing how MC 14/3's architects went about addressing the new strategy's key objectives and then by examining the contents of the strategy itself.  

NATO's members all agreed that the primary objective of the new strategy was to be deterrence of enemy attack on any member, territory, or vital interest in Western Europe. To the extent that controversy still existed in 1967, it was not over deterrence per se, but rather over the exact balance between nuclear and conventional forces that should be struck to achieve this goal. While the allies had come to accept that some degree of conventional strength was required, they preferred to continue placing heavy reliance on nuclear weapons. The United States favored a greater, albeit not exclusive, reliance on conventional forces. The process of negotiation over MC 14/3 in this area focused on the search for a common ground between these two approaches.

The idea behind deterrence, then and now, is to persuade the enemy not to attack by means of making the stakes, risks, and costs of aggression far outweigh any rational calculus of potential gain. In MC 14/2's heyday, NATO had

---

6Material in this section is drawn from multiple sources, including academic accounts and interviews. See Stromseth, The Origins of Flexible Response; and Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons, for similar descriptions of MC 14/3's origins and contents but more critical appraisals of the strategy's coherence.
simply assumed that the very threat of nuclear reprisal, especially by U.S. strategic forces, was enough to achieve deterrence in virtually any circumstance. But since then, the United States had come to develop a more insightful realization of the subtleties of deterrence and the limitations of nuclear threats. It had concluded that to persuade an aggressor not to attack at a time when he might be desperately driven to do so, the deterrent threat must be credible.

To McNamara, "credibility" meant that in a crisis the Soviets must unambiguously perceive that NATO possessed not only the physical capability to enforce the deterrent, but also the will to do so. The core problem with nuclear threats, he argued, was that they might not be credible against nonnuclear aggression because they would obligate NATO to run equally grave risks of its own. A purely nuclear strategy would require NATO not only to respond to an enemy nuclear attack but also to be willing to initiate nuclear war in the face of purely conventional aggression. This, in turn, meant that the alliance would have to be politically capable of reaching an internal consensus to start a process of escalation that could culminate in the physical destruction of NATO's nations themselves.\(^9\)

In a crisis, McNamara and other U.S. officials reasoned, deterrence would hinge not on whether NATO actually could muster the will to execute its nuclear threats, but instead on how the Soviets appraised NATO's political will in advance. Doubtless, the Americans felt, the Soviets would not lightly dismiss NATO's stated intent to escalate, especially if it was backed up with adequate forces to do so. But whether this threat would absolutely inhibit them from engaging in risk-taking behavior, especially in desperate circumstances, was a more difficult matter. As the United States argued, there always would be a risk that the Soviets, sensing in advance the extreme reservations that NATO's leaders would face at the moment of truth, might discount NATO's threat. Put another way, the Soviets might conclude that the stakes in some future crisis might justify a decision to test NATO's resolve. This could be the case especially in a situation in which a successful war provided Soviet leaders an avenue to avoid some severe political setback, such as the crumbling of their East European empire or communist rule in the USSR itself.\(^10\)

Unfortunately, there was no reliable way to ascertain how the Soviets were thinking about the complex psychological dynamics of deterrence. Their publicly available strategy documents at the time suggested a proclivity to believe that any NATO-Warsaw Pact war quickly would become nuclear because of escalation by NATO. But elementary logic suggested that in an actual crisis, the Soviets would have no incentive to seek out a nuclear war if it was not thrust upon them. Further, their past behavior in Europe and elsewhere suggested

---

\(^9\) McNamara's reasoning for all of MC 14/3's objectives is addressed in his annual posture statements for 1965–1967.

that in a crisis they would be prudently careful, as well as clever enough to
minimize the risks to themselves while maximizing the ambiguity facing NATO.

Moreover, the evidence from their military programs implied a complex view
of war that went well beyond any exclusive preoccupation with nuclear
weapons. During the 1960s the Soviets had embarked on an ambitious nuclear
buildup. But they also had begun to equip their ground and tactical air forces,
which previously had been structured primarily for nuclear war, with weapons
that commonly are associated with conventional combat. This trend suggested
that, their public rhetoric aside, the Soviets had reached a decision to be pre-
pared for either nuclear or conventional war, without prejudging the outcome.
It also implied that the Soviet government was willing to spend the vast sums
required to be prepared quickly to prosecute a conventional war to completion
if the need presented itself. Because decisions of this sort consume enormous
national resources, they are seldom taken lightly. Normally, they reflect con-
scious, carefully planned intent. This certainly seemed to hold true for Soviet
defense policy in the 1960s.11

In the face of this emerging Soviet strategy and force posture, the United
States was particularly concerned about limited contingencies and enemy
“salami slice” tactics. There could be no doubt, Washington believed, that
NATO would respond in kind to a nuclear attack and that it would risk nuclear
escalation in any conventional war in which the West’s political survival was
openly at stake. But, the United States argued, what about an incident at sea or
a probing attack on Norway or Turkey? Or for that matter, what about a large
conventional attack in Central Europe with ambiguous origins? Or an attack
advertised by Moscow as a product of “limited” and negotiable political goals?
How would the United States respond to the prospect of NATO crossing the
nuclear threshold in these situations? Indeed, how would the West European
allies themselves respond? Equally important, how would the Soviets assess the
credibility of NATO’s nuclear threats in these ambiguous circumstances?

To the United States, these question marks did not imply that nuclear
weapons should be removed entirely from the deterrent equation. But they did
suggest that NATO’s deterrent strategy, especially for limited war, would have
to be based on threats that were credible in the eyes of both NATO’s capitals
and Moscow. This requirement meant that NATO’s posture would have to in-
clude forces that the alliance could be relied upon actually to use in the full
range of a crisis that might erupt. While the Soviets might doubt that NATO
would employ nuclear forces in all contingencies, they would be unlikely to
doubt NATO’s willingness to meet limited aggression with a commensurate re-
sponse. To the United States, unambiguously strong conventional forces were
needed for this purpose.

These then were the U.S. arguments. For their part, the allies were not pre-
pared to concede that nuclear forces were unimportant to the deterrence of
limited attacks. Nor were they enthusiastic about the kind of costly conven-
tional buildup that would enable NATO to fight a war of unlimited duration.

11See Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe.
thereby suggesting that NATO would prefer to accept the conventional destruction of Western Europe rather than escalating. But they had come to grant that Washington’s worries about nuclear credibility were valid. This led them to agree that a conventional buildup of moderate proportions made sense. While their specific positions differed somewhat from one nation to the next, they had in mind a posture that would give NATO a viable defense at least in the early stages and, if affordable, perhaps longer. Accordingly, they agreed to incorporate language to this effect in the new strategy.

A second objective guiding MC 14/3’s formulation—defense—similarly pushed the new strategy in the direction of a stronger conventional posture. At first glance, the goal of “defense” seemed synonymous with deterrence. But when the operational details were considered, defense took on a sufficiently different meaning to be treated as a separate entity in military planning. The main distinction here was that while “deterrence” focused on how to shape the enemy’s political decisions before combat began, “defense” addressed how NATO actually should fight a war once it started. In presuming that deterrence had failed, defense was concerned with NATO’s ability to physically prevail on the battlefield and to achieve its wartime ends. These ends in theory might have included preventing the Soviets from seizing and holding territory, denying them other operational aims, and competing successfully in the grim attrition process that also drives combat. Plausibly they also could have included war-termination aims, such as launching counterattacks against enemy forces and territory to gain bargaining leverage. Whatever the case, they were defined in practical political-military terms.

Deterrence can become identical with defense when the former is measured in terms of the latter. But normally the requirements of defense are regarded as being potentially larger than deterrence. Because deterrence is achieved by manipulating perceptions and risk-taking propensities, an enemy plausibly can be bluffed into exercising restraint by less than adequate forces. Deterrence thus requires sufficient forces to undermine the attacker’s confidence of victory and to confront him with the expectation of high risks and costs. But defense requires sufficient forces to give the defender confidence in his ability to repel an attack physically, and to do so at acceptable risks and costs. As a result, defense can be achieved only by forces that meet stern tests of sufficiency, tests that can be subjected to physical measurement by both alliances. According to traditional military planning standards, this goal is attained only when the defender’s forces are sufficiently powerful to confidently execute specific military missions on the battlefield. This does not necessarily require the defender’s forces to be as large as the attacker’s posture. Because the defender often enjoys such classical advantages as knowledge of the terrain and prepared positions, to some degree he can afford to fight outnumbered. But the defense objective does require a posture that is physically large enough to cover the terrain it is defending and to execute a coherent military strategy. This tends to elevate force needs beyond the more limited requirements of deterrence.

A thorough understanding of how the defense objective could best be achieved led MC 14/3’s drafters to reach negative conclusions about any exclu-
sive reliance on nuclear forces. The United States was the first to arrive at this conclusion; many allies initially had been reluctant even to address the troublesome issue of how NATO actually would defend itself. But as their strategic thinking matured, they gradually came to see merit in the U.S. position.

A key issue in NATO's deliberations was whether small NATO forces could rely on tactical and theater nuclear weapons to offset any deficiencies against a large Warsaw Pact attack (80–100 divisions). Nuclear weapons provided enormous firepower that, it originally was thought, could help make up the difference. But they suffered from the drawback that they could only inflict damage on enemy forces: They could not occupy space or seize key terrain features. Although they potentially could deny the enemy his battlefield objectives, they were often unable to help NATO pursue many of its own defensive aims. Beyond this, an equally important operational question loomed large, one that initially was perceived only by U.S. Army officers but eventually came to be recognized throughout NATO professional military circles: What would happen once the Soviets acquired a full panoply of tactical and theater nuclear weapons of their own?\textsuperscript{12}

At the time, NATO had available over 7,000 nuclear warheads in Europe. These warheads were distributed among a host of delivery systems, including nuclear artillery, short-range missiles, and tactical air bombs for deeper strikes in the enemy rear areas. As a result, NATO enjoyed a definite lead over the Warsaw Pact in this area. The Soviets, however, were hardly unarmed. Already they had begun fielding high-yield FROG and SCUD missiles for battlefield use as well as impressive theater bomber and missile forces for strikes against NATO's rear areas. With these systems, the Soviets were not able to conduct the highly discriminating battlefield strikes that NATO could mount, but they could conduct massive terrain-fire operations to blanket NATO's forces and installations with lethal blast and overpressure. This gave them a strong capability for a theaterwide nuclear blitzkrieg. Beyond this, the prospect loomed that within a few years, the Soviets were likely to acquire the tube artillery and tactical air bombs that would enable them to match NATO in battlefield nuclear operations as well.

NATO's new military strategy thus had to be designed on the principle of eventual nuclear parity on the European battlefield. In this context, careful analysis suggested that NATO could no longer afford to rely on its nuclear strength to offset its conventional disadvantage in Central Europe. In fact, precisely the opposite seemed to be the case. This disturbing conclusion derived partly from analysis of the dynamics of massing forces on the battlefield. During the 1950s, both sides had learned to disperse their ground forces to reduce their vulnerability. This meant that to gain destructive benefit from nuclear strikes, especially with the low-yield tactical weapons that were coming to dominate its inventory, NATO needed to compel the Soviets to mass their forces in a limited area. But the only way to accomplish this goal was for NATO first to mass itself, thereby denying dispersed Soviet forces the ability to continue their

\textsuperscript{12}See Enthoven and Smith, \textit{How Much Is Enough}?
advance against NATO's now firm defense positions. This step would expose NATO's forces to preemptive destruction by Soviet terrain-fire warheads before Soviet ground units themselves had become vulnerable. These nuclear fires would enable advancing Soviet units to rip large holes in NATO's defense line and then advance quickly through, without massing in ways that would expose them to destruction from NATO's strikes in return. As a result, nuclear weapons seemed to confer important operational advantages on the attacker, not the defender.

Also, nuclear weapons seemed to be the friend of the side with the larger, not smaller, ground forces. Even apart from the disadvantages of massing dynamics, nuclear weapons did not automatically promise to alter the critical exchange rate (the ratio of forces killed on both sides) in favor of the smaller force. As a result, they did not enable the defender to compensate for his lack of adequate size. Their main effect would merely be to accelerate the lethal pace of attrition on the battlefield. At best, they promised to completely destroy all forces on both sides, while simultaneously devastating the surrounding West European countryside. At worst, they promised merely to speed up the war and hasten the outcome, thereby making things worse for NATO rather than better. NATO had strong reasons for slowing down the pace of combat to give its mobilization efforts time to take hold. The Warsaw Pact would benefit from a faster war by limiting NATO's reinforcement time. Consequently, NATO seemed to have an incentive for avoiding nuclear war, not fostering it.

These troublesome considerations led a growing number of U.S. and allied planners to conclude that NATO no longer could turn to tactical and theater nuclear weapons as a military cure-all. Equally important, NATO's planners concluded that conventional and nuclear operations were not separate phenomena on the battlefield. An ineffective initial conventional defense by NATO seemed likely to render a later tactical nuclear defense more difficult. By contrast, a successful conventional phase seemed likely to make the nuclear phase a more manageable proposition. It promised to reduce the amount of enemy forces to be destroyed while preserving a larger number of defending forces to conduct the required nuclear strikes and capitalize on the results. For these reasons, NATO's planners increasingly came to the conclusion that tactical and theater nuclear weapons should not be viewed as a substitute for an adequate conventional posture. The inescapable conclusion was that large ground and air forces were needed for both conventional and nuclear war, or any combination of the two.

Consideration of MC 14/3's next objective—crisis stability and escalation control—led to further doubts about the efficacy of a largely nuclear strategy. Once again, the United States was the principal exponent of argumentation in this area, with the allies eventually coming to agree—at least partially—with Washington's views. American analysis had suggested that escalation could best be controlled when the pace, tempo, and shocks of combat could be limited, and when the opposing sides both recognized firebreaks and plateaus. Nuclear warfare promised to erase all of these inhibitions. It seemed likely to accelerate the pace of combat beyond the political capacity of decisionmakers
to control events, and once the main threshold—first use of nuclear weapons—had been crossed, it offered no obvious plateaus on which the escalatory process could readily be halted.

The task of designing credible operational concepts for employing tactical and theater nuclear weapons to NATO's advantage bedeviled alliance planners, who were chronically hard-pressed to develop attractive plans. There were plenty of alternatives to massive retaliation, all envisioning a more gradual escalation. Each offered a more discriminating way to wage nuclear war than massive retaliation and therefore needed to be incorporated into NATO's war plans. But given the Warsaw Pact's conventional superiority and its eventual achievement of equivalent nuclear options, none seemed obviously capable of enabling NATO to attain its political-military goals while controlling escalation, especially without adequate conventional forces.

One concept for employing tactical nuclear weapons called simply for detonation of a single weapon: a symbolic "shot across the bow" that would convey a clear political message of NATO's determination without touching off escalation. This step promised to do the trick if the Soviets lacked the stomach for nuclear war. But it suffered from the drawback that Soviets would have been unlikely to attack in the first place if they were unprepared to face risks of this magnitude. If the Soviets were determined to press on, a limited use by NATO, with little operational effect on the battlefield, was unlikely to suffice. Indeed, it might even be counterproductive by signaling a lack of resolve on NATO's part. In any event, it could easily be matched and it would not physically impede enemy forces from advancing against defeated NATO conventional forces.

If political persuasion failed to work, the only way to stop the enemy's advance was to detonate enough weapons to destroy the Warsaw Pact forces in question. This goal, however, could not be accomplished with a few weapons. For example, analysis suggested that destruction of a single enemy division could require detonation of enough nuclear weapons to destroy virtually all targets within 100 square miles, or an area about the size of a city. Destruction of enemy tank army, normally the minimum needed for closing a breakthrough salient, would cause even larger damage to the surrounding countryside. Targeting of enemy assembly areas, stockpiles, transportation networks, and aircraft based in the rear areas promised to cause more damage still. Massive detonations of this magnitude hardly seemed an appropriate vehicle for controlling escalation or containing damage to the countryside.

Beyond this, the dynamics of a nuclear war in Europe seemed to lead quickly and inexorably to an uncontrollable upward spiral. The result easily could be Europe's total destruction, followed soon by an equally devastating U.S.-Soviet intercontinental exchange. This dangerous situation stemmed from the vulnerability of many nuclear delivery systems in Europe and the resultant hair-trigger nature of the force postures on both sides. NATO and Warsaw Pact tactical air forces and associated bases were especially vulnerable. Ground and missile systems were better protected, but they still could be destroyed by either highly accurate nuclear fires (NATO's style) or by terrain-fire weapons (the Soviet technique).
As a result, each side seemed to have a strong incentive to avoid starting a war and crossing the nuclear threshold in the first place. While this inhibition might help foster crisis stability, the incentives seemed to switch dramatically once the threshold had been crossed to the point where steady expansion seemed likely. Because of its superior command-control systems and its more discriminating warheads, NATO might well enjoy an advantage in purely tactical exchanges on the battlefield. But the Soviets, with their high yield warheads, seemed capable of offsetting this advantage by expanding the scope of nuclear operations to include terrain fire on the battlefield and deep strikes against NATO's rear areas. In this event, each side would face a powerful incentive to launch its nuclear forces first with a massive blow, rather than await a preemptive strike by the other. The worrisome dynamics of this exchange seemed likely to lead directly from targets on the battlefield into the deep rear areas, including the Soviet Union and then the United States.

Once the nuclear threshold had been crossed, a rapid theaterwide escalation seemed hard to avoid. This sobering danger reinforced the importance of trying to control escalation, but it undermined NATO's confidence that control could be easily accomplished. The best, perhaps only, way to avoid nuclear destruction, many U.S. analysts concluded, was not to cross the nuclear threshold at all. This could be done only if NATO's conventional forces were adequate to fight the enemy on his own terms and thereby could place the onus of escalation on the shoulders of the aggressor who was trying to alter the status quo. The problem was that, given NATO's conventional deficiencies, the onus of escalation lay on NATO's shoulders, where it did not belong. As a result, the decision to escalate seemed likely to come not from the side that might be averse to risks because it was embarked on conquest, but from the side that was trying to protect truly vital interests and therefore would have little choice but to accept them. This did not augur well for the control of escalation.

Consideration of these four objectives thus drove the alliance toward a greater emphasis on conventional forces. A fifth objective—arms control—posed no constraint to this strategy shift because NATO was not contemplating the massive conventional buildup that, by posing an offensive threat, might provoke a legitimate offsetting response by the Warsaw Pact. Indeed, a NATO conventional buildup of purely defensive proportions seemed likely to aid the cause of arms control by giving the Soviets an incentive to negotiate. However, the final three objectives in NATO's decision calculus did exert an important inhibiting effect on how far NATO could go in this direction.

The first of these objectives, cost control, placed strong budgetary constraints on the extent to which NATO could embrace ambitious conventional defense planning goals. Earlier in NATO's history, the United States had led the alliance in opposing any military strategy that NATO could not afford in budgetary terms. But now it was the West Europeans who did not want to sign onto a strategy that they could not afford or that their domestic constituencies would not support. The United States had come full circle and was now willing to endorse a new strategy that would drive national budgets upward by setting demanding expenditure targets in the coming years. But even Washington, then
fighting a costly and increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam, was not blind to the realities of fiscal constraints and the limits they set on NATO’s prospects in the near term. Both sides approached MC 143 with a recognition that strategy wears a dollar sign.

The final two objectives, alliance unity and nonproliferation, placed political limits on the extent to which NATO could abandon nuclear deterrence even if budget cost was set aside entirely. For its part, the United States regarded a stronger NATO conventional posture as a condition for its willingness to continue providing extended U.S. nuclear deterrence coverage over Western Europe. Whether it would have sought a “no first use” doctrine, had this been politically possible, is doubtful since many American officials still valued the across-the-board deterrent power of nuclear weapons. Regardless of how far the United States might have been willing to take NATO’s new strategy, there was little doubt about where most allies stood. Although most had accommodated themselves to the idea of stronger conventional forces, nearly all remained adamantly opposed to any strategy that might completely remove nuclear weapons and the threat of American nuclear retaliation from the deterrence of nonnuclear attack.

Their position partly stemmed from lingering skepticism that conventional defense was feasible. McNamara had made major inroads in challenging the assumption that the Warsaw Pact was too superior to be overtaken by a determined alliance. But he had not been so convincing that the allies were completely willing to discard nuclear weapons. Allied military authorities were well aware that no feasible NATO conventional posture could possibly be made impregnable. Indeed, even if NATO somehow were to build larger conventional forces than the Warsaw Pact, some degree of risk still would exist that NATO might lose in a war. History showed plenty of examples in which an ostensibly weaker attacker had defeated a more powerful defender.¹³ Many allied officers believed that even after a successful conventional buildup, nuclear weapons would be needed to hedge against whatever risks remained. U.S. authorities were hard pressed to dispute this conclusion.

An equally strong and fundamental reason for the allies’ stance was their continued belief that the coupling of American nuclear power to Western Europe’s defenses was still a singularly important factor in deterring aggression of all kinds. In this respect, McNamara’s arguments had not dissuaded the allies from their earlier thinking. As a result, the West Germans and others were willing to cooperate with the Americans as long as efforts to improve NATO’s conventional forces were not accompanied by parallel moves to peel away the nuclear deterrent. To them, any move beyond this critical threshold was unacceptable. The implications for alliance unity and nonproliferation were as negative as they were obvious.

¹³A classic example is the May 1940 Battle of France where powerful French and British defenses were routed by a German attacker fielding only equivalent forces.
Had MC 14/3 embraced a "no first use" stance, the West German government in particular would have been in a politically difficult position.\textsuperscript{14} Since the British and the French had their own nuclear forces, they were not entirely dependent on NATO and the United States for deterrence coverage. But the West Germans, who were more exposed to invasion than either of these nations, lacked this advantage. In 1954, they had signed the Treaty of Paris, in which they had pledged not to acquire their own nuclear weapons. Then in 1967, they had acquiesced to U.S. and alliance pressures to sign the nonproliferation treaty; NPT negotiations were nearing completion at the time of MC 14/3's adoption. Through NATO's cooperative programs, they had acquired a limited form of access to nuclear weapons: the vehicles to deliver them. But the United States retained the actual warheads under its control, and even the FRG's delivery systems lacked the range for anything more than tactical use. In essence, West Germany was not an independent nuclear power and had no early prospect of becoming one.\textsuperscript{15}

By forsaking nuclear weapons in these two treaties, the FRG had placed its fate in NATO's hands. Both of these treaties were controversial in West Germany, not only because of their military implications but also because they seemed to single the FRG out as a nation that could not be trusted to possess what other nations, including the Soviet Union, already owned. A new NATO strategy that reserved U.S. and NATO nuclear weapons for use only in nuclear contingencies would have compounded the FRG's already stressful security dilemmas. In particular, it would have left the FRG vulnerable to conventional invasion, with only NATO's questionable conventional forces to deter and defend. Political pressures probably would have built within the FRG either to disavow the new strategy, to withdraw from the two treaties, or both. This step, in turn, would have severely strained the alliance's cohesion at a time when it already seemed fragile enough.

The United States showed a sensitivity to this political reality and the limits it placed on the new strategy. Washington recognized that its agreement to continue providing extended nuclear deterrence against all contingencies was the price it had to pay for a West European commitment to build a stronger conventional posture. At the same time, recognition of political realities proved to be an important factor in West European capitals as well. As a practical matter, support for enhanced emphasis on conventional defense was the price that they had to pay to solidify the U.S. commitment to extended nuclear deterrence. A natural exchange thus suggested itself. This situation, the shared consensus NATO had reached on strategy, and the need to preserve unity all worked to lead both sides to forge a mutually satisfying bargain. The essence of this bargain was an alliancewide agreement to supplement continued extended nuclear deterrence with a larger role for conventional defenses.

\textsuperscript{14}For a critical discussion of FRG reactions to the "no first use" concept, see Karl Kaiser, Georg Leber, Alois Meres, and Franz-Josef Schütze, "Nuclear Weapons and the Preservation of Peace," \textit{Foreign Affairs}, Vol. 60, No. 5, Summer 1982.

\textsuperscript{15}Enthoven and Smith, \textit{How Much Is Enough?} contains a good discussion of the constraints on NATO's use of tactical nuclear weapons.
The title of “flexibility in response” aptly characterizes how MC 14/3 and the more detailed planning documents that later flowed from it (e.g., MC 48/3 and subsequent official force goals) transformed this transatlantic accord into a militarily sensible strategy. First, in clear and distinct language MC 14/3 committed NATO to a forward defense. As was discussed earlier, allied military authorities in 1963 had begun moving NATO’s defense line to the inter-German border. Although this forward defense concept was interpreted in flexible terms, its adoption unmistakably signaled that NATO’s forces now intended to engage in a much more serious effort to protect all of West Germany. MC 14/3 officially and irreversibly endorsed this important change. In doing so, it ratified West Germany’s need for an alliancewide defense not only of all its territory but also of its major cities and towns in the border area.

The same goal applied to exposed border regions in Norway, Turkey, and other nations. Although NATO’s strategy debates of the 1960s largely focused on the Central Region, the northern and southern flanks were important considerations in MC 14/3’s adoption. Indeed, some analysts believed that the Soviets were more likely to launch a probing attack in one of these areas than in Central Europe, where NATO’s forces and the vital interests of the alliance’s most powerful members were concentrated. Northern Norway in particular seemed exposed to a Soviet strike. In the south, Turkish Thrace, which guarded the Dardanelles and the Straits, also seemed vulnerable to a quick Warsaw Pact attack. MC 14/3 signaled that NATO fully intended to defend these areas and was not prepared to sacrifice them to Soviet salami tactics.

Within the framework of forward defense, MC 14/3 created a strategic concept based on three mutually supporting tiers of combined military operations: direct defense, deliberate escalation, and general nuclear response.16 “Direct defense” was defined as a military effort aimed at physically blocking the enemy’s advance and destroying his forces. Although it conceivably could be undertaken by nuclear weapons, it was characterized principally in conventional terms. “Deliberate escalation” was defined as an operation aimed primarily at influencing the enemy’s political will to continue his aggression. Although escalation in theory could be undertaken by conventional forces (e.g., by naval attacks on the Soviet coastline), it primarily was the province of NATO’s nuclear forces. “General nuclear response,” the final stage, was defined in terms of a large-scale nuclear campaign aimed at destroying enemy strategic targets, including in the Soviet homeland.

To implement this strategic concept, MC 14/3 levied a requirement for a NATO force posture composed of a “triad” of capabilities. This triad was to include strong conventional forces that primarily would conduct the direct defense. Propping up the (1) conventional leg were to be (2) tactical and theater nuclear forces, principally to provide the means for deliberate escalation, and (3) strategic nuclear forces that would carry out the general nuclear response. Each leg of this triad, it is noteworthy, was to be independently powerful

enough to execute the military mission entrusted to it. While MC 14/3 recog-
nized that its nuclear and conventional forces were interdependent, it rejected
the notion that strength in one leg could compensate for weakness in another.
In this respect, it departed from MC 14/2, which overtly relied on nuclear
strength to offset conventional weakness. MC 14/3 recognized no such notion
of substitutability.

MC 14/3 thus aimed for a broad spectrum of military capabilities for pursu-
ing NATO's multiple objectives. It anchored itself on the assumption that
NATO required not only a strong defense posture, but a balanced one as well.
In doing so, it rejected arguments that deterrence could be enhanced by pur-
posefully leaving NATO's forces weak in some areas. It postulated that weak-
ness in any area would suggest a lack of determination that might carry over to
a crisis, and thereby would undermine deterrence. It concluded that NATO
could best signal resolve by fully attending to its defense needs in peacetime
rather than by leaving itself bereft of intelligent choices in wartime. MC 14/3
therefore sought to enhance deterrence not by foreclosing NATO's military op-
tions but by enlarging them as much as possible. It aimed to provide NATO the
capability to block any enemy avenue of exploitation with a commensurate re-
sponse, one that credibly would be executable by not requiring unwarranted
escalation. It thus embraced the idea that a strong, across-the-board military
posture increases deterrence, not weakens it.

MC 14/3 carefully preserved NATO's flexibility to respond to aggression with
whatever forces and operations it believed appropriate to the occasion. This
meant that in an actual crisis, alliance leaders were free to choose from the
menu of options at their disposal. Depending upon the exact nature of the cri-
sis, the strategy allowed them to react quickly or in a measured way, to expand
the scope of defensive operations or contract, and to escalate or deescalate. MC
14/3 rejected the notion of a prepared military script that would be applied
rigidly regardless of the provocation. By leaving everything open, it foreclosed
nothing and thereby intentionally confronted the Soviets with a large dose of
ambiguity.

Within the context of this flexibility, MC 14/3 laid out, for planning purposes,
a broad concept of military operations that differed dramatically from MC 14/2.
Of special importance was that MC 14/3 acknowledged the possibility of a lim-
ited NATO-Warsaw Pact war. It recognized that the Soviets might attack with
limited aims in mind and with limited nonnuclear forces. For example, a small
Soviet incursion against Norway or Turkey would be a limited attack. MC 14/3
called on NATO to react to aggression of this sort with a limited response of its
own. This meant that NATO should tailor its use of military force to the situa-
tion and to its goals and interests at stake. In particular, MC 14/3 said, NATO
should aspire to contain the aggression by applying NATO's military power in
limited ways, consistent with alliance wartime goals that sought to control esca-
lation. NATO's goal in a limited war, it mandated, was to end the crisis on ac-
ceptable terms, not to physically destroy the Soviet Union, especially if that
meant NATO's destruction in return.
MC 14/3's emphasis on a flexible response applied even to the contingency of a major Warsaw Pact conventional attack in Central Europe. Against this threat, MC 14/2 had envisioned a brief period of conventional defense followed by a rapid nuclear escalation, culminating quickly in strategic nuclear bombardment of the Soviet Union. By contrast, MC 14/3 called for a longer and more important period of conventional "direct" defense (duration unspecified) aimed at containing an enemy attack as far forward as practicable for as long as feasible. MC 14/3 went on to say that nuclear escalation was to be avoided if at all possible. It did not, as some writers have implied, intentionally create a trail of powder designed to lead inevitably to a keg of nuclear dynamite. It recognized that the firebreak between conventional and nuclear war was strategically important and should not be crossed unless NATO had no alternative. Therefore, it called for escalation to be undertaken only in the event of an impending collapse of the direct defense. By this it meant an immediate threat to the physical survival of one of NATO's members or a situation in which NATO's forward defenses had deteriorated to the point where no conventional options were available to shore up the situation.

In the event of an irreversible downturn, MC 14/3 reserved the right for NATO to be the first to cross the nuclear threshold. Indeed, it actively called on the alliance to take this step if it was required to protect NATO's vital interests, and to take it before NATO's conventional defenses had been entirely defeated. But MC 14/3 also called for a truly "deliberate" escalation. By this it meant not a spasmodic response but instead a carefully calibrated escalation that would remain under positive, high-level control and would be attuned to the political-military dynamics of the specific crisis. This implied a steady progression aimed first at halting the war by political means and only later to include major tactical and theater strikes to destroy enemy forces. The final step, a nuclear attack on the USSR itself, was to be undertaken as an outgrowth of this deliberate escalation and preferably as a last resort. It too was not automatically to be the sort of city-busting attack that would invite a counter(city) retaliation by the Soviets. Its primary goal was to be the cessation of fighting on acceptable terms.

With respect to operational doctrine for the conventional defense, MC 14/3 implicitly ruled out any notion of large-scale retrograde tactics aimed at trading space for time. By demanding a firm forward defense rather than an elastic mobile one, it denied NATO commanders the classical maneuver by which military officers try to compensate for inadequate forces. To execute this demanding plan, MC 14/3 (and its subsidiary documents) called for an active-duty, deployed, immediately available posture capable of stopping a limited "short warning" attack in its tracks. This posture, MC 14/3 intended, would deter any Soviet attempt to seize a limited portion of West Germany in a surprise assault with those Warsaw Pact forces that were in the immediate vicinity of the inter-German border. In this event the Soviets, even to conduct a limited attack, would be compelled to mobilize a very large posture with reinforcements drawn from the USSR. This reinforcement effort, in turn, would provide NATO unambiguous warning and time to mobilize itself. Above all, it
would give NATO time to establish defensive positions, to prepare the terrain, and to deploy reinforcements from the United States. The net result would be a larger, better prepared NATO posture, one that could not easily be dislodged, especially short of a massive Warsaw Pact assault with 80–100 divisions consciously sized for a full theater offensive campaign.

Against the large, sustained attack that the Warsaw Pact could launch after fully mobilizing, MC 14/3 called on NATO to build a powerful mobilizable posture of its own, one based on a combination of active and reserve forces. Ideally, it specified, NATO’s forces should be strong enough to contain this attack in the forward areas and ultimately launch counterattacks to restore any lost territory. It was the intention of MC 14/3 that such a posture would reduce or eliminate any need for NATO to be the first to cross the nuclear threshold.

MC 14/3 also was realistic. It recognized that this ideal standard was beyond immediate reach and could be attained (if at all) only over the course of several years of sustained improvement efforts. Accordingly, MC 14/3 also specified a minimum requirement for NATO’s posture that was to be attained as quickly as possible. It called on NATO’s members to deploy enough forces to conduct an “initial” forward defense, one that could hold temporarily. While MC 14/3 did not attach a precise definition to the term “initial,” most authorities had in mind a period lasting at least one week and preferably a full month. Militarily, MC 14/3 contended, this initial defense was aimed at denying the Soviets confidence in a quick victory. But it also was intended to perform an important political function. By providing the time needed to clarify any ambiguity about the origins and nature of the war, it aimed at creating the political conditions necessary for NATO to make the decision to escalate.

MC 14/3 faced up to the likelihood that even a well-prepared initial defense might be worn down, driven back, and faced with defeat. Unless otherwise checked, the Warsaw Pact then would be left free to drive deep into West Germany and to reach the Rhine River or beyond. MC 14/3 concluded that while this conventional defense would complicate Soviet plans, alone it would not deter them if they were willing to pay for success. MC 14/3 therefore continued to rely on nuclear escalation for this purpose. It called on the nuclear forces to provide the extra, still important increment of required deterrent power that the conventional forces lacked.

At the same time, MC 14/3 also recognized that NATO might find the decision to escalate difficult if the conventional defense did not perform its task of providing adequate time and clarity. It thus viewed conventional strength as an important contributor to nuclear deterrence, not an irrelevant adjunct or, as some claimed, a detractor from it. Beyond this, MC 14/3 called on the conventional and nuclear forces to provide each other support in other, operationally complex ways. By keeping the Soviets uncertain about NATO’s nuclear plans, its intention was to compel them to disperse their forces during conventional fighting, thereby inhibiting them from concentrating in ways needed to defeat

17During his tenure, McNamara laid down sustainability goals ranging from 30 to 90 days. See annual reports to Congress, multiple years.
NATO. Similarly, it called on the conventional forces to aid the nuclear forces by inflicting as many losses on the enemy as possible, thus easing the task of conducting nuclear strikes by thinning out the enemy's air defenses, by reducing the number of ground targets to be destroyed, and by eroding the enemy's ability to retaliate. In these ways, MC 14/3 tried to achieve deterrence through the combined effects of conventional and nuclear forces, rather than one or the other alone.

FLEXIBLE RESPONSE: IMPLICATIONS

MC 14/3's adoption marked the end of a long and remarkable odyssey that had begun with an American effort six years earlier to forge a revolution in U.S. and NATO's military thinking. It passed through a period of alliance debate on nuclear sharing and control that ultimately led to an accord on this issue. Finally this odyssey culminated in an alliancewide agreement on a new strategy that preserved unity by reflecting a synthesis of views on both sides of the Atlantic. Such an achievement had once seemed beyond the realm of possibility. To be sure, the process of reaching it had been turbulent, but in this case the end justified the means. The new strategy would have been beyond reach had NATO not gone through a soul-searching debate on its priorities.

MC 14/3's adoption, it should be remembered, coincided with a parallel NATO effort to update and broaden its overall security policy in Europe. The Harmel Report, also adopted in 1967, shifted NATO's policy away from its earlier preoccupation with managing the Cold War and toward the pursuit of détente with the Soviet Union.10 The goal was to promote a constructive dialogue with the Soviets aimed at relaxing East-West tensions, while not prematurely letting down the West's defense guard. MC 14/3 thus was one part of a larger alliance effort to overcome some of the Cold War's rigidities. It aimed at making NATO's military strategy more flexible, while the Harmel Report aspired to make the West's diplomacy more flexible. The two efforts worked together on behalf of a common enterprise.

The Harmel Report and MC 14/3 promised to help take the edge off the Cold War's harshest features: the tense bloc-to-bloc confrontation in Central Europe and the hair-trigger nuclear situation there. Harmel aspired to narrow the political divide between the two blocs, to reduce Soviet paranoia, to temper the Warsaw Pact's aggressive instincts, and to lessen the danger of war breaking out over unresolved disputes. MC 14/3 endeavored to render war less likely by shoring up NATO's deterrent, and to make war more manageable and less prone to runaway escalation if it did occur. The effect was to be a two-fold contribution to NATO's security: better relations with the adversary and a more stable military balance of power.

Harmel and MC 14/3 also worked together to enhance NATO's internal solidarity. By aspiring to lessen the political confrontation with the USSR, Harmel

---

made flexible response more bearable to the Germans, and it made forward
defense less onerous to the Americans. By solidifying NATO's deterrent, MC
14/3 increased the West's bargaining leverage in détente, gave alliance mem-
bers greater incentives to remain in common cause, and reduced risks that
strategy flaws could be exploited in negotiations to damage Western interests.
The effect was to lighten worries about the future and to make NATO's mem-
ers more confident of their partnership.

While the transatlantic bargain that underlay MC 14/3 reflected alliance po-
litical imperatives, it also resulted in a strategy that made better military sense
than MC 14/3's critics often alleged. 19 Bargains arrived at by a coalition of na-
tions typically fail in this area. Most often, they wind up reflecting the coal-
tion's internal political dynamics and, in the process, do violence to such exter-
nal standards as effectiveness and rationality. MC 14/3, however, met these
standards to a considerable degree. This outcome partly reflected the division
in the transatlantic debate over strategy along lines that lent themselves to a
coherent solution. But it was by no means guaranteed at the outset.

One reason for this outcome was that MC 14/3's authors worked hard at in-
telligently blending together the arguments that were being made on both sides
of the Atlantic. NATO's leaders went to lengths to ensure that the new strategy
was fully coordinated among the key headquarters and national capitals. The
coordination process itself was conducted by American and allied staffs aware
of both their own interests and the need to work together. Moreover, these
staffs displayed a willingness to study the issues in enough detail to probe be-
low surface disagreements, to discover common ground, and to craft mutually
satisfactory language. MC 14/3 thus was a hard-won product of coalition
planning and management.

In the end, MC 14/3 was a product of both politics and analysis. In light of
the conflicting perspectives that had prevailed at the onset, MC 14/3 would not
have been adopted had the United States not applied the full weight of its lead-
ership backed up by its nuclear strength. In this sense, politics dominated in
the way that it must drive any alliancewide effort to make innovations in policy,
strategy, and forces. At the same time, the United States did not have the politi-
cal power to compel the allies to act against their better judgment. It had to
persuade them to see things differently and to change their minds. For this

---

19 Especially in the years immediately following its adoption, MC 14/3 was widely criticized by
the media and within academic circles. The main argument was that, because of NATO's internal
conflicts and right-listed fiscal policies, MC 14/3 was an incoherent strategy which could not be
implemented due to NATO's inadequate military muscle, especially in conventional forces. In my
judgment, this criticism carried a party correct insight too far. MC 14/3 suffered from
inconsistencies, but had it been fatally incoherent, it would never have been adopted by
governments which, despite their partisan squabbling, never would have tolerated a strategy that
sacrificed all of their interests at once. To be sure, NATO's members were slow to field a fully
adequate force posture, but they were far from blind to their military needs. The perception of
gross NATO military inferiority to the Warsaw Pact, including in conventional forces, was partly a
product of conservative planning standards which created conceptual blinders whose distorting
impact was not grasped in the public domain. In reality, the Warsaw Pact posed a serious military
threat, but NATO's conventional forces were far from a pushover, and they were sufficiently strong
to make MC 14/3 a coherent strategy. Even if solid conventional defense was not an immediate
reality, it was a viable programming goal in 1967 and the years thereafter.
purpose, it had no choice but to resort to analysis and argument, which it did with skill. Fortunately the allies reacted in a far-sighted way by agreeing to engage the United States on these terms and to let the results influence the final product. In this sense, analysis, not politics, was the father of MC14/3.

In many ways, MC 14/3 was a product of cooperative efforts between the United States and West Germany. It represented the kind of balanced strategy that these nations, with varying degrees of emphasis, had come to favor. Although it left France outside NATO's military orbit, it certainly helped cement U.S.-German relations and marked the further emergence of the Washington-Bonn axis as one of NATO's strongest foundations. MC 14/3 also reflected the professional judgments and preferences of NATO's military leaders, who had come to doubt a purely nuclear strategy before most of their political leaders had seen the light. This gave MC 14/3 an important source of support and doubtless was partly responsible for the resiliency that MC 14/3 showed in the years after 1967.

To be sure, MC 14/3, a compromise strategy, did not resolve all controversies or satisfy all military theorists. Among the least serious of its problems was that it was quite complex. It lacked the transparency that only simplicity can provide. As a result, it came across as confusing to laymen, and even seasoned professionals often found it hard to absorb at first exposure. A more serious drawback was that while MC 14/3 assigned the conventional defenses a larger role in deterrence than before, it did not define precisely where reliance on conventional forces now was to leave off and nuclear weapons were to take over. By failing to resolve lingering ambiguity on this important issue, it left open to interpretation exactly how NATO was to distribute responsibility among the three legs of its triad. This proved to be a source of continuing controversy in later years with both the United States and the West European allies citing MC 14/3 as justification for somewhat incompatible positions on this subject. In general, the United States favored a greater reliance on conventional forces and the allies, less. MC 14/3 unfortunately provided no authoritative basis for resolving this important dispute.

Also, MC 14/3's call for forward defense undermined, to some degree, its emphasis on flexible response and the goal of controlling escalation. The concept of defending all of West Germany's forward areas denied NATO's military commanders, at least in theory, the option of retreating rather than resorting to tactical nuclear weapons. Moreover, forward defense—as implemented by a frontal array that left NATO lacking sizable reserves—increased the likelihood that escalation (to contain breakthroughs) could come early. For understandable reasons, this situation left the U.S. government, which particularly championed flexible response, uneasy.

In a similar vein, MC 14/3's emphasis on flexible response left West Germany's nerves somewhat strained. For Bonn, a core problem was that flexible response seemed to make escalation conditional upon NATO's reading of the situation at hand. In theory, MC 14/3's call for forward defense implied that escalation would be forthcoming once NATO's frontal positions had been breached. But MC 14/3's endorsement of flexible response plausibly left the al-
liance an escape clause for other alternatives, particularly a theaterwide retreat, if the forward positions began buckling. To the United States and other alliance members, an abandonment of forward defense might represent only a regrettable tactical expedient. But to the West Germans, it would amount to a strategic catastrophe of the sort that would invalidate the FRG’s rationale for being in the alliance in the first place. MC 14/3’s ambiguity in this area stemmed less from its failure to stress forward defense than from its inability to prevent NATO from adopting other expedients in a crisis. Regardless, it left a question mark in the back of many German minds.

To an important degree, the delicate balance that MC 14/3 struck between forward defense and flexible response was politically unavoidable. While the United States demanded flexible response as its condition for endorsing forward defense, the FRG demanded forward defense as its price for signing onto flexible response. As a result, neither nation was able to have its cake and eat it too. Both sides reacted to MC 14/3’s ambiguity with political maturity born not only of their awareness that compromise was required to upgrade the common interest but also of their realization that the alliance’s behavior could not be predicted. For example, it was not implausible that, in an actual war, the United States might be both more insistent on forward defense and more ready to escalate than the FRG or other West European nations. NATO thus needed to keep its options open, something that all participants recognized. Nonetheless, MC 14/3’s ambiguity left both sides uncomfortable with this aspect of the new strategy.

Nor did MC 14/3 resolve all disputes over how nuclear escalation, once undertaken, should be conducted. The United States remained committed to a step-by-step escalation, with its emphasis on a steady, controlled upward progression that could be halted before an intercontinental war occurred. The allies continued to display a hostile stance to the idea of a purely theater nuclear campaign that could leave Europe devastated and the United States and the Soviet Union relatively unscathed. Their underlying goal was still the coupling of the U.S. strategic arsenal to Europe, which they wanted implemented by a very rapid NATO escalation from (1) conventional defense to (2) a symbolic nuclear shot across the bow to (3) a full-scale strike against the USSR. Indeed, in their fondest dreams some allies doubtless hoped that the nuclear war might be conducted over their heads and that Europe somehow could be insulated from its devastating effects. Their realistic expectations, of course, were more sober. But even in the clear light of day, MC 14/3’s call for deliberate escalation left them worried and uncertain on this score. For entirely different reasons, deriving from concern that deliberate escalation might prove a chimera, the United States felt likewise.

In essence, notwithstanding prolonged debate on this subject, the alliance still had not yet resolved exactly how nuclear escalation was to be conducted once the proverbial shot across the bow had been taken and had failed. Was the alliance then to conduct only limited nuclear operations aimed at containing the enemy breakthrough? Or was it quickly to escalate to a theater nuclear campaign aimed at breaking the back of the enemy’s force posture? Or was it
promptly to conduct attacks against the Soviet homeland? If the strategy called for a steady progression from one step to the next, exactly how fast and under precisely what conditions should it proceed? The need to control escalation argued for restraint, military exigencies argued for nuclear operations timed to enemy force dynamics, and the goal of exerting major political pressure on the Soviets to desist called for strikes on Soviet soil. MC 14/3 did not definitively sort out NATO's priorities in this area. Indeed, any firm statement of priorities was beyond the reach of analysis owing to the impossibility of forecasting the precise situation. For this reason, MC 14/3's call for flexibility was probably the wisest choice. But by leaving the issue open, MC 14/3 helped contribute to continued debate in future years.

Additionally, MC 14/3 left the important matter of NATO's conventional defense plans unresolved and subject to a wide range of interpretation. The United States clearly favored stronger allied efforts and a sustained conventional buildup, even at a greater budgetary cost than West European governments were prepared to support. To the United States, MC 14/3 endorsed this vision. By contrast, many allied nations found in MC 14/3 a plausible rationale for doing little more. The issue here was largely one of how much staying power NATO's conventional defenses should provide. McNamara had called for a 90-day logistic stock for NATO, while most allies were inclined to support only a 30-day stockpile or less. Since MC 14/3 was not definitive on NATO's sustainment goals, this issue also was to result in stressful alliancewide debates in the following years.²⁰

For all these reasons, one of MC 14/3's principal strengths—its ambiguity—was also its primary liability. Because it emphasized flexibility, it completely ruled out the preference of few participants. It left all alliance members with the sense that their vital interests were at least minimally protected. At the same time, MC 14/3 absolutely guaranteed the wishes of no single nation. All participants were left with lingering worry that the strategy, in some situations, might result in their own undoing. In important ways, then, MC 14/3 was a "satisfying" strategy rather than an "optimizing" one: It accomplished its aims adequately but far from perfectly.

Military strategies, however, are seldom gauged by standards of perfection. What matters more is whether they prevent catastrophe, whether they allow nations and alliances to cope with unsolvable problems, and whether a better alternative exists. If a better option was available in 1967, MC 14/3's authors were unable to identify it, and it has not been identified since then. The simple fact is that the alliance faced a compelling need to reconcile multiple objectives, many of which pulled in different directions. Other strategies could have done a better job of supporting one or another of these objectives, but MC 14/3 did

²⁰The distinction between planning concepts and actual practice in a crisis is an important one. MC 14/3 and its subsidiary NATO documents established operational concepts for sizing, designing, and programming NATO's forces to prepare them for use in a crisis. However, the issue of how they actually would be employed was left to be determined by NATO officials and allies in the actual situation. Thus NATO retained the flexibility to escalate in a graduated manner or in different ways.
the best job of balancing them. It may have fully achieved few, but neither did it unacceptably sacrifice any of them.

Beyond doubt, MC 14/3 placed NATO on a higher strategic plateau than before. Although not transparent to the public, it was a sophisticated strategy that responded intelligently to the era of mutual nuclear deterrence that the alliance was to face in the years ahead. As a result, it represented a decided improvement over the strategy it replaced, which had outlived its usefulness. MC 14/2 had emphasized deterrence and cost control while attaching little importance to other objectives, and it had bet imprudently on the power of nuclear weapons. MC 14/3 erected a considerably better deterrent, one that was anchored on forces and threats that would be credible in Moscow even after the Soviets had attained nuclear parity. It also paid attention to NATO's need to be prepared to actually fight a war in Europe and to control escalation.

For these reasons, it provided a solid foundation for maintaining alliance unity, one that could endure in the years ahead. It offered both the flexibility that the United States wanted and the nuclear insurance that the allies insisted upon. By fashioning a strategy that helped improve NATO's collective security in the eyes of all members, it passed the twin tests of consensus and coherence not only minimally but impressively. Equally important, it gave NATO's leaders an important instrument in their battle to halt further erosion in the alliance's defenses. It did not forestall all of the military cutbacks that were being contemplated in the late 1960s, but it enabled the United States to begin exerting its political leadership on behalf of a strategy that now enjoyed NATO's endorsement, and it gave allied defense officials powerful arguments to take to their own parliaments. MC 14/3's political effect began to be felt shortly after it was adopted and grew steadily over the next decade.

Above all, MC 14/3 settled matters sufficiently to allow the alliance to put its stressful strategy debate behind it. NATO finally had shed its nuclear fixation without stripping away the positive features of nuclear deterrence. With consensus reestablished on strategy, NATO now was in a position to pursue a better conventional defense in the confidence that this effort would be guided by agreed purposes rather than paralyzed by disputes over fundamentals. MC 14/3 thus stands as a major accomplishment in NATO's history.

Since MC 14/3 promised to be only as good as the forces that were built to support it, the task now facing NATO was to make progress on assembling the required defense posture. Although MC 14/3 had pointed out the broad direction that NATO was to take in planning its conventional forces, it did not define exactly how strong this posture should become or when it should be fielded. Force goals and target dates were not specified in its pages. Its main contribution in this area was to create a conceptual framework for NATO's conventional defenses within which the alliance could operate in the coming years. While it mandated that its minimum floor was to be met immediately, it provided the alliance considerable flexibility in defining the ceiling and building toward it. Moreover, MC 14/3 specified no fixed division of labor to guide NATO's nations in this endeavor. It established no minimum national obligations, nor did it discourage any single nation from contributing more than its fair share. It left
programmatic decisions of this sort in the hands of NATO's future leaders. To them was entrusted the task of deciding upon the exact kind of defense posture and pattern of burden sharing that was needed to execute the new strategy.
The adoption of MC 14/3 represented the culminating step of NATO’s strategy debates in the 1960s. But NATO’s progress was not limited solely to strategy. Behind the scenes, in a less visible way, this decade also witnessed important changes to NATO’s conventional and nuclear force posture. Not all of these changes were for the better; indeed, a few were for the worse. But when the dust had settled, NATO’s forces emerged from this turbulent decade in substantially better shape than they had entered it.

One negative development was the Vietnam War, which, among its many effects, diverted U.S. political attention and military resources from Europe. This especially was the case from 1966 onward, when the U.S. buildup in Southeast Asia began gathering force. As the buildup proceeded, the United States enlarged its active ground posture by three divisions (two Army and one Marine). But even so, the eventual deployment of ten Army and two Marine divisions to Vietnam left the United States a central reserve of only four active divisions and comparably small tactical air forces. This reduced Washington’s ability to reinforce NATO (or elsewhere) in the event of war.

Equally important, Vietnam’s demands led to a decline in the readiness of U.S. forces that were deployed in Europe. Personnel turbulence developed as tours of qualified soldiers were cut short in order to meet manpower needs in Vietnam; equipment stocks were also depleted to meet logistic demands there. The budgetary drain of the Vietnam war further exacerbated tensions over balance of payments and foreign exchange issues, which were coming to affect U.S.-German relations. The United States initially tried not to let Vietnam degrade its presence in Europe. But in the face of these mounting problems, Washington succumbed in 1968 by deciding to withdraw 34,000 military personnel, two combat brigades of the 24th Mechanized Division, and three tactical air squadrons from Europe.¹

These withdrawals were justified publicly as a necessary step to bolster the U.S. strategic reserve, and American officials insisted that no change in the U.S. commitment was implied. The withdrawn combat units were configured in a “dual base” status in which their commitment to NATO was not altered; much of their equipment was left behind in storage to permit a prompt return. The United States began the “REFORGER” program, in which withdrawn ground

¹See McNamara’s testimony to Congress in 1968.
and air units were flown back to Central Europe to participate in annual exercises. In succeeding years, REFORGER was to grow in size and stature, eventually becoming a major vehicle for increasingly tying U.S.-based forces to NATO's defense plans.

Despite these offsetting measures, however, this drawdown did not augur well for the future, and it triggered a nervous reaction in Western Europe. During the Eisenhower years, the U.S. military presence in Europe had averaged about 390,000 soldiers. At the height of the Berlin buildup, it had peaked at about 417,000 soldiers. Although this level was artificially high because of the temporary nature of many U.S. deployments, it sent a reassuring signal to the allies, who then began employing it as a measuring stick to gauge the U.S. commitment. The post-Berlin drawdown, an inevitable step, had led to the return to the United States of some 60,000 troops. De Gaulle's decision to expel U.S. forces from France then led to the withdrawal of 15,000 more as part of McNamara's efforts to increase efficiency. The final withdrawal of 34,000, which had overtones of American displeasure with the allies, had brought American troop strength down to about 300,000. By any standard, this was still a large presence, but it was smaller than what the Eisenhower administration, for all its nuclear fixations, had provided.

U.S. FORCE IMPROVEMENTS

Notwithstanding these steps, the 1960s as a whole saw major improvements to the overall U.S. military contribution to NATO.\textsuperscript{2} In particular, the Army made big strides toward converting its purely infantry divisions to armored and mechanized status, thereby rendering them better able to compete with Soviet tank divisions on the battlefield. In the early 1950s, four of the Army's five divisions in Europe had been infantry units (the other was an armored division). The late 1950s had seen one of these infantry divisions converted to armored status. The 1960s were to see all three of the remaining divisions (one now dual-based) converted to mechanized status, thereby producing a well-armed force of two armored and three mechanized divisions, supported by three armored cavalry regiments. This trend was replicated in the Army's overall posture, including NATO-oriented units based in the United States. In 1960, only two of the Army's 14 active divisions were armored and none were mechanized. By 1968, eight divisions (of 18 total) were either armored or mechanized, a major improvement.

The Army also benefited from the expensive modernization programs that McNamara funded: Virtually all of the Army's weapons were replaced by new, qualitatively superior models. In 1961, the Army's inventory of 8600 tanks had been dominated by the old M-48, which mounted only a 90-mm gun and lacked a modern fire control system. Also, the M-48 was powered by a gasoline engine that consumed a large quantity of fuel, which limited its sustainability and

\textsuperscript{2}This analysis of U.S. defense programs for the late 1960s draws on McNamara's annual testimony in 1967 and 1968 and related congressional testimony.
made it highly explosive if hit by enemy fire. By the late 1960s, over 5000 new M-60s had entered service. This tank was much more capable than the M-48. It carried a more powerful 105-mm gun, an improved fire control system, and a more survivable and endurable diesel engine. To complement this tank, procurement of new M-113 armored personnel carriers was accelerated. These vehicles carry infantry to support the Army's tanks in mobile operations. By the end of the decade, the Army's total armor capability had increased by about 50% since 1960.

Another Army improvement was the acquisition of large 155-mm self-propelled artillery to replace lower caliber and towed pieces. The Army's total artillery inventory grew by 80% and its firepower increased by an even greater amount. The Army's helicopter inventory grew from 3100 to 7500, and old models with piston engines were replaced by modern helicopters with turbine engines. This improvement bolstered the Army's battlefield mobility and permitted the creation of an entire airmobile division. The Army's stockpile of cargo trucks, an important area often neglected at budget time, similarly expanded by 60%. This change in logistic support bolstered the Army's ability to deliver ammunition and supplies to front-line units and produced a substantial increase in deliverable firepower, especially artillery munitions.

The combined effect of these modernization programs, along with the force posture expansion also undertaken, was profound. Total Army combat power (the Vietnam-related expansion not included) roughly doubled. The Army also was now internally structured to fight a conventional war rather than purely tactical nuclear combat. With respect to NATO, the Vietnam buildup constrained the Army's ability to bring the full force of its combat power to bear. But even at the height of the Vietnam War, the United States still retained the capacity to reinforce NATO with a combination of active and reserve forces in a crisis. All changes taken into account, the Army in the late 1960s was capable of deploying in the critical initial weeks roughly 70% more combat power than had been the case in 1961.

In addition to these changes in active forces, McNamara continued his efforts to tailor the Army's reserve forces to support U.S. defense strategy. In the late 1960s, he unveiled a plan to combine Reserve and National Guard units into a single overall command structure (not approved by the Congress). In addition, he announced a program to reconfigure their combat units into a force of eight divisions (six intended for overseas combat) and 21 separate brigades, a step that was approved. At first glance, this appeared to be a large reduction from earlier levels. In early 1961, the Reserve and National Guard together had deployed 37 divisions. Even after McNamara's initial reforms that year, the level stood at 27 divisions. But in reality, this change was designed to improve the ability of these forces to contribute where they were needed most: in the early stages of a war.

During this period, the paid "drill strength" of the Reserve and Guard remained roughly constant at 600,000-700,000 soldiers. As a result, each of the 37 divisions in 1961 was manned at less than 50% of needed strength and would have required months of mobilization and training before being ready for com-
bat. McNamara’s reforms in 1961 had increased manning levels for the remaining 27 divisions to 50–75%, thereby theoretically rendering them deployable within a few weeks. Subsequent analysis revealed, however, that these divisions also lacked required amounts of combat and support equipment. Since the Army’s inventory did not have enough items to equip them speedily in an emergency, their deployment would have had to be delayed until entirely new equipment could be produced from production lines. As a result, they still could not have been shipped overseas for many months.

McNamara determined that the Defense Department could not afford to buy enough equipment for these units anytime in the foreseeable future. He therefore consolidated these units into the smaller force of eight divisions and 21 brigades, the number needed to support DoD’s initial war plans. These units were manned at 93% of required levels; moreover, each was given a full complement of equipment. McNamara also accelerated DoD’s program to affiliate several of the brigades with active Army divisions and to orient the training of remaining units to actual contingencies and operational plans. These changes provided a large reserve force of about 15 division-equivalents (three brigades are counted as the equivalent of one division) for deployment 30–60 days after mobilization. This represented a vast improvement over 1960.

McNamara also acted to make full use of the remaining Reserve/National Guard manpower that had not been allocated to combat units. The expansion of the Army’s active combat forces had left the Army short of manpower for essential support units, especially the units that provide enduring sustainability. At the time, each Army division included about 16,000 soldiers. But another 32,000 troops were deemed necessary to support each division: 16,000 to provide an “initial support increment” (ISI), and another 16,000 to provide a “sustaining support increment” (SSI). To satisfy unmet support requirements, McNamara allocated some 130,000 Reserve soldiers to SSI units. Active manpower was concentrated in the combat and initial support forces that would be needed immediately, while Reserve manpower was employed to fill out support units that would be needed later. Meanwhile, National Guard troops primarily manned combat units. Table 9.1 displays how the Army had come to be structured by the late 1960s.

Parallel, if less dramatic, improvements were made in U.S. tactical air forces. During this period, the Air Force’s inventory remained constant at about 7,000 aircraft and 21–24 active combat wings, backed up by some ten reserve wings. Improvements primarily came in the form of qualitative upgrades. In 1961, only 15% of the Air Force’s interceptors were all-weather models; by 1970, the figure stood at over 60%. The acquisition of modern F-4 fighter-bombers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Army Structure: Late 1960s</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force</th>
<th>Divisions</th>
<th>ISI</th>
<th>SSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve/National Guard</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
greatly improved the Air Force's ability to conduct non-nuclear ground attack operations. Before their arrival, Air Force airplanes were primarily oriented to air defense and nuclear strike operations. Between 1961 and 1968, the Air Force's ability to deliver payload in conventional missions (as measured in tonnage dropped) roughly doubled; by the early 1970s, it was to double again. Additionally, the Vietnam War led the Air Force to develop better munitions (e.g., electro-optical and laser-guided bombs) and better command and control systems for conducting large-scale air campaigns. These improvements enhanced the Air Force's ability not only to win the air battle in Europe, but also to come to the aid of NATO's ground forces with a large quantity of interdiction and close air support missions.

The Navy experienced a similar pattern. It continued to deploy some 15 carriers, 105 attack submarines, 260 surface combatants, and 160 logistic/support ships, about the level that McNamara had set in 1961. But the Navy's combat power increased steadily through qualitative improvements. Acquisition of modern fighters and fighter-bombers strengthened the capability of its carriers to conduct air defense and strike operations. The acquisition of modern attack submarines and P-3 patrol aircraft equipped with sonobuoys and torpedoes more than doubled the Navy's capability for antisubmarine warfare. Procurement of missile-carrying surface combatants improved the Navy's antiair warfare (AAW) strength by a similar amount. These changes in strike, ASW, and AAW capabilities bolstered the Navy's capacity not only to protect the sea lanes but also to conduct power projection missions in high threat areas.

McNamara also carried forward his earlier efforts to strengthen the Defense Department's ability to conduct combined operations and to encourage the three services to work together, rather than independently and often at cross-purposes. In 1961, he had found that the Defense Department's logistics planning was badly out of balance. The Air Force and the Navy concentrated on a brief period of nuclear operations and lacked the sustaining stocks, including munitions, for a conventional war of any duration. The Army meanwhile was planning for a conventional war of almost indefinite duration, one that the Air Force and Navy could not support.

Further compounding this problem was the practice that the Army employed in procuring its logistics stocks. Faced with funding limitations, the Army had distributed its resources across the entire spectrum of logistics needs, short and long. As a result, it lacked adequate stockpiles of all relevant ammunition and equipment that would be needed in the initial weeks of combat in Europe. This created a risk that the Army's performance might be undercut by shortages in a few critical areas: artillery ammunition is a good example. To rectify these problems, McNamara issued guidance for all three services to meet a single standard of logistics readiness: stockpiles for six months of combat. This, he calculated, would help ensure that all the services could function in a NATO-Warsaw Pact war. Requirements for most items after the six-month mark, he determined, would be met by the production pipeline.

A final and important area of U.S. conventional improvements came in strategic mobility forces, an area that McNamara had been examining from his
earliest days. His analyses of likely contingencies led him to conclude that the United States should develop the capability to deploy its entire active Army and Air Force overseas (to Europe, in particular) within only 4-8 weeks. Since a single Army heavy division weighed over 100,000 tons and came equipped with thousands of vehicles, this yielded a daunting requirement of over two million tons of cargo. This requirement, in turn, levied a demand for very large mobility forces: A single modern air transport could carry only 20-40 tons on one mission, and even a large cargo ship could carry only some 10,000-20,000 tons.

In the early 1960s, McNamara had set an improvement program in motion by procuring C-130 and C-141 transport aircraft and several other measures. In the late 1960s, he expanded this program considerably. He initiated procurement of some 60 C-5A air transports. Each airplane could carry some 70 tons of cargo, including most items of Army equipment. In total, he set a goal for airlift forces to include the C-5As, some 150 C-141 transports, and about 500 C-130s. To supplement this force, he initiated a program with DoD funding support to configure civilian cargo aircraft for military use in an emergency; this effort later was expanded to include allied transports as well.

With respect to sealift forces, the problem he faced was one of mobilizing an already large capability. He approved a program to assemble over 400 cargo ships. Some were to come from the Navy reserve fleet but most were to be drawn from the U.S. and allied civilian fleets. The task of mobilizing these ships in a crisis could be time-consuming. In any event, most of these ships were slow-moving. This meant that a reliable seaborne lift capability to Europe would take about a full month to establish. To create a more responsive sealift capability, McNamara fastened upon the goal of procuring some 30 “Fast Deployment Logistics” (FDL) ships, an idea that he presented to the Congress during 1967-68.

Subsequent analysis was to show that McNamara’s estimate of strategic lift requirements was understated. Even so, not all of his strategic lift programs came to pass. In particular, the FDL program was not funded, but the remaining programs largely were implemented, albeit on a schedule slower than McNamara preferred. Their combined effect was to accelerate the pace at which U.S. combat power could be deployed to Europe in an emergency, even one offering little advanced warning. These lift measures, coupled with the programs to strengthen the U.S. ground and air combat forces that were committed to NATO, all worked together to enable the United States to make a contribution toward improving NATO’s conventional defenses in Europe.

**EMERGENCE OF THE WEST GERMANY ARMY**

Even greater than this growth in U.S. combat power was the emergence of the German Bundeswehr (Army and Air Force) as a first-class fighting force. This was a little-noticed event but one of seminal importance. It gave NATO the solid military foundation it needed to undertake both a strategy change and a commitment to a true “forward defense.” By and large, the event went unheralded and has largely escaped notice in most academic accounts of NATO’s se-
curity policy in the 1960s. But it made an indelible mark on the battlefield, where deterrence is forged. In essence, it transformed the military balance in Central Europe in fundamental ways, all of which contributed heavily to alliance security.3

Budgetary cutbacks and recruiting problems caused the original schedule for German rearmament to be stretched out several years. But by August 1956, the FRG had created staffs for the first six of its 12 divisions. Later that year, rearmament gathered momentum as these divisions were provided a full complement of officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs), a compulsory service law was passed to fill out enlisted ranks, and 1100 M-47 tanks arrived from the United States. In succeeding months, the FRG ordered some 2500 U.S. M-48 tanks, initiated production of its own antitank guns, and purchased other equipment to provide necessary weapons for its emerging Army.

With adequate equipment on hand, the new divisions began their initial field training. By mid-1958, four had reached the stage where formal commitment to NATO became possible; shortly afterward, the next two joined. In 1959, four more divisions commenced buildup and deployment. They were committed to NATO in 1962. In the early 1960s, the final two divisions began forming and soon came under SACEUR's control. Meanwhile, a parallel buildup of the German Air Force and Navy also was being pursued. By 1965, as a result, the FRG was able to bring its rearmament effort to a successful culmination for its active forces: deployment of a 12-division Army, an Air Force of ten tactical fighter wings, and a Navy of 12 squadrons. German reserves were created in the 1970s.

The German buildup added enormous muscle to NATO's posture. It bolstered NATO's air arm by about 30%. Its effect on NATO's maritime posture was less marked, but it did provide the important capability for defending the Baltic and the critical Danish straits. On land, each German division fielded more soldiers than its U.S. counterpart and deployed a similar complement of heavy weapons. The German Army was able to form three powerful, independent corps that were promptly integrated into NATO's operational scheme. In total, the German Army virtually doubled NATO's peacetime strength.

During these years, the German Army also underwent a series of internal changes as its doctrine evolved. Its divisions originally had been structured along traditional lines with three regimental-style 'combat commands' apiece. In 1959 they were altered to a configuration that included three independent brigades (called Army Structure 2). Although this change was partly intended to prepare the Army's divisions for nuclear operations, it also was aimed at strengthening their capability for conventional combat. The Germans thus stopped short of fully emulating the U.S. Pentomic division and its nuclear-oriented five battle groups. Most German motorized infantry units were con-

---

verted to mechanized status by receiving armored personnel carriers. This left the German Army dominated by two types of brigades: armored and armored infantry (mechanized) brigades. The former had four battalions and the latter three. Each also included a battalion of field artillery. All support elements were to be armored. Although this mechanization provided German combat and support forces protection against nuclear blasts, it also gave them the mobility needed to contend with purely conventional Soviet armored attacks.

As the 1960s unfolded, the German Army, acting on SACEUR’s guidance, increasingly trained for the conventional and tactical nuclear operations that would be the first stage of flexible response. NATO’s emerging doctrine created new requirements that spawned a second internal change, which was undertaken in 1967 (Structure 3). At the time, the German Army was composed of seven mechanized (panzergrenadier), three armored (panzer), one mountain, and one airborne division. Two of the mechanized divisions were converted into Jaeger infantry units and were assigned to cover the Hessen Hills and the Bavarian forest, terrain that did not require much armor. The armored vehicles from these divisions were then used to form three new tank regiments, one of which was assigned to each corps. Some 10,000 soldiers were taken from support units, converted into infantry troops, and assigned to the combat divisions. Their support functions were transferred to reserve units. These changes bolstered the capability of the three German corps for combined arms operations. The extra infantry enlarged the “foxhole strength” of each division, thereby improving its ability to hold ground and to withstand the enemy infantry attacks that normally precede tank assaults. The additional tank regiments provided each corps a stronger armored reserve for containing localized penetrations. Taken together, they strengthened the German Army’s ability to conduct a firm conventional and nuclear defense.

This trend was reinforced by the high degree of proficiency that the German Army showed. Regardless of weapons inventories, newly created armies typically lack the operational expertise that plays a large role in their ability to fight effectively, particularly on the modern battlefield, which demands complicated military maneuvers and skillful coordination. The German Army, however, was able to overcome this problem by filling its officer and NCO positions with skilled veterans from World War II and by drawing on the experience gained in that war. As a result, the German Army quickly emerged as one of NATO’s best, matching both the experienced American and British armies. Rather than detracting from NATO’s mastery of the tactics and the operational art of war, the German Army added strength.

FORWARD DEFENSE CONCEPT

The deployment of the German Army, and the professionalism it brought to NATO, played a major role in NATO’s adoption of the forward defense concept. While this change was formally codified in MC 14/3, it was first initiated in 1963 when SHAPE issued planning guidance that moved NATO’s main line of resistance close to the inter-German border. The political genesis of this change was
the FRG's growing insistence that West Germany should draw the full benefit of its membership in NATO and its contributions to the alliance's military strength. Its timing was shaped largely by the schedule on which the West German Army was deployed. As a result, the forward defense concept increasingly took shape between 1950 and 1967.

The original rationale for the Rhine defense line had been purely military: NATO lacked the overall military strength for a forward defense and many of its units (French, British, Dutch, and Belgian) were based so far to the rear that they could not reach the forward areas in time to counter a surprise attack. By the late 1950s German rearmament had begun altering this military equation, and this trend gathered force in the 1960s as remaining German divisions were deployed (see Figure 9.1). As the new German divisions were activated, they mostly were deployed in the forward areas, near such exposed cities as Hamburg, Hannover, and Nuremberg. Moreover, they were distributed in rather uniform fashion on a north-south axis across the entire nation. This was done partly for purely national reasons. It enabled the FRG to make use of available Kasernes (barracks), and it also guaranteed that if the alliance did not respond in a crisis, at least German units would be available to defend the entire coun-

Figure 9.1—NATO Ground Force Basing Patterns: Late 1960s
try. But by intention, it also had a powerful influence on NATO's defense options. It provided NATO the military wherewithal to contemplate a forward defense along the entire frontier. Equally important, it guaranteed that fighting would begin in the forward areas and that the key battles would be fought there. Since NATO could hardly afford to divide its forces by having some forward and some back, it now had a powerful incentive to shift its operational center of gravity forward.

The exact military doctrine that NATO adopted in these years was the product of a complicated military calculus. The exposed location of many FRG cities and the forward positioning of German army units guaranteed that many advancing Soviet units first would be engaged directly at the inter-German border itself. At the same time, current Western doctrine called for flexible retrogrades in the forward corps sectors, especially against larger attacking forces. The purpose of this doctrine was to reduce losses while allowing NATO's units to employ maneuver tactics to inflict high casualties on advancing enemy formations. Also, the most defensible terrain in many areas lay somewhat to the rear, especially in northern Germany, where the Aller, Leine, and Weser Rivers typically ran between 20 and 100 kilometers west of the border. In southern Germany, the rough terrain around Hesse and Fulda, the Main and Danube Rivers, and the Bavarian mountains and forests all argued for a defense closer to the border. As a result, NATO's military plans in the 1960s came to envision localized mobile operations within the framework of forward defense. NATO's covering forces and main maneuver units were to initiate defense operations well forward. But if things did not go well, they were expected to retrograde until they reached favorable terrain, where an unyielding main line of resistance was to be established.4

The forward defense concept thus represented a balance between political dictates and military exigencies. It provided NATO with military options for defending the far forward cities and all FRG territory. But it recognized military realities and the necessity of taking advantage of modern doctrine and appropriate terrain features. Also, it enabled NATO to orient its main effort to blocking access to the lowlands and protecting the industrial Ruhr and the Frankfurt area. For these reasons, this concept served as a basis for NATO's planning from 1963 onward.

NATO's front line thus had undergone an important odyssey of its own (see Figure 9.2), one that is often overlooked by critics who claim that NATO made little military progress in the 1960s. While the forward defense concept reflected the political imperative of protecting the FRG's territory, it represented more than a politically inspired decision to draw an imaginary and indefensible line on a map. Since NATO's military authorities had long been chary of establishing front lines that they could not defend, the forward defense concept reflected an official military assessment of the growing strength of NATO's forces. This important change may have gone largely unnoticed by the Western public,

but its implications doubtless were not lost on Moscow. In any event, as NATO’s units began to develop plans for defending forward and to conduct military exercises on the relevant terrain, they acquired the ability to execute this concept. The result was to make NATO’s defense posture an increasingly difficult nut to crack.

Adding to NATO’s political and military strength was the manner in which missions for executing the forward defense concept were allocated. Ever since the original rearmament decision, Bonn had insisted that the other NATO allies should join with the FRG in accepting responsibility for defending West Germany. Its determination in this regard hardened when the forward defense concept was adopted. Purely military factors figured importantly in this calculus. Given density considerations, the German Army alone could not hope to establish a viable line along the entire front. In World War II, a German division normally had been able to defend only about 10–20 kilometers of frontage depending upon the terrain. The acquisition of modern weapons with greater lethal range and mobility promised to expand this frontage, but there were still practical limits on how much frontage a modern division could cover, especially if it was to withhold some reserves that could contain early breakthroughs.
and provide some staying power. For this reason, modern defensive frontages typically were set in the range of only 20–30 kilometers. Also, virtually the entire forward area needed to be covered in adequate density to block the invasion routes that were scattered up and down the border. As a result, at least 25–30 divisions were needed to defend a linear front line.

Beyond this, political motivations were important as well. The Germans wanted other allied units to stand alongside them to ensure that a Soviet attack could not be directed only to FRG forces. With allied units interlaced with German forces, any enemy assault automatically would draw many other NATO nations into the fray and thereby would commit the alliance as a whole, including the United States. Deterrence would be enhanced; in particular, NATO’s willingness to escalate would be strengthened when the time came. This political consideration, reinforced by military logic, led to agreement on a “layer cake” or “club sandwich” concept for establishing national corps sectors along the front line. In this concept, all Central Region national armies, minus the French, were assigned a critical corps-sized portion of the front. Moreover, allied corps were intermingled with German corps-sized formations uniformly across the front. This deployment pattern meant that no single mass of German units could readily be isolated for attack while allied formations were bypassed.

In the layer cake concept, the Central Region (AFCENT) was divided into two army groups: the Northern Army Group (NORTHAG) and the Central Army Group (CENTAG). To the immediate north of NORTHAG’s boundary, a large German division was deployed to guard the Hamburg-Lübeck area and the approaches to Denmark. In wartime, it was to come under the command of the AFNORTH commander (who was responsible for defending Denmark, the Danish straits, and Norway) and to join with the Danish Army in protecting the Jutland peninsula. In NORTHAG itself, the Dutch I Corps and German I Corps were deployed next to each other to block a Soviet advance on the Northern German plain. Immediately to the south of the German I Corps, the BAOR was assigned to guard the Braunschweig approach and the autobahn leading to Hannover and the Paderborn plain. Further south, the Belgian I Corps was directed to defend the Göttingen gap and the avenues of advance to the nearby Weser River.

In CENTAG, the German III Corps was deployed astride the Hessen corridor, to guard the NORTHAG-CENTAG boundary and to support the Belgians. To the south, U.S. V and VII Corps were assigned responsibility for a wide sector covering the Fulda gap, the Meiningen gap, the Coburg approach, the Cheb gap, and the Hof corridor. Along CENTAG’s southern boundary, where the terrain favors the defender more than most other areas, the German II Corps was directed to defend a broad frontage covering the Highway 14 approach, the Bohmen Wald, the Fuert approach, and the German-Austrian border.

Although NATO military authorities designed this layer cake concept (see Figure 9.3), several arguments were directed against it. The main argument was that it reflected the accidents of World War II rather than a coherent defense philosophy. It left the powerful U.S. Army in southern Germany and entrusted the defense of the more dangerous northern areas to presumably less capable
allied forces. A second argument was that it was so preoccupied with political concerns that it produced an operationally unmanageable hodgepodge of national corps sectors with dissimilar doctrines and force structures. A third argument was that it divided the German Army to the point where it could not gain full operational benefit from its large mass. Also, it seemed likely to compel deployment of U.S. reserves (arriving from the United States) to the northern area, thereby dissipating the mass of the U.S. Army as well.

All three of these arguments had merit; indeed, they were to lead NATO in the 1970s and 1980s to take steps to reduce the layer cake’s vulnerabilities. But they also were beside the point. If the German Army had been built to a much larger size, a different concept conceivably could have been adopted. For example, the Germans could have defended more than three forward sectors, and forces from the Low Countries could have reverted largely to a reserve role. But given the limited size of the German Army and NATO’s posture, as well as German deployment patterns and the high budgetary cost of moving U.S. forces, the alliance as a practical matter had no other alternative.

Additionally, the layer cake had important assets that its critics often ignored. For example, removal of Dutch and Belgian forces from the front line would have partially disengaged these nations from NATO’s decisionmaking in a crisis, given them fewer incentives to maintain their forces at a ready state, and required their forces to function as operational reserves, for which they were not well-suited. Moreover, criticisms of the layer cake implicitly assumed that Dutch, Belgian, and Danish forces would not fight effectively and that strong
U.S. forces were not needed in the Fulda-Meiningen area. Neither assumption was valid. While the layer cake might not have been militarily ideal, it by no means was an operationally infeasible arrangement. Its successful execution required prompt mobilization by all participants in a crisis and close coordination in wartime, tasks that were difficult but still manageable. All things considered, adoption of this concept represented an important step forward for NATO, not a step backward. Precisely for this reason, NATO’s layer cake deployment survived the test of time. It remained the foundation for NATO’s forward defense concept until the Cold War ended and Soviet troops were being withdrawn.

ALLIED DRAWDOWNS AND THE FRENCH WITHDRAWAL

Partially offsetting these gains was a series of actions taken by some allied nations in the late 1960s to pare back their forces, despite MC 14/3’s adoption and U.S. complaints. The Belgians completed their decade-long drawdown by reducing their army to only two divisions and two reserve brigades. Despite successful negotiations with the FRG on reducing foreign exchange costs associated with the stationing of British troops in West Germany, the U.K. withdrew one brigade and one tactical air squadron. Later, several thousand soldiers were withdrawn for duty in Ulster. Although these soldiers could have returned quickly, their removal degraded the BAOR’s readiness. As a result, the BAOR’s force level had declined from 77,000 in 1957 to about 52,000 in 1966. The Canadians reduced from one division to a single brigade. Dutch and Danish defense spending was influenced by competing domestic programs and liberal constituencies; as a result, their forces also declined in readiness and modernization.

These downward trends marked an important change in NATO’s burden-sharing arrangements in the 1960s. NATO originally was created as an alliance in which all powers were to play a major contributing role. By the end of the 1960s, a new pattern had begun to emerge in which the United States and West Germany provided the lion’s share of forces while the other allies had relegated themselves to a lesser status. This diminished role was particularly noticeable with respect to Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark; they all scaled back their contributions as West Germany’s military strength grew. At the same time, however, this adverse trend began to stabilize as the 1960s drew to a close. The British decided to withdraw their forces east of Suez, a development that curtailed their presence elsewhere around the globe but enabled them to concentrate their military resources on the defense of Europe. Meanwhile, the Dutch, Belgian, and Danish governments expressed their intent at least to continue meeting the obligations that were still theirs. Although their defense efforts continued to slacken in many areas, they did maintain most of their commitments to specific NATO ground, air, and naval missions.

The most serious reversal of all, of course, was France’s withdrawal from the NATO integrated military command. While this step was formalized in 1966, it had been under way in stages for several years. Its origins went back to France’s
failure in the 1950s to secure a satisfactory role in NATO; key contributing events were the 1956 Suez crisis and U.S. reluctance to aid France’s nuclear programs. In 1959, the French Mediterranean fleet was removed from NATO command; also, nuclear-capable U.S. air squadrons (250 aircraft) were compelled to leave when de Gaulle vetoed further U.S. storage of nuclear weapons on French soil. In 1960, Paris refused to participate fully in NATO’s newly integrated air defense system. In 1963, the French Atlantic fleet was withdrawn. In 1963, the French also declined to assign their army’s newly created First Corps to NATO (the already-existing Second Corps remained under NATO command). In 1965, a new tactical air command was established under national control and not assigned to NATO. Early in 1966, the French declined to participate in NATO military exercises that, they felt, departed from MC 14/2. Against this background, France’s formal departure from NATO’s integrated military structure later that year was not without ample precedent.\footnote{For an analysis of French force trends and doctrine, see Diego Ruiz-Palmer, “France,” in Simon (ed.), NATO-Warsaw Pact Mobilization, Chap. 9.}

By this time, the French Army, which was withdrawn from Algeria in the early 1960s, had made progress in rebuilding itself. By late 1966, it fielded four divisions (expanded to five the following year). Two of these divisions, which were based in West Germany, and seven air wings had been assigned to NATO. The remainder, based in France, were retained under French control but were available for commitment to NATO in a crisis. De Gaulle’s action removed all of these ground and air forces from their previous commitments to NATO’s operational plans. Beyond doubt, this was a troublesome loss for NATO: It took away about 15% of the alliance’s M-Day military strength.

Further complicating this loss was an additional unsettling development. French forces were instructed to execute a new, purely national military doctrine, one that was not ostensibly aligned with NATO’s strategy. According to French declaratory policy, they no longer were intended for automatic employment in NATO’s forward defense of West Germany. Instead they were oriented to protecting French territory. This suggested that they might enter combat only after NATO’s defenses had collapsed and enemy troops were advancing on France itself. At this point, French policy implied, they would engage the enemy with a tactical nuclear barrage, to be followed, if necessary, by a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union itself. The purpose of this “deterrent maneuver” would be to persuade the Soviets to stop short of any violation of French borders. It also implied that France would cross the nuclear threshold, conduct a tactical nuclear campaign on German soil, and possibly start a general nuclear war independently of parallel actions by NATO. On the surface, this doctrine hardly seemed in the spirit of MC 14/3; indeed, it threatened to undercut the basis of flexible response.

To compound things, de Gaulle requested that NATO remove all U.S., Canadian, and NATO forces from France, all NATO headquarters and command staffs, and virtually all military facilities. Although he stretched out his initially tight deadline of four months, even the revised schedule of one year levied a
daunting requirement on NATO. Withdrawal of NATO’s combat forces involved the vacating of eight airbases, a few ground installations, and many related facilities. Removal of NATO’s headquarters imposed an equally tough administrative burden. Since the alliance’s inception, Paris had been NATO’s institutional home. NATO’s large civilian headquarters was located there, as was SHAPE, AFCENT, the U.S. European command (EUCOM), and other staffs. Since NATO was compelled quickly to make other arrangements, the task of moving to Belgium, Germany, and elsewhere consumed a great deal of time and energy. For a period, it disrupted normal business and diverted the alliance’s attention from other pressing matters.\textsuperscript{6}

In addition, de Gaulle denied NATO the freedom to use French territory for logistic purposes. In some ways, this step dealt NATO the worst blow of all. France had provided NATO the battlefield depth that any army seeks. As a result, NATO had established much of its logistic infrastructure there, where it would be safer from Soviet attack and available to NATO forces if they were compelled to retreat. The U.S. Army’s logistic headquarters were located in France, many warehouses and supply installations were there, and logistic supplies for U.S. and other NATO forces regularly were received in French ports and transported to Germany along French roads and rail lines. De Gaulle’s decision not only compelled NATO to move its facilities, but also denied NATO the important military advantage of a secure logistic base on its likely avenue of retreat.

Taken together, de Gaulle’s actions inflicted a painful blow on NATO’s prestige and Washington’s pride. Over time, however, they proved to be less militarily disastrous than surface appearances suggested. Part of the reason was that NATO responded to de Gaulle’s rebuff in a measured way. The United States, joined by Britain and the Netherlands, initially took offense. But the FRG and Belgium argued that France was still a member of the alliance and urged a cautious response. As a result, NATO set aside the impulse to force a confrontation with de Gaulle and instead behaved in a businesslike fashion. NATO and SHAPE headquarters promptly were welcomed in Belgium, AFCENT moved to the Netherlands, and EUCOM settled in Germany. Within the appointed time, NATO’s combat forces also found new homes. Further, NATO established new logistics arrangements, primarily in the lowlands and northern Germany. While the new logistic supply bases were less secure, they also were located closer to the forward areas, thus providing shorter supply lines and quicker service.

Meanwhile, France did remain an active, if often troublesome, member of NATO. In addition to retaining its seat on the NAC, Paris continued to participate in all NATO committees that did not involve the integrated military structure. This at least allowed its voice to be heard, and it preserved an adequate institutional framework for maintaining alliance unity on policy issues. While French forces no longer participated in NATO’s military planning, Paris soon

\textsuperscript{6}For an analysis of French policy for NATO withdrawal, see Harrison, The Reluctant Ally, Chap. 4. For the impact on NATO, see Kaplan and Keilner, "Surviving the French Withdrawal."
signed a bilateral agreement with Bonn to continue basing its forces in West Germany and to conduct regular FRG-French joint exercises. As a result of a 1960 Bonn-Paris bilateral accord, the FRG also was allowed to retain its ammunition storage sites and logistical installations in France. In general, this pattern was to repeat itself elsewhere. The French established distance from NATO's integrated military activities, but they proved willing to continue and even expand bilateral military relationships with individual NATO nations, including the United States.

Nor did French withdrawal from NATO's military structure prove to be complete. In exchange for continued French membership in NATO's air defense alert system (NADGE), allied military aircraft continued routinely using French airspace. Several NATO nations were permitted to use French training areas, and NATO was allowed to continue using its critical oil pipeline running across France and linking the Atlantic ports to Germany. These and other steps preserved at least a fair degree of French military involvement in NATO and helped buffer the negative effects of withdrawal.

Furthermore, the doctrinal split between France and NATO proved to be less severe than at first seemed likely. In the 1950s, the French Army had been responsible for helping defend the area where West Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia met, the least dangerous area in West Germany. Consistent with the "Weser-Lech" concept at the time, their defense positions were located well in the rear areas, about one-half the distance between the inter-German border and the Rhine River. When NATO's forward defense concept was moved forward, the French declined to shift their defense positions into the frontal zone. This sector was assigned to the German II Corps, aided by German territorial reserve units that were being created then. For this reason, France's withdrawal did not deal the forward defense concept a crippling operational blow.

The more serious problem was the depletion of NATO's combat reserves. But even here reality was deceiving. Although de Gaulle had removed French ground forces from formal commitment to NATO, he was careful to preserve the option of promptly recommitting them in a crisis if France's interests so dictated. In 1967 French military authorities gave real life to this option when they reached agreement with NATO on establishing procedures for joint contingency planning. This step reflected Paris's willingness to acknowledge, in private, that French forces would have a far more difficult time stopping a Soviet attack if NATO's armies already had been defeated. Timely commitment of French forces to forestall a NATO collapse thus was an option that Paris was anxious to keep open.

With respect to nuclear escalation, French doctrine also proved to be flexible. Evidently the French remained open to committing the two-division II Corps to NATO in a purely conventional counterattack role to contain a Soviet breakthrough. This concept coincided with NATO's operational needs. NATO's forces did not require additional front-line units, but they did need larger operational reserves, something that the French were willing to provide, albeit on a conditional basis. France's plans for nuclear escalation evidently centered on
the backup I Corps, but this force was planned for commitment after II Corps. By the time nuclear use by this corps became necessary to defend France, NATO itself in all likelihood would have resorted to nuclear weapons. For this reason, NATO and French military doctrine proved to be less incompatible than de Gaulle’s declaratory policy implied.

France’s withdrawal from NATO’s defenses thus was more apparent than real, and less harmful than many feared. French forces gained flexibility to operate independently, but they also remained capable of working with NATO. The key change was that Paris now reserved the right to make its own decisions. This stance complicated NATO’s peacetime planning, but it did not render impossible an effective wartime response. What promised to matter most in a crisis was national priorities. As events unfolded, it became increasingly clear that in an actual crisis, France’s priorities probably would not be different from NATO’s. Indeed, the alliance as a whole now seemed to have its defense priorities relatively straight.
As the alliance approached its 20th anniversary in 1969, the Western media often conveyed the impression that NATO, suffering decay from within, was facing a crisis. On the political level, some of this apprehension seemed justified. France had left the military arm of the alliance. The Germans still harbored their doubts about Washington’s leadership and, at Chancellor Brandt’s instigation, were pursuing an Ostpolitik seemingly aimed at doing business with the Soviets. The British were caught in an economic malaise that was eroding their defense efforts. Many other allied nations were falling under the sway of their liberal parliaments and appeared on the verge of sharply scaling back their military commitments.

In the United States, meanwhile, the Johnson administration first had lost domestic support over Vietnam and then had been driven out of office. McNamara, one of NATO’s most ardent supporters, had suffered a similar fate. The new President, Richard Nixon, brought a pro-NATO attitude to office and wanted to reinvigorate the alliance, but even so, the alliance had changed over the past two decades in important ways. NATO originally had been conceived as a military alliance, but it was born at a time of mounting hopes for an integrated Europe and a close transatlantic community of democratic nations. In the interim, NATO had served its original military purpose well, but the larger hopes that some held for the transatlantic community had been dealt a cruel blow. By 1969, it was apparent that the alliance was made up of sovereign nations with independent and sometimes conflicting interests. The events of the late 1960s suggested that this harsh reality was causing the transatlantic community to approach the limits of how far it could go—for the moment at least—in the direction of larger visions. West Europeans turned toward the European Economic Community as the best vehicle for achieving community-building. NATO’s role remained confined to the realm of security policy, an important charter, but still a limited one.

The alliance thus had lost some of its luster. Moreover, NATO had been so successful at deterring war that some were beginning to question whether the threat of a Soviet invasion was real. A contributing factor here was that the Soviet Union was issuing increasingly strong appeals for détente in Europe. The

---

fall of the mercurial Khrushchev in 1964 had ushered in the Brezhnev era. Brezhnev (and his partner at the time, Kosygin) later came to be associated with stodgy leadership and an often hard line toward the West. But at the time, Brezhnev and Kosygin were viewed as early architects of détente. In 1966 the Warsaw Pact, meeting at Bucharest, had issued a formal appeal for détente; this offer was repeated the next year at Karlovy Vary and again at Budapest in 1969. These communiqués contained numerous diplomatic thorns, but they also suggested that a political dialogue with the East was becoming possible. It seemed that the Cold War was declining, the Soviet threat losing its sharp edge, and NATO’s mission eroding.

The onset of détente sent worrisome shivers through NATO official circles. One worry was that Western parliaments, never enthusiastic supporters of large defense budgets, would seize the opportunity to scale back military spending in unhealthy ways. An equally important concern was that NATO’s nations would begin pursuing individual courses toward Moscow and that the alliance would unravel from within. The West Europeans worried that the United States, already turning inward as a result of the growing Vietnam debacle, would strike a deal with the Soviets over their heads. The United States, meanwhile, was harboring fears that West Germany, now guided by Brandt’s Ostpolitik, would drift away from NATO as it bargained with Moscow on East Germany, Berlin, and a new security order in Eastern Europe. In the end, these fears proved unwarranted: Both the United States and the FRG behaved responsibly. But at the time, neither the United States nor Western Europe knew that this would be the outcome.

Not all of the political trends were negative for the alliance. NATO had reacted to the Soviet challenge by assigning itself the mission, in the Harmel Report, of orchestrating the West’s diplomatic response to détente. It also proclaimed that internal unity and alliance military strength would help the West channel détente in the proper direction. This stance tended to shore up the alliance’s raison d’être and provided a rationale for maintaining strong defenses even though the war clouds were dissipating. Aiding NATO’s efforts in this regard were the Soviets, who, their soothing words notwithstanding, were clearly in the midst of a major defense buildup. In late 1968 they had not only invaded one of their own allies—Czechoslovakia—but had also issued the Brezhnev doctrine, which proclaimed their right to do so again in the future. Their stated willingness to employ military force to punish allies that deviated from the fold raised doubts about their willingness to behave benignly toward West European nations, especially those not Socialist in the first place.

Détente notwithstanding, NATO’s military rationale still seemed strong enough to weather attacks from those who claimed that the Soviet threat had disappeared. But beyond doubt, the alliance’s economic foundation was shifting. The now prosperous West European nations had become not only a major, interdependent trading partner of the United States but also, in some respects, a competitor. The result was the onset of growing tensions on trade and financial issues and the rise of American resentment on burden-sharing. In the Congress, disillusionment with Western Europe, spawned by complaints over
economic issues and the unhelpful stance of some allies on Vietnam, was growing at a fast rate. Indeed, Senator Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) was beginning to gain support for a resolution that he had tabled calling for major American troop withdrawals from Europe. If Mansfield were to succeed, reciprocal allied steps to pull away from NATO seemed likely. All of this boded ill. Although few sober observers were predicting an imminent collapse, NATO certainly seemed to have fallen on hard times.

NATO’s UPWARD MILITARY SLOPE

In the area of NATO’s military strategy and forces, however, the situation was not bleak. The alliance, to be sure, had gone through a rocky period and had experienced some setbacks. Yet it had successfully adopted a new strategy, one that made military sense while meeting political needs on both sides of the Atlantic. NATO had also strengthened its ability to conduct coalition warfare and to plan together in developing its forces for the future. The 1960s saw not only a sizable U.S. nuclear buildup but also a nuclear sharing agreement and the deployment of several thousand nuclear warheads and delivery systems to Western Europe. As a result, NATO’s nuclear deterrent was now unquestionably on solid footing.

Table 10.1 indicates trends during the 1960s for NATO and Soviet/Warsaw Pact nuclear forces. NATO’s strategic nuclear forces grew only modestly while transitioning from bombers to missiles. Meanwhile, NATO’s theater systems roughly doubled, primarily because of the U.S. deployment of nuclear tube artillery to U.S. and allied units. Soviet forces also grew substantially, especially the strategic nuclear forces. By the end of the decade, the Soviets were rapidly approaching strategic parity with the United States and NATO, albeit not yet in ways threatening the West’s deterrent. In theater systems, NATO preserved its roughly 2:1 edge. The net result was to maintain an overall Western numerical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S./NATO</th>
<th></th>
<th>Soviet/Warsaw Pact</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Nuclear Forces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICBMs</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1,054</td>
<td>0-25</td>
<td>858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLBMs</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>25-75</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombers</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>2,374</td>
<td>200-275</td>
<td>1,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater Delivery Systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tube artillery</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface, surface missiles</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear capable aircraft</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>775</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Author’s estimate; multiple sources.
lead but to deprive the West of any operationally significant edge. As MC 14/3 recognized, by 1969 the era of mutual nuclear deterrence had arrived.

Equally important, NATO's conventional forces themselves had become considerably stronger. The 1960s saw a second period of growth in the size of NATO's forces (primarily German). This also was a transitional decade in which NATO began concentrating on how to improve the quality of its forces rather than simply enlarge them, an approach that would come to dominate the 1970s. The improvements that were made in NATO's forces in the 1960s are often overlooked by arguments that this decade was a period of decline for NATO. The alliance might have argued a good deal in the 1960s, but it also achieved a fair amount.

The upward trend in NATO's conventional defense posture becomes especially clear if we compare NATO's ground buildup rate in 1969 with that of earlier years. Table 10.2 displays this trend in division/equivalents (DE), one useful measure of merit. In this respect, despite the nuclear-inspired downturn of the Eisenhower years, NATO was better off in 1959 than 1949, the year the alliance was formed. Even so, NATO still was capable of fielding only 17 DEs on M-Day and about 22 DEs after a full month of mobilization. By 1969, NATO could deploy 24 DEs by M+10, a number that would grow to 29 if, as expected, the French chose to reassign their forces to NATO early in a crisis. Later arrival of U.S. reserves, slowed by reliance on sealift, would have brought the posture higher in succeeding weeks.

Added on was an important internal restructuring by NATO. In 1959, only 13 of NATO’s 22 divisions (at M+30) were armored or mechanized units. The remainder—fully 50%—were straight-leg infantry units that would have been hard-pressed to compete with Warsaw Pact forces, which had begun converting to armored/mechanized status in the mid-1950s. NATO reacted to this disadvantageous situation by following suit. By 1969, 27 of NATO’s 37 divisions were either armored or mechanized. This change bolstered NATO’s competitiveness on the battlefield.

This expansion and reconfiguration of NATO's force posture resulted in a major enlargement of NATO's inventory of combat manpower and critical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>M-Day</th>
<th>M+10</th>
<th>M+30/45</th>
<th>M+60</th>
<th>M+90</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969***</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Author's estimate; multiple sources.
**Three independent brigades are counted as one division/equivalent.
***For 1969, assuming France committo forces after one week.

2For a detailed assessment, see Isby and Kamps, Armies of NATO's Central Front.
weapons in Central Europe. Table 10.3 shows that NATO ground manpower increased by about 50% in this period, and its inventory of tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery, antitank weapons, and air defense systems roughly doubled. The gains in air power were less pronounced but not insubstantial.

Adding to this quantitative increase was an important qualitative gain brought about by modernization in virtually all categories. In particular, the 1960s saw the large-scale introduction of the M-60 (U.S.), Chieftain (U.K.), and Leopard I (FRG) tanks, all of which carried large guns, improved armored protection, and powerful diesel engines. In 1959, NATO fielded no modern tanks; by 1969, nearly two-thirds of its tank inventory was modern. Also, NATO’s artillery underwent a major modernization program. In 1959, roughly two-thirds of its artillery inventory was dominated by light 105-mm tubes that lacked the range and firepower for modern combat. By 1969, about 75% of NATO’s inventory was composed of heavy 155-mm pieces that met modern standards; most of these were self-propelled models that provided the cross-country mobility that towed pieces lacked. The combination of new tanks, self-propelled artillery, and deployment of several thousand armored personnel carriers gave NATO’s ground forces the capability to conduct a “combined arms” defense, necessary for defending against Warsaw Pact armored assaults.

Also important, antitank guided missiles began making their appearance in NATO’s inventory, thereby giving NATO’s infantry a capacity to stand up to enemy tanks. The 1950s had seen the introduction of recoilless rifles that, at the time, were thought capable of offsetting enemy armor. Once the Soviets began introducing T-62 and T-64 tanks with thick armor, however, these weapons began to lose their attractiveness. They lacked the capacity to punch through enemy armor, they were not accurate at the long ranges needed to keep Soviet tanks at bay, and they were too large and cumbersome to deploy in large

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10.3</th>
<th>Trends in NATO’s Inventory During the 1960s (M+30/45)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat manpower (000s)</td>
<td>810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisions</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigades/regiments</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division/equivalents</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanks</td>
<td>2,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APCs</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antitank weapons</td>
<td>1,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air defense weapons</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat aircraft</td>
<td>2,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Author’s estimates, from multiple sources, are based on a standard planning scenario envisioning a full-scale NATO mobilization and reinforcement effort launched a few days after a Warsaw Pact mobilization decision.
numbers. NATO turned to antitank missiles to solve this problem. They carried a shaped-charge munition that could penetrate better than a small kinetic energy round, they were more mobile, and they provided additional range. NATO's systems of the 1960s—the Cobra, ENTAC, SS-11, and Shillelagh—were fairly primitive devices that lacked high individual lethality. But by 1969, NATO had deployed about 2,000 of them, enough to begin making a difference by virtue of sheer numbers alone.

The 1960s also saw major progress by NATO in establishing a capable ground-based air defense missile system. In 1959, NATO's air defenses were composed of some 800 antiaircraft guns supported by a small force of Nike Hercules surface-to-air missile (SAM) launchers. This system lacked sufficient numbers to cover West German airspace and it had major weaknesses against high-performance enemy jet aircraft. The guns were usable only at low altitudes, and the Nike Hercules missiles were effective only at high altitudes, leaving a major gap at medium altitudes, where modern aircraft normally operate. During the 1960s, NATO began introducing such modern, medium-altitude systems as the HAWK, BLOODHOUND, and THUNDERBIRD. Also, low-altitude missile systems began to be introduced into NATO ground units. By 1969, NATO fielded several hundred SAM missile launchers that, along with antiaircraft guns, provided a much stronger defense at low and medium altitudes. As a result, NATO was able to form a strong SAM belt along the entire inter-German border, while providing defense of selected targets in the rear areas. This SAM belt was protection for NATO's ground forces and denied Warsaw Pact aircraft ready access to NATO's rear areas. An additional benefit was that this belt enabled NATO's air forces to defend alliance airspace with fewer interceptors, thereby allowing for diversion of more aircraft into critically important ground attack roles.

NATO's aircraft inventory also expanded during this decade. During the late 1950s, NATO's inventory had dipped downward, largely because several hundred British aircraft were retired as a result of London's budget cutback in 1957. During the 1960s, this reduction was offset by the deployment of the West German Air Force and by the expansion of USAF tactical air forces that McNamara funded. By 1969, NATO's air power posture in Central Europe (at M+30) stood at about 2,900 combat aircraft. Although this level was less than ideal, it did provide enough aircraft to perform critical air defense, interdiction, and close air support missions at least at minimum densities.

NATO's air forces also underwent a major modernization program during this decade. By the decade's end, virtually all of NATO's older aircraft had been retired. In their place stood a modern inventory of F-4 Phantom, F-104 Starfighter, and Buccaneer aircraft, which had considerably better aerodynamic characteristics, avionics, and munitions. Also, they were far better suited for conventional combat and for ground attack missions. Their predecessors had been primarily oriented to nuclear combat, sharply restricting NATO's conventional war-fighting capability.

Measured in absolute terms, NATO's defense posture thus grew importantly in overall capability during the 1960s. Table 10.4 suggests the magnitude of this
Table 10.4
Trends in NATO's Conventional Forces (M+30/45)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-place ground forces</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-place air forces</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground reinforcements</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air reinforcements</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Author's estimate, from multiple sources, based on static weapons scores.

upward trend by gauging NATO's combined ground and air combat power in terms of a single static index that combines quantity and quality. The table compares NATO's 1969 posture with its 1959 posture; 1948 is provided as a basis for comparison with NATO at its origins. Overall, during the 1960s, NATO's "in-place" forces and M+30 forces grew by nearly 75% in combat power, an impressive amount. What is equally important about the 1969 posture is that NATO's forces now were prepared to fight a conventional war, at least initially. In 1959, they had been too small for a conventional defense and were primarily oriented—by training, doctrine, weapons, and structure—for nuclear combat. By 1969, NATO's forces were well on the way toward becoming aligned with NATO's new strategy of flexible response.

DYNAMICS OF THE NATO-WARSAW PACT CONVENTIONAL BALANCE

NATO's improvements in the 1960s must be judged, of course, in relation to how Warsaw Pact forces evolved during this decade, and their evolution was also considerable. As a result, Central Europe witnessed quite an expansion of the NATO-Warsaw Pact arms race during this decade. During the early 1960s, Soviet nonnuclear military programs slackened somewhat because of Khrushchev's cutbacks. Beginning in 1964, the Soviets embarked on a major and sustained defense buildup that not only led to a major increase in Soviet nuclear forces but also had a marked effect on Soviet/Warsaw Pact conventional forces in Europe as well. These forces did not expand a great deal in size. Apart from the deployment of five Soviet divisions into Czechoslovakia after the 1968 invasion, overall levels and geographic deployments of Soviet/Warsaw Pact manpower, divisions, and combat aircraft remained roughly constant, but these forces did improve a great deal in combat capability.3

Table 10.5 displays purely quantitative trends for those Soviet/Warsaw Pact forces that would probably have participated in an invasion of Central Europe. Included are some 27 Soviet divisions in Eastern Europe, 30 East European divisions (Polish, Czech, and GDR), and 33 Soviet reserve divisions in the USSR's western military districts, 90 divisions in total. The table shows that Soviet ma-

3For a detailed analysis of Soviet/Warsaw Pact force trends in the 1960s, see Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe.
Table 10.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>1969</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divisions</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat manpower (000s)</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>1,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanks</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APCs</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antitank weapons</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat aircraft</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Author's estimates, from multiple sources.

...neuer unit, tank, and artillery inventories grew by only about 10%; the air forc
did not grow at all. The one major exception is armored personnel carriers, which roughly doubled in size as part of an ongoing effort to fully mecha
nize Warsaw Pact infantry units.

Within these generally constant force levels, however, Soviet/Warsaw Pact forces grew considerably stronger because of internal modernization with qualitatively better weapons. In particular, Warsaw Pact armored forces bene
fited from the introduction of T-62 and T-64 tanks, which began entering the inven
tory in the mid-1960s. In addition, BTR personnel carriers, SAGGER antitank missiles, larger artillery tubes, SAM systems, and modern MiG-21 and SU-7 fighters were introduced in large quantities. Taken together, these increases in quantity and quality produced a roughly 30–40% increase in the combat capability of Warsaw Pact forces. This is an impressive amount, but it falls below NATO’s gain of 75%.

NATO thus made a net gain, relative to the Warsaw Pact, during the 1960s. Table 10.6 measures the magnitude of this gain by displaying Warsaw Pact to NATO force ratios at M+30 in the various weapon categories. The table shows that in 1959, NATO still trailed the Warsaw Pact by about 2.7:1 in total capability, taking into account ground and air and quantity and quality. The difference was even larger in ground maneuver units (4:1) and tanks, where the ratio was a high 8:1. By 1969, this difference had appreciably narrowed. The ratio of total capacity was down to about 1.7:1, with the tank ratio reduced to 3.5:1 and the two sides close to equality in manpower.

At the same time, Table 10.6 also shows that the Warsaw Pact still held a siz
able lead in forces and capability. What do these data suggest about whether, and to what degree, NATO succeeded in building a viable conventional defense posture of the sort that confidently could execute MC 14/3? Even if NATO failed to overtake the Warsaw Pact (a goal that it never officially endorsed), did it successfully rectify the conventional balance satisfactorily? If not, by how much did it fall short?

We can best begin gauging the effect of NATO’s improvement efforts by setting aside comparisons between NATO and the Warsaw Pact and instead mea
suring NATO’s posture in relation to Western estimates of the force levels that are required for defending Central Europe. The large number of official U.S.
Table 10.6
Comparative Trends: 1959–1969
(Warsaw Pact to NATO ratios)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>1969</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manpower</td>
<td>2.0:1</td>
<td>1.3:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division/equivalents</td>
<td>4.0:1</td>
<td>2.4:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanks</td>
<td>8.0:1</td>
<td>3.5:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APCs</td>
<td>2.6:1</td>
<td>3.2:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antitank weapons</td>
<td>2.0:1</td>
<td>1.2:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>3.3:1</td>
<td>2.5:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat aircraft</td>
<td>1.7:1</td>
<td>1.4:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total capability</td>
<td>2.7:1</td>
<td>1.7:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and NATO studies that were written during the Cold War consistently developed a "theory of requirements" that identifies three different levels of ground capability as being especially required for defense there. The differences among these three levels are largely a function of the ambition of NATO's political and military objectives.4

- First, some 25–30 divisions were assessed as needed to form a cohesive front line of divisions and corps to cover the West German border areas, which provided about 750 kilometers of frontage stretching from northern Germany to the Austrian border. A front line of this magnitude, it was held, could confidently provide a few days of forward defense against a massive enemy attack (80–100 divisions), but not much more.
- Second, a total of 40–50 divisions were estimated as required to constitute a credible "initial" defense, one of enough staying power to meet MC 14/3’s minimum goals for a posture that could defend forward and delay escalation at least for a few weeks.
- Third, a posture of 50–60 divisions was assessed as needed to provide a confident capability to sustain a forward defense against a strong attacker indefinitely.

This theory of requirements did not postulate that NATO's forces needed to match the Warsaw Pact in some mechanistic sense. Instead, it was based on the quite different assumption that NATO's goal was limited to fielding enough forces to execute a defensive strategy whose requirements were dissimilar from those of the offensive strategy being pursued by the Warsaw Pact. For a variety of reasons, military assessments of Central Europe generally held that an attacking Warsaw Pact army would need about 80–100 divisions to conduct a sustained advance against a prepared defense. But, these assessments held, NATO would have enjoyed the classical advantages of fighting on the defensive.

---

4For more detail, see Richard L. Kugler, "Surviving Forty: Toward a Robust NATO Conventional Defense," in Golden et al. (eds.), NATO at Forty: Change, Continuity, and Prospects. These force levels have their origins in SHAPE studies of the early 1950s, and were updated as alliance strategy evolved.
(e.g., prepared positions and preselected terrain) and thus would have faced a less operationally demanding situation that would require fewer forces.

As a result, the alliance’s studies normally concluded, NATO’s posture to some degree could tolerate a numerical disparity and still hope to contain the enemy, even if the Warsaw Pact possessed large enough forces to conduct a wide-ranging offensive. What mattered more than the ratio of forces on both sides was the capability of NATO’s posture to perform the operational missions that were associated with a forward defense. These missions included coverage of the front line in adequate density and the use of reserves and counterconcentration tactics to contain localized penetrations. Planning factors traditionally associated with these missions were based not only on the enemy threat but also on assessments of the terrain, density standards, force-to-space relationships, and operational doctrine. When added together, these planning factors consistently suggested that NATO’s posture could be smaller than the Warsaw Pact’s and still be adequate for the alliance’s strategy.

When judged by this theory of requirements, NATO’s buildup in the 1960s clearly had an important operational effect. In 1959 NATO had enough ground forces in Central Europe (or available within a month) to mount a plausible conventional defense effort. But it did not have enough forces, especially early in the mobilization process, to establish and hold a strong front line along the inter-German border for any period of time. Even after three months of mobilization, it still would have lacked depth and staying power. As a result, in almost any plausible scenario it would have been compelled to conduct a mobile defense in retrograde. In other words, it would have had to retreat steadily and to use mobile tactics to defend itself. In all likelihood, NATO’s forces would have been driven back to the Rhine River, and perhaps further. NATO thus could not have conducted a sustained forward defense of the sort envisioned by MC 14/3. If it had attempted a forward defense, nuclear escalation would have been necessary very early.

By 1969, this situation had changed appreciably. Enough NATO forces were then present in Central Europe to establish a solid front line within a few days. Moreover, NATO was capable of adding depth to its posture within one or two months. As a result, NATO had become physically capable of mounting not only a conventional defense, but a forward defense as well. Unless caught unprepared, NATO was not compelled by any early lack of forces to resort immediately to mobile tactics and retrograde operations, or to escalate promptly. And if given enough time to fully mobilize by deploying U.S. reserves to Europe, it had the physical capacity to establish the kind of stalwart defense that could not readily be dislodged even by a full-fledged Warsaw Pact attack. For the first time in NATO’s history, the issue was no longer one of total assets, but rather relative mobilization and buildup rates.

To be sure, NATO’s posture in the early stages of mobilization still fell short of the 50–60 divisions needed for an ideal defense, and even below the 40–50 divisions needed for an “initial” defense. NATO’s deficiency was especially marked during the critical first month of mobilization, but its forces were now close enough to the required level to ensure that they no longer could easily be
pushed off the continent, especially if the Warsaw Pact failed to mobilize quickly and attack strongly. Moreover, since the war is a matter of probabilities rather than certainties, NATO’s forces had become strong enough to raise genuine doubts in Moscow about the likelihood that an attack against the West would succeed at all. NATO’S forces thus had done more than merely grow in a linear, quantitative sense. In operational terms, they had ascended onto a higher plateau and thereby altered the deterrence equation in Europe.

This achievement did not mean that NATO had solved all of its defense problems. It still remained vulnerable, particularly if the Soviets successfully did mobilize quickly, attack, and wear down NATO’s defenses before the alliance’s own mobilization effort had built up steam. Given NATO’s likely hesitancy to mobilize early in a crisis, this was a contingency that could not be discounted. Indeed, NATO’s military planners were inclined to assume that NATO, in fact, would mobilize in a sluggish way. In succeeding years, this assumption was to become embedded in NATO’s planning.

The task of mobilizing and reinforcing quickly, however, did not appear to be an easy one for the Soviets themselves to accomplish. Only some 27 Soviet divisions were deployed near the inter-German border in peacetime. Even if the Soviets were to draw on highly ready East European forces nearby, they would have been able to attack after a few days with only about 40 divisions. As Table 10.7 shows, this hardly seemed enough for confidence that NATO’s forces could be easily overwhelmed. Consequently, the Soviets would have had to mobilize at least the 20 additional East European divisions nearby. Even that, however, would have yielded a Warsaw Pact advantage of only 1.2–1.4:1, depending upon reinforcement rates on both sides. As a result, mobilization of the Soviet reserve divisions based in the Baltic, Byelorussian, and Carpathian military districts would have been necessary. If done very quickly, this would have enabled the Soviets to achieve a 2:1 advantage. Most of these units, however, were maintained in low readiness status and would have required a period of refresher training before moving forward. In addition, the physical act of transporting them to the forward areas by road and rail seemed likely to be time consuming. Exactly how much time few Western analysts pretended to know. But it seemed likely to be a matter of weeks, and perhaps months, rather than days, all of which would work to NATO’s advantage. At the time, a Warsaw Pact attack around M+30 seemed the most likely scenario: The force ratio by then would have been down to 1.7:1 if NATO mobilized quickly. In the extreme case of a very slow Warsaw Pact buildup, the Soviets would have found themselves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>40-Division Attack</th>
<th>60-Division Attack</th>
<th>90-Division Attack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2:1</td>
<td>1.2–1.4:1</td>
<td>2.0–1.2:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Author’s estimate based on a standard planning scenario in which NATO mobilizes a few days after the Warsaw Pact.
with only a 1.2:1 overall advantage and opposing them a large, well-prepared NATO posture of 52 divisions.\textsuperscript{5}

As the 1960s drew to a close, much uncertainty remained about the conventional military balance in Europe, including the thorny issue of relative buildup rates. Nonetheless, one thing was clear: NATO was in a better position than had been the case only ten years before. Whether NATO's forces, in fact, could withstand a full Warsaw Pact attack without resorting to nuclear weapons was still a controversial matter. But for the first time in NATO's history, the balance had become close enough to render this issue an object of intensive analysis, scrutiny, and debate. This alone was an important accomplishment. It meant that while NATO still could not feel fully confident of its military posture, neither could the Warsaw Pact. As NATO knew well, the risks that the Kremlin now found itself facing would probably produce the kind of hesitant, cautious behavior that MC 14/3 targeted.

NATO's progress during his tenure led McNamara to conclude, in his final official DoD posture statement in 1968, that while the risks in Europe were far from entirely eliminated, NATO's posture in Central Europe was now generally adequate to deter and defend against a Soviet attack. This appraisal partially reflected his own downgrading of the Warsaw Pact threat and his doubts that a Soviet attack could be mounted quickly. But it also reflected satisfaction on his part with the size and configuration of NATO's forces in Europe as well as U.S. reinforcement capabilities. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, SACEUR, and allied military authorities did not fully share in this optimism about either the threat or NATO's prospects, but they did recognize, and acknowledge, that the situation had changed importantly over the past decade.

The issue dividing McNamara from his military advisers was not a matter of victory or defeat, or adequacy versus inadequacy, but rather the kind of disagreement that regularly arises between managers of defense programs and seasoned professionals who lead troops into battle. It was a result of differing technical analysis, judgment, interpretation, and emphasis. It also was a product of dissimilar approaches to handling uncertainty: whether appraisals should be based on how a war most likely would transpire or instead on conservative standards that recognize how the unexpected can occur and things can go wrong. For these reasons, the disagreement ultimately boiled down to a matter of confidence levels and insurance. Neither McNamara nor the military embraced an extreme judgment one way or the other. McNamara felt more confident about NATO's posture, and the military, less.\textsuperscript{6}

The truth of the matter probably lay somewhere between their differing appraisals. Especially at the time, U.S. and allied professional officers had a reputation for being too pessimistic about the West's defense prospects. At the same time, McNamara's own assessments were probably too sanguine. McNamara and his OSD analysts tended to dwell on force levels and early force generation rates. This approach led them to overlook a host of less visible but

\textsuperscript{5}Relative buildup rates throughout the mobilization cycle were not addressed in detail by either McNamara's annual reports or Enthoven and Smith, \textit{How Much Is Enough?}

\textsuperscript{6}See McNamara's annual reports and congressional testimony, 1966-1968, multiple volumes.
still important deficiencies in NATO's posture. Examples are NATO's lack of standardization and interoperability, inadequate ammunition stocks and war reserves, inadequate strategic lift, a redundant but inefficient logistic support system, a cumbersome command system, and other liabilities stemming from the need to fight as a coalition. These deficiencies were to rise to prominence in the 1970s, when they became focal points of two major NATO efforts—AD-70 and the Long Term Defense Plan—designed to solve them. Because they would have retarded NATO's performance in the 1960s, NATO's defense prospects probably were not as good as McNamara implied, even if they were not as bad as the military concluded.

Moreover, McNamara's analysis was focused primarily on the Central Region and said little about the flanks or the maritime balance. At the time, the U.S. and British navies still dominated the sea, and NATO was not yet concerned about the Soviet naval challenge. This situation was to begin changing a few years later as the Soviets began deploying a blue water navy capable of interdicting NATO's seaborne supply lines in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, the situation on the flanks, an important but chronically overlooked issue, was more precarious than in Central Europe. In particular, both northern Norway and Turkey lay exposed to Soviet military power in ways that NATO could not readily offset. These considerations need to be factored into any appraisal of NATO's conventional defense prospects.

Both McNamara and the military, their differences aside, broadly concurred on the agenda facing NATO in the future. McNamara openly argued that NATO's forces still needed further strengthening in many areas. He favored a moderate set of improvements that would be economically affordable and politically feasible. In justifying this stance, he said that NATO's buildup since 1961 had placed the alliance within striking range of a fully adequate posture. Senior military officers did not dispute this appraisal, but they wanted more ambitious programs than McNamara was recommending, and they said so. However, they also expressed willingness to work with what they could get in the confidence that NATO's forces were no longer hopelessly weak and that NATO's strategy was a viable military proposition.

The Johnson administration thus came to an end with Pentagon civilian and military leaders in agreement on the basic programmatic issue. The challenge now facing NATO was whether it could maintain its unity to the point where the programs and budgets needed to achieve these improvements would be forthcoming. As the Nixon administration entered office in 1969—NATO's 20th birthday—it found itself squarely confronting this troublesome but far from hopeless issue.

LESSONS LEARNED

The 1960s were a decade of debate for NATO, but also of decisions and progress. The alliance argued stressfully over its military strategy and forces and emerged with its nerves frayed and one of its key members sitting sullenly on the sidelines. Yet the alliance also emerged with agreement on a new, better
military strategy and with an improved defense posture—nuclear and conventional—that far more adequately protected the West's interests in Europe. Out of NATO's decisions on strategy and forces flowed a stream of positive political consequences that made themselves felt not only in the 1960s but also in the two decades to follow. These decisions by no means solved all of NATO's problems. But because of them, NATO's internal wounds largely healed, and its members began finding mutual confidence where there had previously been doubt. Equally important, these decisions helped stabilize previously tense East-West relations in Europe and set the stage for a process of accommodation, on terms favorable to the West, that began in the 1970s and then accelerated when Gorbachev assumed power in the mid-1980s.

The strategy of flexible response, with the agreements on nuclear sharing, employment concepts, and force goals that underpinned it, stands out as NATO's most publicly visible accomplishment in this decade. But NATO's less-visible progress on actually building a stronger conventional posture was important as well. A simple analogy, one that compares NATO's efforts to the process of building a house, best characterizes the nature of this progress. The 1950s saw NATO lay the foundations for a viable coalition defense. The 1960s were to see NATO build on this foundation by erecting the main beams, girders, wall supports, and roof. This progress, in turn, provided the framework for additional efforts by NATO in the 1970s and 1980s to carry the job further toward completion.

Why were these gains achieved and what lessons can be derived from this period? While a large number of factors were at work, it is clear that these achievements would not have been accomplished had the United States not exerted decisive leadership within the alliance. During this period, the United States refused to remain content with an unsatisfactory military strategy out of fear of stirring up trouble with its allies and reluctance to make things difficult for itself. Instead, it set sights on ambitious goals, embarked on a concerted effort to attain them, and showed a penchant for clear strategic thought. In the process, it wisely accepted temporary controversy and strain as the price for achieving enduring security. Along the way, it stumbled several times and suffered some setbacks. But in the end, it emerged with much of what it had sought, and the alliance as a whole benefited from the outcome.

While this outcome was a product of the efforts of two presidential administrations and the national security bureaucracies that served them, Robert McNamara deserves a special share of the credit. His relentless determination to think clearly and to manage intelligently helped reform not only the Pentagon but also the entire NATO alliance. He left the Department of Defense with his reputation scarred by Vietnam and his political capital spent. But he also left behind the strategy of flexible response, a NATO force posture capable of supporting this strategy, and an alliance with well-established planning mechanisms. Beyond question, this is a positive legacy, one that few have aspired to achieve, much less actually attained.

The lesson here is that American leadership of the alliance was often needed and was seldom easy. Also, leadership was not measured by the absence of
strain; normally controversy was its bedfellow, a price that had to be paid for progress to occur. By the same token, political equilibrium—especially when it existed on the surface alone—was not necessarily an indicator of internal health. It was a sign of decay, and ferment was an engine of renewal. The United States was able to recognize the distinguishing features of wise leadership: vision, courage, and energy. Because it did so, the alliance emerged the better for the exercise. It entered the 1960s with its security at question and its unity at risk. It exited the decade with its security far better intact and many of the cracks in its foundation mended.

Not all of the credit goes to the United States. Success was achieved because NATO functioned as a true coalition: one constantly at war within itself, but also driven by a shared interest in reaching sound decisions. Many of the allies deserve a fair share of the credit for this outcome. This particularly is true for the Federal Republic of Germany. In the 1950s, it emerged phoenixlike from the ashes of its Nazi predecessor and gradually gained a reputation as a responsible, stable, westward-anchored democracy. In the 1960s, it reacted uncertainly at first to the winds of strategy change blowing from across the Atlantic. But in the end, it maintained its anchor in NATO and worked cooperatively with the United States to gain accord on a new military strategy that served the enduring interests of both nations. Equally important, in a quiet and uncredited way, it fielded the military forces that made conventional defense and flexible response possible. West Germany was soon to come under attack for its pursuit of Ostpolitik and its failure to measure up better on some burden-sharing accounts, but the central strategic reality here is as simple as it is obvious. Without West Germany’s pro-NATO behavior and its large military contribution, neither Central Europe nor the United States would have enjoyed nearly as much security as was the case during these years.

Similarly complimentary things should be said about several other NATO allies whose contributions are easily overlooked in appraisals that see little but friction, self-serving behavior, and short-sightedness in the alliance. Britain was continuously bedeviled by fiscal constraints on its defense spending, but it wisely steered a steady course by both nurturing its ties with the United States and seeking a contributing role on the continent. The same should be said about Belgium and the Netherlands. Both of them continued to contribute small but critically important forces to NATO’s defense posture. Equally important, they were voices of moderation and compromise within NATO’s circles. Playing an often-ignored but always important role in NATO’s deliberations, they helped steer the alliance toward unity and a sound military strategy.

None of this is to imply that either the United States or the allies had unblemished records during these years. The United States made many tactical errors in alliance management and perhaps a few strategic blunders. Often it behaved too unilaterally, without due regard for allied sensitivities and the need for advance consultation. Sometimes it sought too much, too quickly. And its larger visions for West European integration and transatlantic relations often were curiously blind to the goals of key allies, especially France. In later years, the United States was able to correct many of these shortcomings by behaving
more patiently within NATO and by treating France with greater respect. But its
errors of the 1960s spawned a negative reaction across Western Europe, one
that hampered its own efforts to lead the alliance.

The West European allies also came away from this period with a mixed
scorecard. Many, including West Germany, reacted too negatively and suspi-
ciously to early U.S. efforts to bring about strategy reform. To the extent that a
damaging debate ensued, it was partly a product of their own shortsightedness.
Also, some nations proved willing to accept the benefits of American nuclear
protection and flexible response while not living up to their obligations and re-
sponsibilities. In the seeds of this failure were planted American dissatisfaction
that led to the burden-sharing debate, which already had started in 1969
and was to grow in future years.

France’s behavior in the 1960s especially will be a subject of debate among
historians and policy analysts. Although de Gaulle’s emotions are under-
standable, his vision for Europe and transatlantic relations was neither healthy nor
achievable. To compound things, his withdrawal from NATO’s integrated mili-
tary structure unnecessarily damaged the alliance, the United States, and other
West European nations: all of which were playing an important role in protect-
ing France’s security. On the positive side, France regularly sided with the
United States and NATO in moments of crisis and continued to provide many
of the military forces that NATO’s strategy required. De Gaulle’s legacy is best
measured by the behavior of his successors, all of whom slowly but surely tried
to steer France back in the direction of the alliance and the United States.

Another lesson that stands out clearly from this period is the extent to which
nuclear and conventional defense issues were intertwined in alliance politics
and strategy. The simple fact is that progress in one area was necessary for
progress to occur in the other. The United States would have been unlikely to
continue tying its nuclear forces so closely to Western Europe’s defense had the
allies not been amenable to flexible response. The allies would not have ac-
cepted MC 14/3 and its conventional defense concepts had the United States
not provided proper reassurances that led to a satisfactory nuclear sharing ar-
rangement. Neither side of the Atlantic seemed to recognize this interconnec-
tion at the outset of NATO’s strategy debate, but both sides ultimately came to
realize it. As a result, they were able to fashion a political settlement, anchored
on the principle of adequacy in both nuclear and conventional forces, that laid
the basis for further progress in later years.

A great imponderable about NATO’s military policy in the 1960s is its effect
on relations with the Soviet bloc. Beyond question, the United States and
NATO acted out of their own self-interest, pragmatically defined, in their deci-
sions to adopt flexible response and to build a stronger defense posture in Cen-
tral Europe. Underpinning these decisions were the sensible assumptions that
the Soviet Union was a hostile power bent on expansion and that the cause of
stability was best served by a Western policy of firmness. At issue, therefore, are
not the motivations behind NATO’s decisions but rather their practical conse-
quen ces.
The major line of criticism directed at the West is that its defense policy in the 1960s triggered an upward spiral in the arms race and dampened prospects for an earlier détente in Europe. While the truth of the matter lies buried in Soviet archives, it is clear that the Soviets, in fact, did embark on a major military buildup shortly after the United States began strengthening its nuclear forces and NATO began moving toward flexible response. What is less clear is whether NATO’s actions triggered this step or whether the Soviets would have taken it in any event. The historical sequencing of actions on both sides plausibly suggests that the Soviets at least partially were responding to the United States and NATO. Weighing against a full acceptance of this thesis, however, are three important strategic facts. First, the West was not indifferent to arms control in this period. Indeed, it actively pursued the course of negotiations even as it bolstered its defenses. Second, the West stopped well short of pursuing the kind of military programs that would have posed a serious threat to the Soviet deterrent, including a major ABM system and much larger conventional forces in Central Europe. Third, the Soviet Union’s military programs, especially its buildup in Central Europe, went well beyond the standards normally associated with purely defensive intent. These facts suggest that while the West might not be completely innocent of blame in this period, neither was the Soviet Union. In essence, Gorbachev and other Soviet analysts have admitted as much in recent years.

The diplomatic events of this period also are instructive. Before NATO’s military buildup, Western Europe was a focal point of one dangerous crisis after another. These crises normally were brought about by ceaseless Soviet efforts to upset the status quo at the West’s expense. In the wake of NATO’s buildup, Soviet diplomacy did a remarkable about face. The Soviets began pursuing détente, crises became a thing of the past, the Cold War began cooling, and the security problems facing NATO, while still daunting, became less severe. This political record suggests that the correlation between NATO’s military resolve and the stabilizing of Central Europe is more than casual.

If this turns out to be the legacy of NATO’s defense policy in the 1960s and thereafter, then the alliance will have served itself and the larger cause of stability well. In any event, the 1960s saw a great deal of debate, stress, and struggle within NATO, but they also saw courageous decisions and strong actions, most of which have thus far endured the test of time.
Ambiguous Competition and Growing Resolve: The 1970s
Chapter 11
U.S. DEFENSE POLICY AND STRATEGY IN THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION

The approach of the 1970s confronted the Western alliance with security problems radically different from those faced in the preceding decade. In the Kennedy-Johnson years, the alliance wrestled with profound strategy dilemmas but was aided by a clear understanding of how the USSR threatened its safety. Moreover, the European and global security systems remained rigidly bipolar, thereby easing the task of forging sound policy. The new decade promised to sweep away these comforting certitudes. The Soviet Union was now pursuing a more subtle policy of political détente and military buildup that, Harmel and MC 14/3 notwithstanding, left NATO facing profound uncertainty about how best to respond. Also, bipolarity was giving way to multipolarity brought about by shifting global power relationships, further complicating the alliance's policy agenda.

Among other trends, the alliance itself was undergoing major internal changes in both security affairs and economics. Having absorbed a military setback in Vietnam that damaged its domestic foreign policy consensus, the United States was now inflicted with self-doubts about its superpower role and growing reluctance to continue carrying the military and economic burdens of earlier years. Meanwhile, the increasingly prosperous West Europeans, less besieged than before and confronted with new opportunities to the east, were now even more prone to assert their independence from Washington, but they were not enthused about hoisting greater burdens. As a result, the alliance again found itself facing troublesome policy issues that threatened its solidarity, prosperity, and security.

The task of working with the allies to fashion coherent security and economic policies was especially to bedevil the Nixon administration, which took office just in time to greet the new decade and all its difficulties. But this task also was to confront the two administrations, under Presidents Ford and Carter, that succeeded Nixon. Although this decade presents many subplots—including détente vicissitudes and turbulent transatlantic economic relations—its central story is one of how ambiguous competition with the Soviet Union eventually gave way to growing NATO resolve.
THE NIXON FOREIGN POLICY

Richard Nixon assumed the presidency in early 1969 as a dedicated conservative, but his views on NATO and Europe reflected the bipartisan consensus that had shaped U.S. policy since the late 1940s. The same held true for his influential national security adviser, Henry A. Kissinger, and most other members of his presidential team, including Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and Secretary of State William Rogers. As internationalists who rejected the isolationist strand in U.S. thinking, Nixon and Kissinger felt that Western Europe’s security ranked high among America’s global priorities. Both also regarded the USSR as an enduring adversary whose expansionist aims in Europe and elsewhere had to be contained by a firm U.S. and allied stance. Nixon characterized his administration’s national security policy as one of strength, partnership, and negotiation—in that order: a formulation that aptly captured the thinking of the two men.1

When they entered the White House in early 1969, Nixon and Kissinger confronted a collapsing foreign policy consensus in Washington and across the United States. The late 1960s had witnessed mass demonstrations against the Vietnam War and the outbreak of bloody riots in many urban areas motivated by poverty and protests against racial prejudice. Both developments created massive pressures for the United States to turn inward. A strong consensus had emerged in favor of leaving South Vietnam, but disaffection with American foreign policy by no means was confined to Southeast Asia alone. Especially from liberal Democrats, previously strong advocates of internationalism, calls were being heard for wholesale withdrawal from entangling overseas military commitments. Moreover, this sentiment was gaining strength among the centrist foreign policy establishment, which had long been the principal source of support for American Cold War policies.

Nixon and Kissinger were well aware of the eroding national consensus and understood the need to extract the United States from the Vietnam mess, but they had no intention of presiding over a policy of global disengagement. The principal drawback of disengagement was that vastly greater power and responsibility could not readily be devolved onto America’s close allies in critical regions around the world. As a result, the Soviet Union, now entering a period of growing military strength and foreign policy assertiveness, would move into the regional power vacuums left behind by the United States. The likely outcome would be growing instability and serious setbacks to bedrock U.S. interests in Europe, northeastern Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Confronted by these competing pressures, Nixon and Kissinger aspired to fashion a new foreign policy anchored on a redefined and domestically acceptable assessment of vital national interests in a more multipolar world. Despite the losses in Vietnam and mounting domestic economic troubles, the United

---

States by no means was lacking the physical assets to conduct an activist foreign policy anchored on military strength and alliance relationships. The problem was declining psychological willingness to continue bearing the Cold War's heavy burdens and eroding faith in the efficacy of military power committed on behalf of strategies that failed to work. These were serious liabilities, but the United States by no means had irretrievably reverted to full-scale isolationism, and the Vietnam setback did not mean that America's entire Cold War strategy had been invalidated. If the Vietnam War could be ended, a consensus eventually could be reestablished behind a more selective involvement anchored on ends and means that did command enduring support.

Calculating that the United States was a weakened but not permanently crippled superpower, Nixon and Kissinger aimed for a revised but still coherent foreign policy that could ride out the current storm and prove viable in the long run. By adjusting intelligently to the changes under way in world politics, they hoped to strike a proportional but effective balance between declining American resources and still-existing requirements for overseas commitments. Critics saw their policy as a scarcely veiled rationale for accommodating to dissipated American strength, but in reality, their stance was not one of withdrawal but rather a more careful and discriminating management of continued engagement. Although they proposed to downplay peripheral American interests, they intended to continue safeguarding interests that truly remained vital. Moreover, their policy envisioned the selective application of military power to this end. The military involvement in Vietnam was to be liquidated, but American forces would remain committed elsewhere, including Europe.²

Although Nixon's early career had been marked by strident anti-communism, by this time he had come to favor business-like but cautious relations with the Soviets. Having no illusions about the future, both he and Kissinger were skeptical about Moscow's overtures for détente. They suspected that the Brezhnev-Kosygin leadership was trying to lull the West asleep, wear down NATO's unity, and expand the USSR's influence in Europe through more subtle tactics than the Kremlin earlier had used. In their view, the Soviet military buildup, evidence of which was becoming available when they took office, contributed to Moscow's détente strategy by creating a climate of intimidation. They did not believe that the Soviets were likely to resort to overt aggression in Europe. But they did fear that the USSR's attainment of nuclear parity with the United States, coupled with the Warsaw Pact's military predominance in Europe, had ominous political implications for the future.

These fears left them opposed to any détente that involved only atmospherics and glossed over the important security issues still dividing the two sides in Europe. They were willing to negotiate with the Soviets, and they recognized that the dark prospect of nuclear war gave the two blocs no choice but to learn how to live together. But negotiations were desirable only if the West’s unity and vital interests were not sacrificed, and if concrete progress could be made on such important subjects as Berlin and the military balance in Europe. This stance led them to approach negotiations cautiously, to emphasize consultation with the allies on European matters, and to be realistic about what could be achieved.

Kissinger’s views on security policy and strategy were similar to those of Metternich, the 19th century Austrian foreign minister who had skillfully orchestrated the Concert of Europe following the Napoleonic wars. Conservative practitioners of realpolitik, both Nixon and Kissinger were committed to advancing American interests, but not to the point of pursuing an ideological crusade. They recognized that the USSR had vital interests which demanded recognition, but conversely, their willingness to strike bargains and make accommodations did not extend past carefully delineated limits. Their policy was driven principally by the concept of fashioning an equilibrium between the superpowers, one anchored on mutual respect, codes of conduct, and rules of restraint. They aspired to employ détente diplomacy in combination with firm Western resolve to establish a stable balance of power in Europe and around the globe, one that would endure because it was anchored on the vital interests of both sides. Their principal goal thus was not to win the Cold War or even to end it, a prospect they regarded as beyond the realm of possibility, but rather to manage it safely.

As part of their strategy of global management, Nixon and Kissinger were determined to preserve a sound transatlantic relationship with the West European allies. Their goals in Western Europe were highly practical. Unlike the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, they did not believe that the United States could orchestrate the evolution of a politically integrated Western Europe. Indeed, they felt that Kennedy’s “Grand Design” had actually damaged transatlantic relations, and that further European integration might be harmful to U.S. interests in the long run. They were not worried about potential U.S.-West European rivalry in the security arena, but they were concerned that the EEC would come to compete with the United States economically. These concerns led them to de-emphasize visionary designs, to withdraw the United States from active involvement in intra-European struggles over burden-sharing, and to focus instead on maintaining normal transatlantic relations.

Western Europe’s complex internal politics led Nixon to shift emphasis toward relying on bilateral contacts with individual allies rather than working through NATO’s cumbersome machinery. This particularly was the case with respect to Great Britain, West Germany, and France. Of these three nations,

---


4See Kissinger, The White House Years, Chaps. 4 and 11.
good relations with the British, long staunch allies of the United States, were most easily within reach. West Germany, which came under the leadership of the Social Democratic Party shortly after Nixon took office, promised to be more difficult. The new chancellor, Willy Brandt, wanted to pursue Ostpolitik which would point Germany eastward beyond what its allies heretofore had endorsed. Relations with France, now led by Pompidou following de Gaulle’s resignation in 1969, were the most problematic of all. Pompidou was committed to steering a Gaullist course but was sending signals of greater flexibility toward the United States and NATO. The question was: How far would he come? Knowing that relations with these three nations would heavily influence their success at managing European security affairs, Nixon and Kissinger preferred to deal with them individually.

Nevertheless, both Nixon and Kissinger had a favorable attitude toward NATO and wanted to see it intact and preferably strengthened. They were concerned about the allies’ growing reluctance to spend adequately on defense now that détente seemed to be blooming. They were less prone than many Americans, however, to find serious fault with the West Europeans over their failure to assume more of the defense burden. Although they preferred to work with the allies on a bilateral basis, they felt that NATO was still the proper vehicle for coordinating the West’s defense policies. They felt that the United States should continue to play an active role in NATO’s defense planning, but in a less abrasive way than Robert McNamara had done during the Johnson years. Finally, they favored continuation of a large U.S. troop presence in Europe, cooperative efforts to bolster NATO’s defenses there, and a sizable U.S. capacity to reinforce NATO in a crisis. Especially since the USSR was embarking on an activist policy in Europe aimed at weakening NATO, their fundamental goal was to solidify the alliance’s unity and to bolster NATO’s defenses.

Confronting their pro-NATO policies, however, were troublesome political realities. In Western Europe, an ambivalent attitude prevailed with respect to NATO. The allies were disturbed by the prospect that U.S. troops might be withdrawn and NATO’s defenses thereby weakened. They were not predisposed, however, to stepping up their defense efforts in response to the Soviet buildup. Reinforcing their predisposition was the growing belief that the threat of war had passed, that NATO’s luster was fading, and that détente offered a viable way to improve relations with the USSR. The allies paid lip service to Nixon’s stance that NATO military strength was a prerequisite to pursuing negotiations, but not to the point of opening their pocketbooks.

TOWARD A NATO-ORIENTED GLOBAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

Within three weeks of his inauguration, Nixon journeyed to Europe in an effort to sharpen his understanding of the situation there. He wanted to reassure the allies of his intent to steer a stable course and to convey his willingness to consult with them. In the course of a few days, he delivered a speech to the North Atlantic Council and made stops in Belgium, West Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. This whirlwind trip signaled his intention to play an en-
ergastic role in Europe and marked the initiation of what was to become an increasingly active and complex U.S. agenda in Europe.

This activism, however, was to emerge only gradually. In the months immediately following his trip, the focal point of his administration was not external diplomacy but rather internal analysis, planning, and policy development. Recognizing that he was facing a complex situation in Europe and at home, Nixon commissioned a series of interagency reviews that were to address the fundamentals of U.S. defense strategy and NATO's future directions. This ambitious effort, which engaged the entire U.S. security bureaucracy, consumed a full year and more. It was to lay the foundation for a series of important and far-reaching decisions in defense policy, alliance relationships, détente, and arms control that Nixon was to make over the following years.\(^5\)

In these studies, the Nixon administration attempted to come to grips with three important strategic trends that promised to make the 1970s a great deal different from the previous decade. The first trend was the declining consensus in the United States for a strong defense effort. Nixon personally favored a strong U.S. military posture, but congressional opposition led him to submit a revised FY70 defense budget request of only $77.6 billion. This budget was down $1.1 billion from what the outgoing Johnson administration had requested. Even this budget quickly came under attack; for example, Senate Majority Leader Mansfield (D. Mont.) promptly called for a $5 billion cut. A number of influential critics were calling for budget reductions down to $60 billion, a level that would compel sharp curtailments in procurement programs, readiness, and even forces. This was a minority view, but the fact that the Congress was controlled by the Democratic Party did not bode well.

Faced with congressional pressures and the budget-cutting advice of his own economic advisers, Nixon in late 1969 approved an FY71 DoD budget of only $73.5 billion: $4 billion less than last year, and even less when inflation was taken into account. This fiscal austerity was to continue throughout his administration, but was especially prevalent in Nixon’s early days. Because the United States was beginning to withdraw from Vietnam and the high fiscal demands of the war seemed likely to fade, some budgetary cutbacks were possible without cutting into military muscle that would be needed for the post-Vietnam era. Nonetheless, political pressures for budgetary stringency extended well beyond pruning the Vietnam surplus. At issue was whether the DoD budget would remain large enough to meet the requirements of the years ahead. Because doubt existed about whether the U.S. defense posture would remain adequately strong, the Nixon administration was compelled to gauge its strategy aspirations with this constraint in mind.

This fiscal austerity made particularly difficult the task of addressing the second strategic trend that differentiated the 1970s from the 1960s: the emerging Soviet military buildup. By mid-1969, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the U.S. intelligence community’s previously sanguine view of Soviet military policy had been wrong. Rather than exercising the military restraint that

---

seemed a natural counterpart to its détente policies, the Soviet government clearly had opened its budgetary faucets to fund what was becoming a sustained and ambitious defense improvement program. For example, Soviet ICBM forces had grown alarmingly over the previous years. From a level of only 570 launchers in 1962, the Soviet inventory had grown to fully 1000 launchers by 1969 and was on its way to reaching 1500 launchers within a few years: 50% more than the U.S. ICBM force. Equally worrisome, the Soviets seemed likely to begin deploying the large ICBMs, accurate guidance systems, and MIRVed warheads that might eventually give them at least a theoretical first-strike capacity against the U.S. Minuteman force.\(^{6}\)

Soviet military programs for conventional forces reflected a similar pattern. As of 1965, Soviet Army units in Eastern Europe began receiving modern tanks (T-62s and T-64s), armored personnel carriers, and other weapons. By the early 1970s, divisions in the Group of Soviet Forces Germany had witnessed nearly a one-quarter expansion in their weapons inventories. Taking into account the qualitative improvements brought about by introducing modern models just off the assembly line, the GSFG’s combat power was growing by a stunning rate: almost double the rate experienced from normal turnover and modernization, and that NATO was achieving. The Soviet Air Force, formerly a second class force capable only of air defense operations, also was being modernized. In a significant departure, aircraft capable of ground attack missions were now entering the inventory. Meanwhile the Soviet Navy, long a purely coastal defense force, was beginning to acquire the kind of surface combatants that would permit far more ambitious “blue water” operations in areas long regarded as under NATO’s control. Soviet military power thus was clearly expanding across the board.

Backing up this procurement effort was a lavishly funded research and development program that seemed capable of fueling a fast-paced modernization effort for many years. Under development were even more modern tanks, aircraft, and other weapon systems. For years, Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces had enjoyed numerical preponderance in Europe and associated waters, but NATO had drawn comfort from the fact that its weapons were qualitatively better. The emerging Soviet modernization effort, while not threatening to enlarge the number of Warsaw Pact divisions and air regiments a great deal, was already showing signs of undercutting this Western advantage.

This ambitious effort suggested that an important change in Soviet military strategy was in the works. The Soviet defense posture earlier had been almost entirely oriented to nuclear war, but now seemed pointed in the direction of acquiring a vastly better conventional war-fighting capability as well. This trend was comforting in the sense of suggesting that the Soviets were coming to

---

recognize the need to avoid nuclear war. But if it was carried to completion, it promised to undercut NATO's own efforts to broaden the conventional component of its defense strategy. Simply stated, an alliance strategy endorsing conventional defense would count for little if NATO's forces were too weak to stand up to the enemy. In this event, NATO would be compelled to fall back on its nuclear weapons, but the USSR's simultaneous nuclear buildup was threatening to make even this strategy infeasible. Taken together, the USSR's combined nuclear and conventional programs thus threatened to erode the very foundations of NATO's security in Europe.

Realization that a Soviet military buildup was under way had begun to filter through the U.S. national security bureaucracies in 1969 and 1970, but its existence was not yet well-known in the public domain. To the extent it was realized, attention focused on Soviet nuclear programs, thereby missing the critical point that something far more sweeping was under way. As a result, the U.S. congressional debate continued to be preoccupied with Vietnam and budgetary battles, as did the larger public dialogue. With détente diplomacy getting the lion's share of publicity, the idea that Western Europe was being endangered militarily did not gain notice.

Within the executive branch, however, activity began to heat up. A bitter battle broke out in the intelligence community over how to interpret the buildup. Pitted against the Central Intelligence Agency, with its relaxed view of Soviet military intentions, were the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the military intelligence staffs, all armed with disturbing information that was becoming hard to ignore. Slowly but surely, U.S. national intelligence estimates, which assessed future military threats, began to reflect a worried tone. The intelligence community's mind was not yet made up; indeed, the various staffs were to remain deeply divided for several more years. But the idea that all was not well in Europe was becoming part of the official dialogue.7

The Pentagon, its antenna highly tuned to information that might help underscore the need for a strong defense posture, was quick to react to the debate boiling up in the intelligence community. Sensing that Europe might provide a focal point for future U.S. defense planning, the military services and the Joint Chiefs of Staff began devoting more attention to the unfolding military situation there. Their recommendation was for an accelerated U.S. defense effort aimed at counterbalancing the Soviet buildup in the nuclear arena, Europe, and elsewhere. Their pleas, which were to intensify in later years but already were being heard early in the Nixon administration, found a receptive audience in Secretary Laird. An influential politician with long years of service in the House of Representatives, Laird shared the military's appraisal of the Soviet threat, and he was not bashful about pressing the President and Congress for a proper re-

---

sponse. In the White House, Nixon and Kissinger found themselves caught between the conflicting pressures emanating from the Pentagon and Capitol Hill.\footnote{See Kissinger, The White House Years, Chap. 7.} Wanting to act prudently, their response was to subject the entire issue to thorough analysis.

The third strategic trend that differentiated the 1970s from the 1960s was the pattern of challenges and opportunities emerging elsewhere around the globe. While the Soviet buildup posed a growing threat in Europe, the trends in Asia were mixed but favorable in important respects. With the United States still heavily committed in Vietnam, Nixon was loath to desert an ally or accept defeat, but he was also keenly aware of reality. Unwilling to risk escalation for fear of provoking China, the United States had become bogged down in a costly attrition war that could not be won militarily or sustained politically. Nixon’s strategy for achieving an honorable disengagement called for a combined effort to bolster South Vietnam’s forces (Vietnamization) and to negotiate a settlement with the North Vietnamese. This approach called for a painfully slow U.S. withdrawal, but the trend lines were as clear as South Vietnam’s prospects were uncertain.

In northeastern Asia, by contrast, U.S. prospects looked favorable. In Korea, the lengthy U.S. effort to build a sound South Korean economy and defense posture was slowly coming to fruition. The political situation remained tense due to North Korea’s hostile demeanor, the military confrontation along the demilitarized zone, and the fact that the 1953 armistice had never been turned into a formal peace treaty. But since neither the Soviets nor the Chinese seemed likely to unleash Kim Il Sung, war in Korea seemed improbable. A continued U.S. military presence was needed, but South Korea’s growing military self-sufficiency meant that American forces could be reduced to a lower level. Across the Korean Straits, meanwhile, Japan was also becoming more militarily self-sufficient. Although Japan’s constitution mandated a small defense budget and a disavowal of any military presence abroad, it did permit a self-defense force for protecting the Japanese homeland. By 1970, Japan’s efforts to support this modest strategy were beginning to bear fruit. This development meant that fewer demands would be made on U.S. forces to protect Japanese territory for any contingency short of a major Soviet invasion.

Perhaps the most important trend in Asia was also the least noticed: the Sino-Soviet split. Although largely unrecognized in the West, tensions between Moscow and Peking had been mounting for over a decade. During this period, the Soviets had refused to provide Peking the kind of military support that it wanted: access to nuclear weapons and other technology. The Chinese, in turn, accused the Soviets of lacking ideological fervor and began challenging them for leadership of the communist world. In response, the Soviets had begun slowly beefing up their military forces in the Far East. These developments served as the catalyst for the outbreak of fighting that occurred in 1969 along the Amur and Ussuri rivers, an area along their borders that the two sides had long been jostling over. The crisis simmered down only after the Soviets issued
crude military threats, evidently including a nuclear attack. In its wake, the Soviet military buildup along the border, ultimately deploying 40–50 divisions, many opposite Manchuria in a posture suggestive of a limited strike into Chinese territory.9

Reacting to this provocation, the Chinese concluded that the USSR now posed a serious threat to their security. Girding for difficult times with the Soviets and not wanting to offend both superpowers at once, Peking began seeking more stable relations with the United States. The impending U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam and the stable situation on the Korean peninsula made this démarche all the more possible. This important shift in China’s priorities dramatically altered the Asian power balance in ways favorable to U.S. interests. In the long term, it meant that the United States and China might be able to pursue a more cooperative relationship—a trend that Nixon was to launch with his celebrated trip to China in 1972. Even in the short term, it had the important beneficial impact of helping ensure that the United States and China were now far less likely to become embroiled in any military conflict. Along with the impending end of the Vietnam War and growing stability in Korea, it meant that Asian contingencies would not need to weigh as heavily in U.S. defense planning as had been the case only a few years before.

These three strategic trends—the weakening U.S. consensus for a large defense budget, the Soviet military buildup, and the shifting Asian power balance—interacted together to determine how the Nixon administration came to define its defense strategy. Attracting greatest attention was Nixon’s moderate stance on strategic nuclear weapons. Early on, it became clear that Nixon was not about to allow the Soviet Union to attain nuclear supremacy over the United States, but he had no intention of trying to restore American superiority. Some conservatives in the Nixon camp argued in favor of superiority and regarded the idea of parity—endorsed by many liberals—with special distaste. Avoiding this semantic battle, Nixon put forth the concept of “sufficiency,” which meant that U.S. nuclear forces would remain adequate for their defense missions. Apart from implying that the USSR would not be allowed to pull ahead in overall nuclear capability, sufficiency said little about comparative force-sizing, but it did mean that U.S. nuclear strength would not be expanded to keep ahead of the USSR for appearance’s sake alone.10

Nixon’s nuclear strategy emphasized the importance of keeping a strong deterrent posture, but in responding to the new situation, reflected an evolutionary departure away from the Kennedy-Johnson doctrine. It was anchored on the premise of maintaining a credible second-strike retaliatory punch in an era in which land-based missiles were expected to come under a growing threat. As a result, the strategy placed emphasis on maintaining a three-legged triad posture of ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers. During the Kennedy-Johnson years, ICBMs and SLBMs both seemed invulnerable to enemy attack, and in reaction,

10See Brown, The Faces of Power, Chap. 22.
McNamara had planned to phase out most strategic bombers. The appearance of the super-heavy SS-9 ICBM in the late 1960s, however, gave rise to the prospect that the USSR might eventually develop the combination of MIRVed warheads, accuracy, and yield that might allow for a disarming strike against the U.S. Minuteman ICBM force. This threat not only elevated the importance of SLBMs, which remained invulnerable at sea, but also gave renewed life to the B-52 bombers as another survivable instrument of retaliation.\textsuperscript{11}

Under the emerging triad doctrine, the three legs of the nuclear posture were viewed as complementary, together providing a confident ability not only to withstand attack, but also to strike back with strength and flexibility. If the USSR were to launch a lethal surprise attack against the hardened Minuteman silos (a far more difficult task than simplistic mathematical calculations suggested), the B-52s could escape from their bases before incoming enemy warheads had arrived. Even if both the ICBM and bomber legs were somehow lost, an invulnerable SLBM leg would remain, with sufficient nuclear power to inflict devastating destruction on the USSR. In the likely event that all three legs survived in strength, they together provided a capacity to cover a diverse target system. The ICBMs were well-suited for attacking hardened and time-urgent targets, the SLBMs were excellent for striking urban areas and soft military targets, and the bombers could strike a broad set of targets on a non-time-urgent basis. The result was a posture capable of carrying out diverse war plans in a wide variety of circumstances, thereby enhancing deterrence.

McNamara himself had unintentionally given birth to the triad doctrine during his last years in office. Badgered by criticisms that the U.S. posture was being endangered by the Soviet missile buildup, he argued that the three legs together could absorb an attack and still deliver over 1200 megatons onto Soviet targets. Because this was far more than the 400 megatons needed to achieve assured destruction (75% industrial destruction and 25% fatalities), it provided ample options beyond simply destroying cities, and in McNamara's eyes, further suggested that cutbacks (i.e., the bombers) could be made. McNamara had never meant to imply that each leg should be sized according to assured destruction requirements, but after he departed, this interpretation was imparted to the triad. The effect, during Nixon's tenure, was to spread a doctrinal patina over all three legs, thereby making them immune to political attack. For good reasons and bad, Nixon's nuclear strategy locked itself into a triad posture of about 2000 missiles and bombers: a stance that preserved ample margins of insurance but allowed little flexibility for reductions in arms control negotiations.\textsuperscript{12}

The nuclear policy that Nixon fashioned during his first year in office envisioned broad continuity in strategic programs. The U.S. missile force was to remain level at 1054 ICBMs and 656 SLBMs, with the chief improvement to come in the installation of MIRVs atop Minuteman III ICBMs and Poseidon


\textsuperscript{12}For more information, see Kugler, "The Politics of Restraint," pp. 280–295.
SLBMs. This important change promised to increase the U.S. ballistic missile warhead total by a factor of four or more. Because the new warheads were not yet hard-target killers, however, their immediate contribution lay in providing greater survivability and penetration rather than a serious threat to the Soviet ICBM force. Rounding out the Nixon offensive posture was a bomber force that stood at about 600 B-52 and FB-111 bombers but was slated to decline to 450 bombers by mid-decade.\(^{13}\)

The Nixon nuclear strategy rejected the idea of seeking supremacy or even safety in an antiballistic missile defense force. Nixon accepted the Johnson administration's conclusion that no affordable defense system could protect the United States against a full Soviet missile strike. Accordingly, he carried forth Johnson's decision to deploy only a thin ABM system, but reconfigured to protect ICBM silos against enemy attack. In ruling out thick ABM defense, Nixon recognized that the USSR would have a survivable triad of its own. In essence, Nixon accepted the unchangeable reality of mutual deterrence and rough parity, and his goal was to open SALT to stabilize the nuclear balance on these terms.

Notwithstanding this sense of restraint, Nixon was determined to carry forth extended nuclear deterrence coverage of U.S. allies, including Western Europe. This concern was one of the reasons that led him to favor an offensive nuclear posture that could provide flexible targeting capabilities and multiple warfare options. Because the age of triad postures and mutual deterrence at parity was dawning, however, Nixon was under no illusions that strategic weapons could serve as a substitute for adequate Western conventional defenses. In this respect, his strategy views were mainstream.

Nixon's modest nuclear strategy placed considerable importance on the need to meet U.S. and Western conventional defense requirements, and he launched an intensive effort to ascertain how those requirements were changing in response to the Soviet buildup and global trends. In the spring of 1969, his administration undertook, among its many studies, a full-scale review of the U.S. defense posture and strategy. This review, named NSSM-3, was one of the most thorough defense analyses ever conducted by the U.S. government and, even today, stands out as a landmark accomplishment. NSSM-3 examined future U.S. military requirements in an explicitly global context, an approach that led its authors to address a host of fundamental issues:\(^{14}\)

- What theaters are to be defended? What are U.S. overseas interests and priorities, and what kinds of threats are likely to arise?
- What military strategy should the United States and its allies pursue to defend against these threats?


\(^{14}\)Kissinger's *The White House Years* presents a detailed discussion of NSSM-3 and related U.S. defense policy studies of this period (Chap. 7).
• What scenarios and contingencies are to be employed in developing U.S. and allied defense plans, and with what assumptions about enemy force capabilities?
• Based on the answers to these questions, what force requirements should be endorsed as the basis for developing the defense budget? What constitutes an appropriately balanced defense program and force mix?

In response to these probing questions, NSSM-3's authors developed three different global strategies for the United States to pursue. The first option called for sufficient U.S. forces to help defend Western Europe for a lengthy period while providing limited assistance to an Asian ally against threats short of a major Chinese invasion. It thus discounted any risk of war with China. The second strategy called for enough forces to defend Western Europe or protect against a Chinese invasion in Asia, along with a capability for a small simultaneous contingency. The third strategy envisioned the previous administration's "2 1/2 war" strategy, which called for a capacity to defend against simultaneous Soviet and Chinese assaults, along with ability to engage in a small additional contingency.

Nixon selected the second strategy. In his *Foreign Policy Report to Congress* in February 1970, he spelled out the rationale for his choice, which he labeled a "1 1/2 war" strategy. By this he meant a strategy with sufficient forces to fight only one major war, in either Europe or Asia, plus a small contingency elsewhere. The new strategy, he said, represented a pragmatic downgrading of the previous administration's unfulfilled goals for a "2 1/2 war" concept, but also was suited to the new international conditions of the 1970s. It thus represented, he implied, a happy marriage between budgetary realities and strategic requirements, one that would enable the United States to defend itself at affordable cost. Laird later dubbed this approach a strategy of "realistic deterrence."15

To some extent, adoption of a "1 1/2 war" strategy was foreordained, and by reasons more farsighted than transient budgetary constraints. Because the United States had treaty commitments to several Asian allies, it could not entirely discount the risk that war with China might occur. Nevertheless, the prospect of simultaneous conflicts with the USSR and China seemed very remote for the simple reason that the two nations were no longer capable of joint planning and would have no incentive to help each other in a war with the United States. In contrast to the 1960s, when two wars were still possible, the United States thus faced a reduced danger of only one major war at a time, which could occur in Europe or, far less likely, in Asia. With the first and third strategies ruled out, the second strategy therefore won by default.16

---


Although the new strategy downgraded U.S. military goals on paper, the force posture changes that it mandated turned out to be more apparent than real. The new strategy called on the United States to defend the same theaters, apart from southeastern Asia that it had been protecting throughout the Cold War. This meant that U.S. forces would have to continue training and equipping themselves for war at several places around the globe. Moreover, the new strategy did not automatically downgrade total force requirements. Depending upon how the enemy threat evolved, diminished needs in one theater (e.g., Asia) potentially could be offset by growing needs in another (e.g., Europe). Because the Soviet threat was pulsating upward, the new strategy eventually wound up embracing force requirements that were not radically dissimilar from what the old strategy of the 1960s had required before the Vietnam War began. Nevertheless, the "1 1/2 war" strategy represented a landmark decision. It sent an important signal to China that the United States now recognized the importance of the Sino-Soviet split and was prepared to act accordingly. It also signaled a major downplaying of Southeast Asia's role in U.S. strategy, a change that was given added impetus in summer 1969, when Nixon announced the "Guam Doctrine." Later renamed the "Nixon Doctrine," this doctrine specified that, while the United States would honor its treaty commitments to its Southeast Asian allies, it would expect them to defend themselves in all situations short of a Chinese invasion. In other words, the United States no longer planned to fight a major war in Southeast Asia except in extremis.\(^{17}\)

Most important, the new strategy singled out the USSR as America's principal adversary and implied that Europe would become the primary regional focus of U.S. defense interests in the years ahead. In the Nixon administration's view, this focus on the USSR and Europe implied only a gradual shift in emphasis, and fell well short of calling for abrupt changes in U.S. force commitments and deployments. Although one of the two U.S. divisions in Korea was withdrawn in the early 1970s, the Nixon administration continued to emphasize the need for U.S. ground and air forces in northeastern Asia, and for a strong naval presence in the Western Pacific. Even so, the "1 1/2 war" strategy marked a turning point in U.S. priorities, one that was intended to be evolutionary in pace but eventually might have a large cumulative impact. It meant that the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam would not lead to the kind of worldwide retraction that many critics were demanding. Instead, the United States would remain active in its quest for global stability, and its defense planning would concentrate on the USSR, Western Europe, and NATO.

A DRY HOLE: TACTICAL NUCLEAR WAR IN EUROPE

Within the framework of this global strategy, Nixon's internal review went on to address the thorny manner of exactly how NATO's defenses in Western Europe were to be improved. Although flexible response (MC 14/3) was now established as alliance strategy, it was still a relatively new and controversial

\(^{17}\)See Kissinger, The White House Years, Chap. 7.
concept that had not yet been fully incorporated into NATO’s planning. In particular, two important issues needed to be resolved:

- The balance to be struck between nuclear weapons and conventional forces.
- The exact conventional force goals and defense aspirations that NATO was to pursue.

MC 14/3 had called for less reliance on nuclear deterrence and greater emphasis on conventional defense, but by no means had banished nuclear war from NATO’s strategy. Its three core operational concepts—direct defense, deliberate escalation, and general nuclear response—had called for a conventional response against nonnuclear aggression, but allowed for prompt escalation if that effort failed. In endorsing these concepts, MC 14/3 provided NATO considerable flexibility in deciding exactly where conventional defense was to leave off and nuclear escalation was to begin. Enhanced conventional defense, with diminished reliance on nuclear strikes, made the most sense militarily, but also promised to be expensive. For this reason, tactical nuclear warfare offered the allure of security on the cheap, but only if it could be made to work. The Nixon administration investigated this option thoroughly, but failing to find satisfactory answers, its efforts came to naught.18

Kissinger and other Nixon appointees did not share McNamara’s optimism about the NATO-Warsaw Pact conventional balance, and also felt that McNamara had overly debunked theater nuclear operations as a viable war-fighting strategy.19 As a result, they were willing to embrace nuclear solutions, if solutions could be found. They quickly encountered, however, an uncooperative allied attitude. At the time, NATO was undergoing a nuclear review of its own, and the West European allies were showing not only skepticism about conventional defense, but also a distinct aversion to schemes for fighting a nuclear war on Europe’s soil. The allies seemed willing to cross the nuclear threshold earlier than the Americans, but their concept for nuclear war called not for American-style deliberate escalation, but rather for a demonstrative shot across the bow followed by prompt resort to nuclear strikes against the USSR. This approach clearly was designed to enhance deterrence by scaring the Soviets, but it hardly appealed to the Americans, who wanted to climb the escalation ladder more deliberately in order to reduce the risk of intercontinental nuclear war. This clash between U.S. and allied views made it impossible to find common political ground for a nuclear interpretation of MC 14/3.20

Beyond alliance politics, analysis and military logic also barred the way to any heavy reliance on tactical nuclear warfare. As the Pentagon staffs pointed out, NATO could resort to massive air and artillery nuclear strikes in an effort to destroy enemy forces, but the Soviets, who were acquiring battlefield systems of

---

their own, could retaliate in kind. In any mutual exchange, nuclear weapons, it turned out, were not the friend of the side with the smaller conventional forces. At best, a tactical nuclear war seemed likely to result in the destruction of both forces, along with the surrounding European countryside. At worst, it might enable the numerically larger Warsaw Pact forces to win quicker. These disturbing truths had been discovered by the previous administration, and they had not changed in the interim. The Nixon leadership was left with little choice but to endorse a SHAPE plan that called for multiple escalatory options without deciding in favor of any in advance. This approach enabled NATO to continue holding a nuclear card, but it reinforced the growing trend to de-emphasize escalation as the centerpiece of NATO's strategy.

With its efforts to reinvigorate tactical nuclear warfare a failure, the Nixon administration turned to the more mundane task of fine-tuning U.S. and allied nuclear programs in Europe. At the time, NATO's nuclear inventory there provided enough Honest John, Pershing, and Polaris missiles to meet SACEUR's requirements. Pressures for additional long-range missiles had abated in recent years, and were not to reappear until the late 1970s, when the Pershing II and GLCM appeared on the scene. The early 1970s consequently saw a temporary hiatus in NATO's perennial debates over deep-strike systems. Where deficiencies existed was in NATO's short-range systems, including tube artillery, tactical air bombs, missiles, and atomic demolition munitions. Here, programmatic changes were needed to increase the nuclear stockpile, replace obsolescent systems, introduce new technology, and provide greater targeting flexibility. Nixon decided to proceed with a steady improvement program in these areas, but without any illusion that they would solve NATO's defense problems.

**U.S. CONVENTIONAL FORCE PLANS IN EUROPE**

Frustrated in its efforts to find nuclear solutions, the Nixon team turned to the task of determining how NATO's conventional defenses should, and could, be strengthened. The administration's internal review identified four alternatives for future planning:

1. A token U.S. force presence in Europe and a small total NATO posture that would act only as a nuclear trip-wire, thereby allowing for sizable U.S. troop withdrawals.
2. The current strategy of an "initial" NATO conventional defense posture, which would not permit U.S. withdrawals and would allow for a policy of affordable improvements aimed at strengthening flexible response to the extent possible.

---

3. A more ambitious strategy calling for a more confident and sustainable NATO posture that would require major increases in U.S./allied defense spending.

4. A "total" conventional defense, including a warm production base that would enable NATO to counter a Soviet force expansion, the cost of which would be very high.

The process of analysis quickly narrowed the range of realistic choice. The trip-wire concept would have responded to the anti-military and pro-détente sympathies sweeping over the United States and Western Europe. It was unacceptable, however, because it would undermine flexible response and produce U.S. withdrawals that would demoralize the alliance. The third and fourth options were infeasible because the allies and the U.S. Congress were unwilling to support them on budgetary grounds. This left the second option, a reaffirmation of the existing approach, as the preferred choice. This option validated the requirement to maintain a large U.S. force in Europe, but even with its limited horizons, NATO's defense posture still came up short in many areas. The issue facing the Nixon administration was whether the alliance could be galvanized into taking sufficiently robust action not only to remedy existing deficiencies, but also to deflect growing congressional pressure for a U.S. pullout.

Although major strides had been made in the 1960s toward building a better conventional defense, prevailing opinion in Washington held that NATO still did not have sufficient strength to execute forward defense and flexible response in Central Europe. Indeed, in the short time since McNamara's departure, confidence in NATO's defense prospects had dipped sharply downward. Partly this development owed to political changes in the Pentagon. When Laird arrived, he brought with him a host of conservatives who clung to traditional views about alleged Soviet military superiority in Europe and therefore were inclined to pessimism about the conventional balance. Equally important, Laird deemphasized civilian control of the Pentagon and downplayed McNamara's Office of Systems Analysis. As a result, the JCS and the military services became more influential, and they infused Pentagon planning with a more pessimistic view of the force balance in Central Europe. Kissinger had installed a small systems analysis office on the NSC staff, but while it asked probing questions in the McNamara tradition, the White House was left hostage to the Pentagon for appraisals of the defense situation.

More was involved than Pentagon and interagency bureaucratic politics, however. Over the past year, data about the Soviet military buildup had found its way into Pentagon planning, and forecasts about future Warsaw Pact improvements were adjusted upward, at a rate outpacing NATO's efforts. The effect was diminished technical confidence about the military balance that drew attention to still-existing deficiencies in NATO's posture. The risk of quick conventional defeat appeared especially high if enemy forces concentrated and attempted to punch through NATO's front line. This problem stemmed mainly from failure by the allies to deploy enough active and reserve forces. Even counting France, together they provided only about 30 mobilizable divisions in
Europe. The United States provided four additional divisions, which was not enough until reinforcement could take hold. As a result, NATO lacked the operational reserves that were needed to provide depth, to replace casualties at the front, and to contain enemy penetrations.

This problem could be corrected if ample time was available to deploy American strategic reserves based in the United States, but the Soviet buildup was threatening to close off this possibility. As Soviet forces in Eastern Europe steadily became more modern and ready, they were acquiring a growing capability to attack on relatively short notice. At the time, NATO planners felt that the Warsaw Pact would require only about 30 days to mobilize and reinforce the forward areas, which was quicker than the United States could transport reinforcements to Europe. Ominously, this warning time was headed downward. Within a few years, it would shrink to less than two weeks if the Soviets were to attack with their highly ready forces in an effort to catch NATO off guard.23

The entire subject of mobilization and reinforcement timelines, the Nixon team quickly realized, needed far more study than had been given. During the 1960s a great deal of analysis had been devoted to the NATO-Warsaw Pact conventional balance, but since it focused heavily on combat once forces on both sides had arrived at the battlefield, relative buildup rates had not been examined closely. Because the impediments to a rapid Soviet buildup were not readily discernible to outside observers, NATO's analysts were prone to overestimating Soviet force generation rates. Even so, the alliance's own mobilization system seemed likely to operate far more sluggishly than paper studies suggested. The data available at the time were murky to a degree that produced major uncertainty, but from what could be determined, things did not look good for NATO. As a high priority, NATO needed a capacity to generate larger combat forces more quickly than planned, and this requirement pointed to a need for a better U.S. reinforcement plan as well as allied improvements.

NATO's posture also had deficiencies in several other areas that undermined prospects even for an initial defense. Allied forces needed modernization and readiness enhancements to bring them up to proper standards, and NATO's air defense system required improvements now that the Soviet Air Force was acquiring an offensive capability. Additionally, NATO's posture badly lacked sustainability because of major shortfalls in allied war reserve stocks. The United States believed that NATO should aspire to a 90-day stockpile of reserves, but the allies proved unwilling to support this goal. In general, their stocks were large enough to sustain fighting only for a month or less, thereby raising the dispiriting prospect that NATO might run out of ammunition and other supplies even if its combat forces were not overpowered.

Because of major uncertainty about ammunition expenditure rates and consumption of other stocks, the data in this area, too, were murky. Sustainability goals set desired programming targets, but they were hardly sacrosanct for actually waging war. For example, history showed that armies, when faced with shortages, typically scaled back their tempo of operations in order to avoid de-

---

pleting their stocks. This tactic, however, had the drawback of sacrificing badly needed combat power at a time when the enemy would be breathing down NATO's neck, thereby compelling NATO's forces to retreat in ways that would abandon forward defense. Complex trade-offs thus were involved, and the exact relationship between stockpile consumption rates and operational tempo was unclear. Logistics and sustainability were hardly glamorous or readily analyzable subjects, and thus far they had not attracted the attention of NATO's staffs. Further study was needed, but from what could be ascertained, NATO's defenses required improvement in this area as well.

NATO's conventional posture thus did not stand up well to careful scrutiny. Internally out of balance and deficient in many areas, it was not well-designed to support alliance strategy. Moreover, alliance resources were being squandered due to duplication of effort and a lack of multinational cooperation in buying weapons and streamlining logistics forces. Nonetheless, Nixon's review concluded, NATO's posture had improved to the point where it could provide a stronger defense capability if it was upgraded selectively and properly tied together. The strategy of flexible response, calling for at least an initial conventional defense, therefore appeared to be an achievable goal if NATO's nations simply pulled up their military socks and began working together.

This important judgment led Nixon to reach a major policy conclusion about the U.S. military presence in Europe. Rather than succumb to congressional pressures for withdrawal, the United States would endeavor to convince the allies to join with Washington in a combined effort to stand up to the Soviets by enhancing NATO's defenses. Provided the allies responded favorably, U.S. troops in Europe would remain there and would be steadily improved.24

For all its powerful implications, this decision was taken with little fanfare and received little public attention. Yet it was a momentous choice—in retrospect easily one of Nixon's most weighty and enduring—because it created the policy and strategy framework for everything that was to come later. Had Nixon chosen to bow out of Europe and to abandon hope for NATO, he would have sent the alliance down an entirely different course of military weakness and political accommodation with the USSR. In no small way the dramatic events of the late 1980s can be traced back to this decision, made so quietly but with such far-reaching consequences.

Nixon's decision was officially communicated to the executive branch that fall, and in January 1970, Laird issued similar guidance within the Pentagon. For many years to come, this decision was to have a powerful impact on U.S. military strategy, forces, and budgets. Quite apart from perpetuating the U.S. presence in Europe, it also meant that forces based in the United States, including units returning from Vietnam, were increasingly to be affiliated with NATO's defense strategy. This policy allowed the Pentagon to spread a protective umbrella over many forces that otherwise would have been targets for budgetary cutbacks. During the following two years, Laird regularly used NATO's rising

---

importance as an argument against defense cutbacks that were being endorsed not only by Congress but also by Nixon's own economic advisers. Indeed, Laird often resorted to the practice of offering painful cuts in these forces precisely for the purpose of fending off attacks on the DoD budget. This tactic sent political shudders across Western Europe, where its purpose was misunderstood, but within the United States, it had its desired effect.\footnote{See Kissinger, The White House Years, Chap. 7.}

Beyond this, Nixon's policy decision had important implications for the Pentagon's internal planning. It instructed the Defense Department to begin focusing its resources on NATO, and it meant that innovative ideas to strengthen Western Europe's defenses would be welcomed by the White House. It also implied that while other theaters were not to be neglected, U.S. forces were now to be tailored to fight in Europe. In particular, this policy had a major effect on the Army, which would be required to convert some of its Pacific-oriented infantry divisions to mechanized and armored status. The Air Force was similarly affected. From now on, it would be required to develop forces and aircraft that could help NATO wage conventional war in a high-technology environment against an increasingly formidable enemy air force. Even the Navy, whose heart was still in the Pacific, was not untouched. The need to secure the North Atlantic and its associated waters, against an adversary aspiring to develop a "blue water" navy, meant that the Navy would have to broaden its horizons as well.

During summer 1970, Laird formulated the DoD program that was intended to carry out Nixon's policy guidance for the post-Vietnam era, and presented it to the Congress in early 1971. Laird's plan called for an Army of 13 1/3 active divisions (down from the Vietnam peak of 18), 8 National Guard divisions, and 21 separate reserve component brigades. The Marine Corps was to continue deploying three active divisions and one reserve division, along with air wings for each. The Air Force was to deploy 21 active wings and 11 reserve wings. The Navy was to be composed of 16 carriers, 93 attack submarines, 227 surface combatants, 155 logistic ships, and enough amphibious ships to lift 1 1/3 Marine divisions. Laird promised that the Pentagon would develop a total force policy aimed at forging these forces into a coherent whole and making constructive use of the reserves. He also served notice that an adequate defense budget would need to be funded if this posture was to remain sufficiently modern, ready, and sustained.\footnote{See Laird's Defense Report for 1971, Chap. 4. See also Laird, "A Strong Start in a Difficult Decade."}
Pacific, now they would begin acquiring a more predominantly NATO and European flavor. As far as the Nixon administration was concerned, the United States was in Europe to stay.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COLD WAR**

The defense strategy crafted by Nixon thus was one of reduced but still-powerful U.S. military strength, with sizable overseas commitments and still-existing collective defense alliances. This strategy was designed to support a foreign policy of continued involvement in critical regions focused on containing growing Soviet military power and political influence. Critics at the time were enamored of the scaled-back aspirations represented by this doctrine and criticized Nixon for ad hoc improvisation that belied White House claims of conceptual order. In retrospect, however, what stands out is that, in Europe at least, the foundations of traditional American policy and strategy for the Cold War were being retained. Critics in the United States were not the only ones misled by their own misinterpretations. Apparently the Soviet Union itself failed to grasp the degree to which continued overseas engagement, rather than withdrawal and disarmament, still animated American diplomacy under Nixon. In the seeds of this misunderstanding probably lie the rise in Cold War tensions that was to occur a few years later.

As of the early 1970s, the United States and the Soviet Union were both endorsing détente, but because this term implied a relaxation of tensions without specifying an ultimate distribution of power, it failed to highlight the extent to which the two superpowers were still pursuing incompatible security agendas. Still seeking enhanced global influence under the mantle of growing military strength, the Soviet government defined détente in terms of a process of peaceful negotiations in which a retreating United States would yield global hegemony to the USSR. By contrast, the U.S. government aspired to reduced superpower rivalry and greater cooperation on behalf of peaceful coexistence, but it had no intention of allowing the USSR to dominate the global security order.27

Nixon's foreign and defense policy statements were expressed in sufficiently firm terms to make this stance clear, but apparently the Soviet government read too much between the lines and took too seriously the cacophony of different voices in the United States. What consequently ensued was a diplomatic process guided by illusions on both sides. Cautiously hopeful that the Soviet Union was tiring of the Cold War and that détente might bring useful accords which would service American interests, the U.S. government embarked on the path of negotiations but simultaneously acted to shore up containment and deterrence. Meanwhile, the Soviet government, underestimating American resolve, entered negotiations in the hope of advancing its own interests, but concurrently kept building its own military power and pursuing its self-serving goals. The interests of the two superpowers coincidentally overlapped in ways permit-

---

27 For an appraisal of U.S./USSR differing conceptions of détente, see Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation, Chap. 2.
ting limited agreements that could moderate their competition; but to a degree not commonly realized in either Washington or Moscow, the two nations remained rivals. The Cold War in Europe and around the globe was not over, but merely was being channeled in new directions.
As the Nixon administration set out in 1970 to actively pursue its foreign policy goals in Europe, it found itself following the two-track approach laid down by Harmel and MC 14/3: détente and defense preparedness. With the winds of political change blowing across Europe, public attention far and away was fixated on détente diplomacy. On both sides of the Atlantic, hopes soared that diplomatic breakthroughs with the Eastern bloc might be in the offing, thereby resolving the Cold War standoff in Central Europe or at least sharply reducing tensions. Behind the scenes, meanwhile, U.S. officials worked on the less appealing but nonetheless important task of breathing greater life into NATO's conventional defense efforts.

Complex motives lay behind Washington's growing activism in the NATO defense arena. As the Harmel Report pointed out, a defense upswing was needed to strengthen the West's hand in détente diplomacy. Without an ongoing program to stabilize the military balance and show NATO's resolve, the Soviet government would have less incentive to come to terms on Berlin, arms control negotiations, and the manifold other issues surrounding détente. Equally important, official expectations about détente were less optimistic than was public opinion. In Washington, awareness of the Soviet military buildup contributed to widespread doubt that détente would settle the Cold War, and this skepticism left the Nixon administration believing that energetic NATO defense planning still was the key to security in Europe. Reinforcing this belief was the White House's judgment that NATO's military posture was still weak in many areas and that a more robust conventional defense was needed to strengthen the strategy of flexible response.

Moreover, accelerated defense efforts were needed to shore up NATO's internal unity. The Nixon administration worried that withdrawal from Vietnam, the plummeting defense budget, and its own modest nuclear strategy were creating the impression that the United States was backing away from its European commitments. A NATO defense upswing led by the United States was necessary to restore Washington's leadership position. Another purpose was to build Congressional support for Nixon's pro-NATO defense strategy and to reduce mounting dissatisfaction with alliance burden-sharing. Because the allies provided nearly 75% of NATO's combat power in Europe, any strengthening of U.S. forces alone, without accompanying allied improvements, would only
marginally enhance NATO's security, thereby rendering the Nixon defense strategy questionable. An alliancewide defense improvement effort thus was needed not only to cement the transatlantic bond, but also to build the domestic support in the United States needed to allow Nixon to pursue his designs in Europe.

TOWARD NATO DEFENSE IMPROVEMENTS: AD-70

Driven by these motives, the Nixon administration in 1970 embarked on a political campaign across Western Europe to mobilize support for a coalition-wide response. This endeavor, which embroiled Nixon's defense strategy in the unfolding drama of détente diplomacy in Europe, was to produce mixed but still important results. Although it failed to produce a major NATO defense upswing, it did help keep the alliance's critics at bay, thereby reducing allied doubts about American leadership and congressional criticism of the U.S. commitment in Europe. Moreover, it helped goad NATO's sluggish defense efforts into moving in the right direction, a development that became increasingly important when détente started losing steam in the mid-1970s.

During its first year in office, the Nixon administration had not been especially active in NATO. It did give rhetorical if somewhat ambivalent backing to a plan by Denis Healy, Britain's defense minister, to form a "Eurogroup" caucus of West European nations to coordinate their positions on NATO defense matters.1 The Eurogroup initiative got off to a slow start due to the allies' lack of agreement on defense priorities, but at least it was a sound idea. Apart from supporting this innovation, the Nixon administration's early activities were confined largely to pro-forma appearances at NATO's biannual ministerial sessions. Meanwhile, the alliance itself showed little energy in defense planning. The West Europeans, fascinated by détente and West Germany's emerging Ostpolitik, showed little concern for security affairs, and had little money to spend on new defense initiatives in any event.

This transatlantic passivity began to change in early 1970 as the Nixon administration completed its internal policy review and set about to marshal support in Washington and Western Europe. It found a receptive audience in limited but influential circles. That winter, NATO Secretary General Manlio Brosio, taking a cue from Nixon's foreign policy report to Congress, proposed a NATO-wide review of alliance defense priorities. Along with this idea, he called for NATO to conduct a study on prospects for entering negotiations with the USSR on mutual force reductions in Europe. Brosio's two-fold plan was motivated partly by a desire to head off growing congressional pressures in Washington for unilateral troop withdrawals. But it also reflected a larger strategic perspective, one influenced by then-SACEUR, General Andrew Goodpaster.2

1See Kissinger, The White House Years, Chap. 11.
2Additional information on AD-70 is provided by Kissinger's The White House Years, Chap. 11 and 22, and by Robert S. Jordan (ed.), Generals in International Politics: NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, Chap. 6.
Recently appointed to succeed General Lyman Lemnitzer, Goodpaster was only beginning to exert his leadership within NATO's circles. A man steeped in NATO's history, he was convinced that the alliance had an enduring role to play in Europe even in an era of détente, but only if it had a positive sense of direction. A believer in flexible response, he saw political and military merit in the idea of breathing vibrant life into MC 14/3. Accordingly, he had begun arguing for a NATO-wide initiative, lasting several years, aimed at bolstering the alliance's conventional defenses. Brosio became aware of Goodpaster's idea, promptly embraced it, and packaged it together with his MBFR initiative. He presented the two ideas as a coordinated approach for enlivening the alliance and for rectifying the military balance through a combination of NATO force enhancements and negotiated reductions in the Soviet threat.

Brosio's MBFR démarche required Soviet cooperation, which was not yet forthcoming, but his force enhancement idea was something that NATO could act on purely by itself. The Nixon administration, seeing domestic and international advantages in Brosio's initiative, reacted positively. At the ministerial session that spring, Laird endorsed the idea and promised strong U.S. backing. In succeeding weeks, U.S. officials tabled a concept for a comprehensive ten-year program to improve NATO's posture that would involve contributions from all NATO's members. Nixon himself got into the act by offering the allies a positive incentive of his own. In recent years the United States had been pressuring the West Europeans, especially the Germans, to contribute more to offsetting the cost of stationing U.S. forces in Europe. Nixon proposed that if the allies were to increase their defense spending, they should spend the extra money on enhancing their own forces rather than on additional offset measures. Although this démarche annoyed some congressmen, it helped channel U.S. pressures for greater allied burden-sharing in a direction that gave the West Europeans a greater incentive to cooperate.

The British reacted enthusiastically to Brosio's plan, with Healy stressing the need for progress on armaments cooperation and logistics planning. West Germany initially was reluctant, but with new defense minister Helmut Schmidt expressing interest in enhancing NATO's reserve forces, it eventually came around. The French reaction was predictably standoffish. De Gaulle's successor, Georges Pompidou, continued to endorse Gaullist policies, but he was showing signs of greater flexibility to NATO and, in any event, France's absence from NATO's integrated command meant that the alliance could act in this area without his formal support. The other allies reacted in a mixed fashion. Although supportive of any scheme that would keep U.S. troops in Europe, they were unenthused about increasing their own defense spending. Along with the British and Germans, they consequently favored a moderate plan that would not involve major new expenditures.

By contrast, the United States favored something more comprehensive and ambitious. The differences between the two approaches were graphically high-

3See Kissinger, The White House Years, pp. 400–402.
lighted when the allies rejected Laird's efforts to induce them to endorse 4% annual real increases in their defense spending. Nevertheless, both sides were agreed on the need to cooperate together, to promote greater efficiency, and to focus on high priority measures. By spring 1970, a NATO-wide consensus had been forged on the terms of reference. A short while later, the study, named AD-70 (The Study of Alliance Defense Problems in the 1970s) got under way. It was officially launched at the May ministerial session in Rome, a meeting that also resulted in a declaration calling for MBFR negotiations.

To ensure that it would be an alliance-wide effort, AD-70 was conducted under the auspices of NATO Headquarters, with most of the analytical work performed by SHAPE with help from member-nation defense ministries. Although the study addressed broad political trends in Europe, it focused most heavily on the state of NATO's defenses. It concluded that NATO's nuclear forces were mostly adequate, but that its conventional defenses had serious deficiencies which must be remedied. Drawing on NATO's already existing force goals and ideas proposed by the United States and the Eurogroup, AD-70 endorsed a set of short-term measures that could be implemented quickly, along with a far-reaching ten-year plan. Preparation of AD-70 took several months; it was finally completed that fall and formally adopted at a heads-of-state meeting in early December 1970. There, Nixon pledged that, provided the allies fulfilled their part of the bargain, the United States would keep its troops in Europe and would withdraw them only if an MBFR agreement was reached. In response, ten allied nations—West Germany and Britain among them—banded together to endorse a special European Defense Improvement Program (EDIP), under whose aegis they promised to work on AD-70's behalf.5

Despite this rousing kickoff, AD-70 served to give NATO's defense plans a gentle shove rather than a hard push. Partly this was because the study itself focused heavily on low-cost ways to improve NATO's forces that were marginally helpful but did not offer to reshape the military balance. Into this category especially fell its call for improvements in NATO's infrastructure, communications systems, and airfield survivability. More ambitious measures included accelerated procurement of new tanks, antiarmor missiles, air defense systems, and antisubmarine warfare technology. Additionally, AD-70 called for improvements in NATO's logistic system, weapons interoperability, and armaments cooperation. But apart from demanding better use of allied reserve forces, it eschewed emphasis on costly measures, especially of the kind that would expand NATO's forces. It thereby continued a trend that had begun emerging in the mid-1960s, when NATO first decided that it was best to try to improve what it already had at affordable cost rather than ask for forces and budgets that were politically unattainable.

Nonetheless, AD-70 was not oblivious to the need for quite substantial improvements, especially over the long term, and it clearly implied that greater defense spending was needed, principally by the allies. AD-70's core problem

---

was that NATO's participants remained unwilling to put up the money required to implement fully these long-term measures. The West European nations responded by agreeing to increase their combined spending by about only $1 billion over the coming five years: a small 1% increase. Of this total, some $420 million was earmarked for infrastructure programs (aircraft shelters, barracks, and other facilities), $500 million was to be spent on improvements to allied forces, and $60 million was to be allocated to other financial measures. On top was to be added whatever funds that the United States and the allies could make available by reprioritizing their spending plans. The total amount, while of uncertain dimensions, provided scope for some improvements but it still fell well short of AD-70's complete requirements, and practically guaranteed that progress would come less rapidly than AD-70's authors had envisioned.

Not surprisingly, NATO's forces improved only slowly as the early 1970s unfolded. This led Goodpaster to declare in frustration that NATO's progress was best measured in millimeters. Again venting his frustration, he likened NATO's members to participants in a perverse form of bicycle racing in which the riders tried to go as slow as possible without actually falling off. Other U.S. officials expressed similar, if less colorful, views. Their pique notwithstanding, however, the AD-70 effort did produce tangible results when all was said and done. Although it did not succeed in lifting NATO's defense efforts onto a higher plateau, it did identify the goals that should be pursued and helped goad NATO's members to start acting accordingly.

The most important military development of this period is that U.S. forces returned home from Vietnam and began orienting themselves toward Europe. Of the ten Army divisions withdrawn from Southeast Asia, five were disbanded, but the remainder returned to bases in the United States where they were now available for missions anywhere. A similar development occurred for the tactical air forces, and for the U.S. Navy. This redeployment produced no increases in U.S. forces in Europe, but it did restore an all-important strategic reserve that could be dispatched there in a crisis. The long-standing U.S. practice of acting as NATO's chief source of reinforcements was now restored, thereby breathing stronger life into flexible response.

On the negative side, U.S. defense spending continued plummeting, and by early 1972 had fallen fully 15% below FY64 levels (in constant dollars), the last pre-Vietnam budget. This drop-off had a strangulating effect on modernization and readiness, but Nixon's strategy change did encourage the Pentagon to focus on Western Europe, thereby helping to buffer the negative impact on NATO-oriented forces. Nonetheless, U.S. forces in Europe continued to be equipped with weapons from the 1960s that were slowly becoming outdated, and morale took a serious nose dive. Behind the scenes, senior U.S. military officers set about to assimilate the lessons of Vietnam and refurbish their tactical doctrines and procedures. This produced a healthy intellectual ferment that was to pay off some years later, especially when new weapon systems started becoming

---

8See Jordan, Generals in International Politics, Chap. 6.
available. But for the moment, the U.S. defense effort was mostly in a stall pattern.

The West European allies, meanwhile, continued to devote a steady 3.5% of their combined GNP to defense, which was only about one-half the percentage allocated by the United States. The West German defense budget reflected this average, the French and British did somewhat better, and the Danes and Belgians somewhat worse. Defense thus was not a growing priority in Europe, but at least allied governments maintained sufficient consensus to arrest further cutbacks. In fact, Western Europe’s sustained economic growth permitted a slow rise in real defense spending of 1–2% per year. Allied active duty manpower remained at about 3.25 million, thereby halting the slow decline of the past decade and keeping allied force levels constant.7

Allied spending levels were adequate to permit a steady if unglamorous modernization, primarily brought about by the recurring need to replace obsolescent equipment with new models. For both U.S. and allied forces, critically important antitank missiles began entering the inventory, and progress was made toward developing modern tanks and aircraft that would start becoming available a few years later. West Germany embarked on an important program to enlarge its army’s reserve forces, but the allies made few additional strides toward rectifying their sustainability shortfalls. Useful progress, however, was made in other areas, including in joint matters. For example, some 600 new aircraft were constructed by 1974, airfields were improved, and national air defense radars were forged into an integrated NATO air defense system. As a result of these trends, NATO’s military strength slowly inched upward in the early 1970s, not enough to match the Soviets, but sufficient to prevent the military balance from deteriorating beyond recall.

Perhaps most important, AD-70 had a salutary effect on NATO’s political attitudes toward taking defense more seriously. It helped solidify the allies’ commitment to MC 14/3 and gave NATO’s governments a reason to rebuff domestic pressures for sharp defense cutbacks. As a result, the guidance that the ministers approved for NATO’s force goals in 1971–1975 called for improvements in conventional defense as NATO’s first priority, and this stance was not revoked in later guidance documents. This alone was an important accomplishment in light of the allies’ original ambivalence toward MC 14/3 and their hopes for détente and MBFR.

The NATO defense consensus that accompanied AD-70’s adoption was to have a lasting political impact in the United States in mid-1971, when the simmering debate in Washington over the U.S. troop presence in Europe finally came to a boil. On May 11, 1971, Senator Mansfield attached an amendment to a Senate bill that called for withdrawal of 150,000 U.S. troops from Europe: a 50% cut. If passed, this amendment would have become law and therefore the executive branch would have been hard-pressed to shirk it. Mansfield asked for an immediate vote, and Senate leaders from both parties warned a concerned

---

7See Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney’s *Report on Allied Contributions to the Common Defense*, GPO, Washington, D.C., April 1990. This document and earlier DoD burden-sharing reports provide detailed data on West European and U.S. defense expenditures during these two decades.
White House that he probably would win. Sensing an impending disaster, Nixon decided to meet Mansfield’s challenge head-on, and set about to mobilize the Washington foreign policy establishment to lobby Congress. In the midst of this public relations campaign, the White House surprisingly got support from an unexpected source. On May 15, Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev, speaking in Tbilisi (a wine-growing area of the USSR), announced his government’s willingness to enter MBFR talks. Taunting the West, he urged it to “taste the wine” of Soviet intentions by agreeing to start negotiations in the near future.  

Brezhnev’s wine-tasting speech doubtless was intended to serve the USSR’s diplomatic agenda in Europe, and was scarcely aimed at helping the beleaguered White House, but it could not have come at a better time. By giving the United States a reason to keep U.S. forces in Europe as a bargaining chip in the upcoming talks, it pulled the rug out from under Mansfield. By the time the Senate vote was taken on May 19, support for Mansfield had largely dissipated. To the White House’s relief, Mansfield’s amendment went down to defeat by a wide margin, as did a similar amendment by Senator Frank Church (D. Idaho) calling for a smaller 50,000-man cut.

The dramatic events of May 19 proved to be a turning point in the U.S. debate over the American force presence in Europe. Mansfield and his allies by no means intended to stop their campaign, but the White House now had the tools to keep them at bay by linking the U.S. troop presence to MBFR. From May 19 onward, congressional support for Nixon’s stance remained fairly strong, notwithstanding continued grumbling about burden-sharing. With its domestic flank now more secure, the White House finally was able to begin focusing on Europe’s affairs with confidence that it would not be undermined by isolationist sentiment in the United States.

To a degree, Nixon’s success at staving off the Mansfield amendment resulted from Brezhnev’s timely intervention, but in a larger sense, it was caused by the consensus-formation in defense policy that had taken place across the entire alliance in 1970 and early 1971. Had the alliance allowed its defense posture and strategy to weaken when détente started blooming, Brezhnev would have had little reason to accede to MBFR talks. Had NATO not committed itself to both MBFR and a serious effort to shore up its defenses, Mansfield sooner or later would have gotten his way. If U.S. forces had been withdrawn, the West European allies almost certainly would have responded by cutting their own defenses, thereby sending NATO’s military strategy on a downward spiral. The result easily could have been a stampede toward Moscow aimed at securing the best deal possible, thereby transforming détente into a disaster for the West. In a quiet way, AD-70 continued to serve as the conceptual framework for NATO conventional defense planning through the mid-1970s, and it achieved only modest results. But by performing a far more important political function earlier in the decade, it left a lasting legacy.

---

8See Kissinger, The White House Years, Chap. 22.
THE DISAPPOINTING FATE OF DÉTENTE AND ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS

During the time that the United States and its allies were forging NATO’s defense plans, a parallel process of détente diplomacy was also taking place in Europe. An analysis of détente’s dynamics is important not only for what was accomplished, but also for what was not achieved. To an important degree, NATO’s sluggish performance in defense affairs during the early 1970s owed a great deal to preoccupation with détente. Had détente successfully resolved the bipolar confrontation in Europe, nothing would have been lost. However, this was not to be the case. Détente was far from a complete flop, but when it fell well short of ending the Cold War, NATO was left facing the ongoing Soviet military buildup, with diplomacy no longer offering any recourse.

As mentioned earlier, the Nixon administration’s approach to détente in Europe was driven by complex motives. While Nixon and Kissinger favored negotiating with the Soviets, they were acutely aware that they were dealing with an adversary in pursuit of its own agenda. Consequently, they regarded détente as a process that had to be managed carefully. In particular, they felt that the West needed to prevent the Soviets from engaging in hollow atmospherics by compelling them to negotiate acceptable accords on substantive security issues. While this stance did not rule out the normal give and take of bargaining, it did mean that agreements with Moscow should not be pursued as ends in themselves. Nixon’s tough-minded approach stressed that any accords must serve the West’s vital security interests and not compromise NATO’s own unity.9

From 1969 onward, the Nixon administration attempted to spread this gospel of caution across Western Europe, but ran up against allied enthusiasm for détente and suspicion that the United States was locked into a self-serving Cold War mentality. Eagerness to explore détente especially ran high in the FRG, where Chancellor Brandt wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to promote his “Ostpolitik” policy of improving relations with the communist bloc. Brandt aspired to reduce the FRG’s isolation brought about by the Hallstein doctrine, under which the FRG refused to have diplomatic relations with any state that recognized the GDR. Beyond this, Brandt took Brezhnev’s overtures seriously, and he felt that an activist Ostpolitik could help not only to enhance the FRG’s stature but also ease East-West tensions in Europe. His goal was to reassure Moscow of its security in the hope that the Kremlin would respond by allowing liberalization in Eastern Europe. Liberalization, Brandt felt, would lead to expanded contacts with the West, ultimately paving the way to German unification on terms the Soviet government could accept.

9 See Kissinger’s The White House Years, Chap. 13. For an analysis of détente politics during this period, see Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation. See also John Newhouse, War and Peace in the Nuclear Age, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1989. Historical chronologies for these years are presented in the Strategic Survey studies published annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, U.K.
Like West German governments before him, Brandt thus continued to aspire for eventual unification, but he pursued it by more subtle means aimed at gradually building acceptance of the FRG in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. As part of this consensus-building, he was prepared to normalize relations with Poland and the GDR and to pursue expanded contacts with other Warsaw Pact nations. His desire for Eastern favors did not carry to the point of being willing to detach the FRG from NATO and a close relationship with the United States, but he was prepared to meet the Soviet government halfway in exchange for mutual security guarantees, improved relations with the Eastern bloc, and a more stable situation in Berlin.10

The Nixon administration initially reacted to Ostpolitik with considerable misgivings, fearing that Bonn would not get the better of the bargain and that NATO’s unity would suffer. Additionally, it was also worried about the precedent that would be set if West Germany started acting unilaterally. At the same time, it also recognized that the United States could not afford to hamstring détente or Ostpolitik. Something more positive than naysaying was needed if Washington was to preserve its own credibility and discourage the West Europeans from pursuing uncoordinated initiatives on their own. As a result, the Nixon administration set aside its doubts and actively entered the détente process in a way intended to exert leadership over the alliance. Its goal was to pursue American interests, bolster Brandt’s bargaining position, and to channel Ostpolitik and détente in constructive directions.

Nixon’s adoption of a forthcoming stance on détente left Washington and Bonn needing to harmonize their somewhat different approaches to negotiations. The White House saw détente in global and military-security terms. It aspired to U.S.-Soviet negotiations aimed at moderating superpower rivalry, bringing the strategic nuclear competition under control, and gaining Soviet cooperation in other regions, including Southeast Asia. In Europe, the Nixon administration was concerned with improving the basic security architecture. It wanted to resolve the thorny Berlin situation, thereby reducing risks of further crises, and to achieve a stable military balance by paring back Warsaw Pact offensive power while leaving NATO’s defense strategy intact. By contrast, the Brandt government was thinking in regional and psychological terms. Its political strategy aimed at a four-fold sequence of diplomatic accord that would begin with improved FRG-Soviet ties, then solidify FRG-Polish relations, and finally settle Berlin and establish FRG-GDR ties. Seeing the military confrontation as a symptom of underlying political tensions, it was less concerned with arms control negotiations than was Washington.

Further complicating the West’s task of building internal consensus was the need to take into account France’s goals for détente. As far back as 1966, de

Gaulle had embraced détente by traveling to Moscow, where he met with Brezhnev to discuss the USSR's terms. De Gaulle saw détente as an opportunity to establish a more fluid East-West relationship in Europe that would weaken American domination, diminish NATO, contain German power, and establish France as an influential arbiter of continental affairs. Although less anti-American than de Gaulle, Pompidou had similar aspirations. The détente vehicle especially favored by Paris was a European security conference, which also was being promoted by the Soviet Union.

Détente diplomacy began in the waning months of 1969, shortly after Brandt's election, when the alliance entered into an internal dialogue on Western negotiating strategy. Undertaken at Washington's behest, this effort aimed at forging a durable consensus that would satisfy the United States, West Germany, France, and other alliance members. An agreement was reached that satisfied everyone by upgrading the common interest: The different approaches of Washington, Bonn, and Paris were bundled together in a single package that all three nations embraced. The agreement called for simultaneous pursuit of arms control agreements, political accords aimed at ratifying the territorial status quo, and a security conference. The American, German, and French governments agreed to pursue these negotiating tracks in tandem, and to establish informal linkages among them. This stance promised to complicate the negotiating process by forcing constant coordination among separate negotiations and by requiring a favorable outcome in each one. The positive feature, however, was alliance unity and greatly increased pressure on the USSR to accommodate Western interests in all three areas.

Inter-alliance negotiations came to a successful conclusion in December, when NATO's foreign ministers issued a formal declaration on East-West relations. This declaration spelled out how the alliance intended to proceed with negotiations and détente. It stated that NATO agreed to the convening of a European security conference, and went on expressly to link this conference to progress on Berlin, Soviet-German negotiations on stabilization of their relations, and talks on arms reductions in Europe. In taking this stance, NATO effectively endorsed Ostpolitik as an outgrowth of official alliance policy and set limits on how far Brandt could proceed with its support. Equally important, NATO sent a strong signal to the Soviets that détente must address concrete security issues, that it would not be conducted selectively with Moscow setting the agenda, and that it must yield tangible progress before any improvement in East-West relations would be possible.

The alliance's declaration marked the initiation of a complicated set of East-West détente activities that took fully four years to play out, during which NATO's defense efforts steadily slipped into the background. In January 1970, Brandt issued a policy statement laying down the FRG's principles for governing détente, including support for NATO's declaration and insistence on maintaining the West's rights in Berlin. One week later, the GDR declared its willingness to begin talks with the FRG on inter-German relations. The FRG and the USSR also announced agreement to enter into negotiations on a renunciation of force treaty. In mid-February, the Soviets responded to Western prod-
ding by agreeing to open negotiations on Berlin. The following April, the United States and the USSR met in Vienna to launch the first round of SALT. Meanwhile, the two blocs accelerated their diplomatic exchanges on prospects for a European security conference (favored by the USSR) and mutual force reductions (sought by NATO).

This sudden frenzy of diplomacy began to bear fruit a few months later. In August 1970, the FRG and the USSR signed a Nonaggression Treaty in Moscow. In December, the FRG and Poland signed a treaty normalizing relations between their nations. In May 1971, the United States and the Soviet Union announced that they had gained a breakthrough in SALT that would permit a strategic arms treaty in the near future. In June 1972, after prolonged diplomatic wrangling, the Quadrapartite Agreement on Berlin finally was signed. The following December, the FRG and the GDR signed the "Basic Treaty" establishing relations between them. Meanwhile, arms control negotiations registered progress. In May 1972, Nixon and Brezhnev met at the Moscow Summit and signed the SALT Treaty, which limited ABM deployments and capped offensive inventories on both sides. They also agreed upon a document on "Basic Principles of U.S.-Soviet Relations," which endorsed peaceful coexistence between the two nations. In June 1973, Nixon and Brezhnev met in Washington and signed a U.S.-Soviet agreement on principles for preventing nuclear war. In July that year, the security conference long sought by Moscow, now called the Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE), was finally convened, followed in October by the opening of MBFR negotiations in Vienna.

Détente thus seemed firmly established as 1974 dawned, but appearances were deceiving. The previous year had also witnessed a palpable slowing of progress and a perceptible souring of U.S.-Soviet relations, a trend discernible to close observers if not to the outside world. Although the key European political accords, which marked détente's heart, had achieved a great deal in reducing political tensions in Europe, they had already been signed. All that remained as major ongoing negotiations were SALT, CSCE, and MBFR. All three proved stubbornly resistant to rapid progress.

Of these, SALT, being a superpower dialogue, attracted the greatest public attention and the most hope. Efforts to negotiate a SALT II Treaty, however, bogged down into a morass of competing perspectives, technical disputes, and political reluctance to close a deal. Negotiations were rendered especially complex because the two sides' force postures reflected quite different design philosophies. Whereas the Soviet posture was anchored on ICBMs, the U.S. posture was composed of a more balanced triad of ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers. The United States was principally interested in restricting Soviet ICBMs and MIRV technology, which posed a first-strike threat, while the USSR sought restraints on U.S. cruise missiles, SLBMs, and bombers. A fair deal did not automatically suggest itself, and negotiations were made even more difficult because neither side was eager for a major cutback in its force levels or modernization programs.

Faced with these inhibitions, the SALT II talks came to focus on a limited accord that, while enhancing stability, promised to have only a marginal impact
on restraining the superpower competition. Meeting in Vladivostok in November 1974, President Ford and Brezhnev reached agreement on main principles for a SALT II Treaty that was to limit offensive inventories on both sides to 2400 launchers and 1320 MIRVed missiles. With U.S.-Soviet relations encountering troubles elsewhere, the two sides were unable to bring the negotiations to completion. A principal problem was growing opposition in Congress. Critics charged that the Vladivostok accord gave the USSR unfair advantages in missile throw-weight and megatonnage, failed to relieve the first-strike threat to the U.S. ICBM force, and did not constrain the Soviet Backfire bomber. Complaints also were voiced that verification was not adequately guaranteed and that the Soviets were violating the SALT I accord. Against this background of mounting controversy, the two sides continued to negotiate during 1975 and 1976 but were unable to resolve the outstanding issues. Eventually, the SALT II negotiations were placed on hold, pending the outcome of the 1976 U.S. presidential election.\(^{11}\)

As for CSCE, negotiations slowly dragged on through 1974 and 1975. What started out as a conference to showcase the USSR's status as a European power slowly was transformed into a Western vehicle for prodding the Soviets about their stranglehold on Eastern Europe. In August 1975, CSCE finally produced agreement on a four-part “Final Act,” which endorsed the inviolability of Europe’s frontiers and initiated “confidence building measures” for regulating military training in Europe. Additionally, the Final Act called for an expansion of East-West economic ties and humanitarian cooperation. Significantly, it also called for a follow-up conference in 1977. The CSCE process was to go on for many years, ultimately playing a role in unraveling communist control in Eastern Europe. But all this lay in the future. At the time, the Final Act looked like mere window dressing, and seemed to contribute little to solving Europe’s fundamental security problems.

This left MBFR, which held the key to future European security affairs because it dealt directly with the military confrontation in Central Europe. Although the two sides had publicly endorsed these talks in mid-1971, MBFR was slow getting started because of Soviet foot-dragging and internal debate within NATO. Between mid-1971 and late 1973, when negotiations finally began, the United States and its allies had ample time to study the issue and prepare their negotiating position. The time was put to good use, but it also led participating NATO nations to conclude that if MBFR was to upgrade the West’s security interests, they had little choice but to table very firm demands.\(^{12}\)

By common consent, the MBFR talks were to focus on military manpower, with the goal of achieving parity in Central Europe, the “NATO Guidelines Area.” In essence, NATO's analyses concluded that, because the Warsaw Pact


had more manpower than NATO there, the West had to demand asymmetrically large reductions from the Soviets and their allies in order to reach parity. Moreover, NATO concluded that in order to preserve the capacity to mount a forward defense of Germany's borders, it could accept only a 10% reduction in its own forces. As a result, NATO was left with a negotiating position which offered only trivial cuts in its own posture and demanded that four Warsaw Pact soldiers be removed for every NATO soldier.

When the negotiations convened, the Soviets reacted to the West's stance in a predictably negative way. Unenthused about MBFR to begin with and under no pressure to sign an accord, because other détente accords already had been reached, they rejected the Western position and stonewalled. Their position offered only equally large reductions, which would have perpetuated the West's inferiority. To complicate matters further, they denied that the Warsaw Pact actually enjoyed a sizable manpower advantage in Central Europe. Incredulous at the USSR's apparent duplicity and aware that any treaty could not be verified unless there was agreement on data, Western negotiators tried to get to the bottom of the two sides' different manpower estimates. The Soviets proved uncooperative, and MBFR bogged down into a sterile dispute over data with little serious negotiating on actual reductions. The West periodically tried to break the logjam by offering pot-sweeteners and by considering small initial steps, but these efforts went nowhere. MBFR talks went on interminably, but the reality was that a negotiation critical to Europe's future security had ended in dismal failure.

The failure of MBFR symbolized the withering of détente, but for reasons going far beyond the technical issues on the negotiating table in Vienna. In the final analysis, détente had played itself out in Europe, thereby exposing the profound political problems that still divided the two blocs. For its part, the West had benefitted from détente in important but inconclusive ways. The Berlin Agreement, West Germany's more flexible diplomacy, and growing contacts with Eastern Europe all enhanced NATO's security and contributed to a less tense atmosphere in Europe. Nonetheless, détente failed to achieve the West's ultimate goals of resolving Germany's divided status, rolling back Soviet power, and ending the dangerous NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation in Central Europe. Indeed, it left the USSR still in control of Eastern Europe and able to pursue a diplomatic agenda aimed at expanding its influence and weakening the West's cohesion.

A similar verdict must be rendered for other arms control talks during this period. On the positive side, the ABM Treaty headed off what could have been a fruitless, expensive, and destabilizing arms race. The SALT I and Vladivostok accords on offensive systems failed to significantly reduce forces on both sides but did put a lid on force levels, thereby discouraging any further expansion. Also, the dialogue produced useful discussions on nuclear explosions, naval practices, communications during crises, and other matters.\(^{13}\) On the negative

\(^{13}\)In addition to the SALT Treaties, negotiations in this period produced the Seabed Treaty (1971), the 1974 Threshold Test-Ban Treaty (not ratified by the U.S.), and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty (1978).
side, however, arms control negotiations failed by a wide margin to end the East-West military competition. In particular, the Soviet Union was left ample room to improve its free nuclear offensive forces through qualitative upgrades and to bolster its conventional forces by whatever means it chose. Arms control thus did little to prevent the USSR from pursuing an offensive military strategy and supremacy over the West. To be sure, NATO was left free to pursue whatever defense measures were deemed appropriate, but this state of affairs hardly was a ringing endorsement for what arms control and détente accomplished in the mid-1970s.

Although Soviet motives for pursuing détente are unclear, the evidence suggests the USSR had goals in mind that were limited and quite different from the West’s. Evidently the Soviets were principally interested in gaining formal Western acceptance of the status quo in Europe, recognition of the USSR as a legitimate European power, and improved economic relations with the West. Beyond this, they apparently hoped that NATO’s cohesion would weaken and the United States would withdraw, thereby leaving Moscow politically dominant across Europe. The Soviets were willing to make some concessions to pursue these objectives, especially on Berlin and in granting legitimacy to the FRG. But they were unwilling to contemplate accords that might have undermined their political control in Eastern Europe and the communist regimes there. Additionally, they were unwilling to part with their forward military presence in Eastern Europe, which was a root cause of the East-West confrontation.

All this suggested that the Cold War was far from over. The two blocs, both armed with powerful military establishments, continued to confront each other across the German partition line. Moreover, they continued to embrace different philosophies on the very fundamentals of political and economic life. Because their diplomatic agendas were now less sharply in conflict, the risk of intense crises seemed to have faded, but this was no guarantee of permanent tranquility. In essence, détente had ameliorated tensions, brought greater stability to East-West relations, and proved that negotiations could bear fruit. It was not capable, however, of bringing lasting peace. As this shortcoming became depressingly clear, Washington especially began losing enthusiasm for pursuing it.

Further contributing to détente’s demise were mounting troubles in U.S.-Soviet relations around the globe. The honeymoon started coming to an end in late 1972 when the Nixon administration set about to negotiate a five-year trade agreement with the USSR. The agreement, among other provisions, was intended to allow the Soviet Union to purchase American grain to compensate for its own agricultural shortfalls. At this juncture, the U.S. Congress, led by Senator Henry Jackson (D. Wash.) began using improved U.S.-USSR trade relations as a lever to compel the Soviet government to ease its emigration policies. When the Soviets failed to make sufficient concessions to satisfy the Congress, the resulting impasse produced a lengthy delay in the trade negotiations. The Congress finally passed the Trade Reform Bill in late 1974, and the trade agreement was culminated in late 1975, but this was fully three years after the origi-
nally intended date. Even then, the USSR was not granted most favored nation status, an outcome that left the Soviet government angry.\textsuperscript{14}

U.S.-Soviet relations slid further downhill in late 1973, when the two sides suddenly found themselves on the brink of a confrontation in the Middle East. When Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel that October, the Soviets stepped up their arms shipments to the Arab belligerents and bolstered their naval presence in the Mediterranean. As the fighting turned against the Arabs, the Soviet government sent a note to Washington implying that it was contemplating dispatching military forces to the region. The United States, supplying Israel and trying to negotiate a cease-fire, countered by declaring a military alert of its own. The Soviets restrained themselves, and the crisis was resolved shortly thereafter when the war came to a close, but this unpleasant incident suggested that détente did not extend beyond Europe’s shores.\textsuperscript{15}

Events elsewhere around the globe reinforced the impression that the USSR was pursuing a selective and geographically limited interpretation of détente. The mid-1970s saw no further U.S.-Soviet crises, but it did witness a steady rise in tensions in several areas. Attracting special attention was the USSR’s aid to radical Arab regimes in the Middle East, its meddling in sub-Saharan Africa and the Persian Gulf, and its support for Castro’s Cuba. Receiving less public notice but still troubling to the U.S. government was the USSR’s stance in the Far East. There, the Soviet military buildup continued unabated, Soviet-Chinese relations remained uneasy, and Soviet-Japanese relations showed little sign of improvement. The Korean peninsula remained tense, and although the Soviet government was not exacerbating the situation, neither was it doing much to alleviate it.

In Southeast Asia, North Vietnam’s victory in mid-1975 soon gave rise to mounting concern that the Soviet Union would establish military bases there. In southern Asia, meanwhile, the Soviet government continued its flirtation with India and its involvement in Afghanistan’s politics, thus displaying a continuing interest in gaining access to the Indian Ocean. Taken together, these trends suggested a mounting effort by the Soviet Union to challenge Western interests globally even as it pursued détente in Europe. This was a worrisome development that the United States, with its global involvements, particularly had to take into account in judging whether détente was working.

The changes occurring in American politics added momentum to détente’s declining fortunes. By promoting détente and opening a dialogue with the Chinese, Nixon had developed a reputation as a sound leader in foreign policy, but his domestic performance brought about his undoing. The Watergate crisis, which burst upon the national scene in 1973, progressively paralyzed his foreign policy and ultimately destroyed his presidency. When he left office in mid-1974, he was replaced by Gerald Ford, a man less interested in foreign affairs and lacking a national electoral mandate. Ford’s presidency, lasting until early 1977, was primarily devoted to healing Watergate’s domestic wounds and was

\textsuperscript{14}See Kissinger, \textit{The White House Years}, Chap. 29.

\textsuperscript{15}See Garthoff, \textit{Détente and Confrontation}, Chap. 11.
marked by a lack of bold departures in foreign policy. Diplomacy remained in now-Secretary of State Kissinger's competent hands, but with other international problems coming to the fore, U.S.-Soviet relations received less attention.

These changes coincided with mounting complaints by prominent American conservatives about détente's course. Already in 1973, conservative critics were charging that the U.S. government was being blinded by détente's atmospherics to the real thrust of Soviet international behavior and the mounting dangers ahead. In particular, détente's skeptics pointed to the USSR's buildup of strategic nuclear forces and the threat posed to the U.S. nuclear deterrent. Also cited were the USSR's questionable activities in the Middle East and Africa, and its increasingly assertive naval policy. As for Europe, the conservative critique charged that détente's contributions were ephemeral and that the West was being lured into acquiescing in the USSR's illegitimate domination of Eastern Europe. These charges were refuted by Kissinger and other administration spokesmen, but they grew in intensity as time passed, and they began to shape the tenor of policy debate in Washington and across the country.

If the Soviet Union became disillusioned with détente, the United States did too. The result was that U.S.-Soviet relations increasingly took on a strained tone as the mid-1970s unfolded. The whole history of the Cold War had shown regular cycles of rising and falling tensions in superpower relations, with periods of growing optimism in Washington followed by bitter disillusion when events exposed the enduring reality of conflicting East-West interests. By now, the Cold War had become less ideological, and the two sides had clearly come to realize that mutual nuclear deterrence created powerful reasons for them to learn how to coexist peacefully. But this change did nothing to alter the fact that the two blocs still embraced radically different values and were pursuing dissimilar courses. With Washington influenced by this sense of geopolitical rivalry and becoming more aware of the incompatibility between the USSR's diplomacy and its military buildup, the pendulum was beginning to swing back in the other direction.

MOUNTING DISCORD WITHIN THE ALLIANCE

The decline of détente cast a bright spotlight on the USSR's ongoing military buildup and reawakened interest in Washington regarding what should be done. Reinvigorating NATO was one natural response, but this did not promise to be easy. A principal reason was that the Americans and West Europeans were now having trouble in fashioning a common security agenda. Differences over détente were one important reason. Because of its focus on global affairs and the superpower military competition, the United States was left especially frustrated by détente's shortcomings. By contrast, West Germany and France, preoccupied with European political accords, were far more satisfied and less pessimistic about the future. When Washington began moving back toward a policy of rivalry with the USSR, Bonn and Paris, not wanting to sacrifice détente and invite renewed tensions in Europe, balked at suggestions they should cooperate.
As détente steadily declined in Washington's eyes, the differences widened, and triggered alarm in other West European capitals also worried about Washington's growing hostility to the Soviet Union. Allied pro-détente sympathies, in turn, went down poorly in Washington, and especially so when the U.S. government turned to the West Europeans for help in confronting Moscow, but encountered foot-dragging. A cleavage thereby opened up within the alliance that, to varying degrees, was to bedevil transatlantic relations for a full decade.

Disagreements over détente soon spilled over into alliance defense planning. As the United States lost faith in détente, it once again began focusing on ways to strengthen NATO's defenses, but the allies responded in a sluggish fashion that reflected their less-worried assessment of East-West relations in Europe. Discontent with allied failures to shoulder a larger share of the defense burden led to mounting congressional criticism of the West Europeans. In 1973, the Congress passed the Jackson-Nunn Amendment, which called for U.S. troop withdrawals if greater progress was not made in reducing balance-of-payment deficits caused by the military presence in Europe. In the end, this amendment resulted in no drawdowns, but it did put the troublesome burden-sharing problem back on the agenda, where it remained as a festering sore for the remainder of the decade and beyond. Because the USSR was beginning to behave in malevolent ways that drew attention to the deteriorating military balance in Europe, neither of these problems was serious enough to fracture the alliance, but they did reflect the degree to which NATO was sinking into a dispiriting malaise.

To make matters worse, transatlantic economic relations, long a source of alliance strength, were also deteriorating. Economic discord first emerged openly in August 1971, when Nixon administered his dramatic "economic shock" to Western Europe and Japan. Suddenly, members of the Western alliance found themselves at loggerheads over an issue that touched their vital interests. Nixon imposed a 10% tax surcharge on imports, and he suspended the convertibility of the dollar into gold, thereby altering the long-established practice of fixed exchange rates that kept the dollar's value high in relation to other currencies.\(^\text{16}\) Nixon's action was aimed at rectifying America's adverse balance-of-payments deficit and its growing trade imbalance. The tax surcharge had the effect of dampening imports while also serving notice that the United States was now prepared to retaliate against trade barriers erected by the allies. Suspending gold convertibility was intended to diminish the dollar's value in the international market, making U.S. goods cheaper abroad, and thus enhancing exports. This combination of reduced imports and increased exports promised to establish a more favorable balance of trade and also to stimulate the U.S. economy. Beyond this, Nixon's economic shock was aimed at fashioning changes considerably more sweeping than a mere marginal adjustment in

\(^{16}\)For a discussion of Nixon's "economic shock" policies in 1971, see Kissinger, The White House Years, Chap. 22; and Szulc, The Illusion of Peace, Book III, pp. 373-507. For an academic analysis of U.S.-West European economic relations during the 1970s and 1980s, see Henry R. Nau, The Myth of America's Decline: Leading the World Economy into the 1990's, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990; and Hanreider, Germany, America, and Europe.
transatlantic commerce. In essence, Nixon had undermined important features of the Breton Woods accords, which had governed international trade since the 1940s. He thereby was compelling the Western alliance to confront the difficult task of establishing entirely new monetary and trade relations.

For all its abruptness, Nixon’s action reflected a carefully calculated response to newly emerging conditions. Ever since the days of the Marshall Plan, the United States had been a strong backer of Western Europe’s economic recovery, often to the point of downplaying its own interests. This cooperative American attitude now seemed to be changing, and there were transparent reasons why this was so. The old economic order, composed of a dominant superpower and several destitute allies, had been replaced by a system of multiple industrial powers, all wealthy, engaged in robust foreign trade, and partly competing with each other. The era of interdependence had arrived, and with it had come American vulnerability to now prosperous allies who were becoming economic competitors even while remaining strategic partners. Reducing this vulnerability and establishing a satisfactory equilibrium was Nixon’s core concern.\(^\text{17}\)

A sense of perspective is in order here. The emergence of economic competition did not mean that the United States and Western Europe were on the way to becoming strategic rivals. The roots of community had sunk too deep for that, and the two sides shared a common commitment to democracy and free enterprise in a world where those values were far from universally accepted. The two sides also still needed each other’s support in security affairs. The United States therefore continued to have a strategic interest in a strong and stable Western Europe, and the allies had a parallel interest in a strong America. Modern economic theory, moreover, held that prosperity was not a “zero sum” game of mutually exclusive goals. If the situation was handled properly, both sides of the Atlantic could aspire to continue growing together, in the process pulling the remainder of the Western community along with them.

Handling the situation properly, however, promised to be a more complex job than in the past. To sustain mutual prosperity, NATO’s nations were now faced with the challenge of carefully orchestrating their trade and monetary relations to ensure that all participants benefited fairly. This challenge would have to be met in circumstances radically different from before. America’s prosperity no longer could be taken for granted, and other economic powers, especially Japan, were now heavily affecting world commerce. Several balls therefore had to be juggled at once, amidst changing economic conditions that were difficult to understand, let alone control.

Prior to 1971, the Bretton Woods accords, with their call for a liberal international order anchored in stable prices, open trade, market economies, and sustained growth, had effectively regulated the transatlantic exchange. Bretton Woods established the United States as the kingpin of the international economic system by making the dollar the world’s strongest currency and by

granting America’s then-highly competitive industrial corporations access to overseas markets. It also served Western Europe’s interests, however. In particular, it brought stability to monetary affairs, established favorable exchange rates that enhanced the continent’s ability to export its products, and gave West European nations access to foreign markets, including in the United States. As a result, Bretton Woods enjoyed support in both Washington and West European capitals. 18 

The 1960s had witnessed the first signs of friction as the newly created EEC began adopting practices, especially in agriculture, that protected its members but closed off its markets to American products. The Kennedy round of the GATT negotiations (1963–1968) successfully reduced EEC tariffs in many areas, but left agriculture unresolved. By the early 1970s, Western Europe’s industrial prowess had grown to the point where it was now exporting heavily to the United States, but its imports were not increasing as fast. As a result, the United States was beginning to confront a trade deficit that had negative repercussions on the American economy. Similar troubles, only worse, had begun to emerge with Japan.

Magnifying these problems with both Western Europe and Japan were mounting troubles with the U.S. economy, where growth rates were declining, productivity was diminishing, and inflation was setting in. The past decade had seen an important shift in domestic economic policy, with the old emphasis on economic expansion now supplemented by a growing stress on social policy goals, including full employment, welfare, public health, improved race relations, urban renewal, and pollution control. These goals resulted in an upsurge of public spending, a greater willingness to tolerate inflation, and diminished resources for capital investment and industrial modernization. Unwilling to restrain domestic expenditures or to alter its internal priorities, the United States turned toward the international arena to boost its economy. There, it found its balance-of-payment position weakening, its exports lagging, its gold reserves being drained, its currency overvalued, and a trade deficit emerging. All these trends contributed to a deteriorating international position that magnified America’s domestic economic travails. 19

Moreover, the United States still shouldered the lion’s share of the defense burden, a state of affairs which enabled the Japanese and West European allies to invest in economic expansion in ways that further bolstered their competitive standing. This preferential treatment made strategic sense in the 1950s, when Western Europe was still on the road to economic recovery, needed the freedom to invest in its own well-being, and was a huge importer of U.S. goods. But in the decade since 1960, Western Europe’s gross domestic product (GDP) had grown by fully 70% and its per capita income by fully 50%. Its total GDP now matched that of the United States, and while its per capita income was still less, it was rapidly becoming a wealthy region, capable of attending to both its domestic economy and its security requirements. Yet it continued to enjoy a

18 See Nau, The Myth of America’s Decline, and Hanrieder, Germany, America, and Europe.
19 See Gilpin, The Political Economy of International Relations, Chap. 2.
relatively small defense burden that allowed it, compared to the United States, greater freedom to invest in capital formation and industrial growth.

The United States, meanwhile, continued to labor under a comparatively heavy defense burden that retarded domestic investment, and therefore its economic vitality and competitiveness. As a result, the U.S. economy, once the West's showcase, was beginning to show signs of tarnishing, thereby threatening to produce a long-term decline in the American standard of life. Adding salt to the wound was the fact that the U.S. military presence in Europe and Japan, which brought security to both regions, was further enhancing American economic troubles by bringing added expense and currency outflow.

For all these reasons, the United States no longer was willing to continue bearing the main defense burden while also supporting an international order that was making its allies rich at the expense of its own prosperity. The Nixon administration had tried to help solve this problem by encouraging its allies to pick up a larger share of the defense burden, but was making little headway. In truth, moreover, it was not enthused about a full-scale devolution that would have left Western Europe and Japan as major military powers. This left reform of the international economic system as the only viable alternative. Concluding that the old system was no longer appropriate for the new conditions, the U.S. government wanted to change the rules of the game in order to better protect American economic interests.

Nixon's decision to overthrow the Bretton Woods accords was especially aimed at creating a more level playing field with Japan, whose trade practices were deemed especially protectionist and unfair. But it also was directed at Western Europe and the EEC, whose own protectionist, trade, and exchange-rate policies left something to be desired. Accompanying Nixon's economic shock came strong American pressure on the West Europeans to agree on measures to offset the cost of U.S. force commitments, and to shoulder a larger share of the economic and military burden. The net effect was to push Western Europe in new and unwelcome directions.

In Europe, allied governments were offended at Nixon's abrupt behavior and confrontational style. Once again, they felt, the United States had suddenly switched policy gears without consulting them, thereby suggesting that they lacked coequal status in Washington's eyes. More fundamentally, the West Europeans had viewed economic problems as separate from security affairs, and they had no wish to change an arrangement that served them well in both areas. In past years, they had been far from insensitive to American economic concerns. In the mid-1960s, for example, West Germany had brushed aside French objections by allowing U.S. corporations to invest heavily in Western Europe. Bonn took this step in recognition of the U.S. contribution to NATO's security. But with this accommodation made, Bonn and other allied capitals felt they had gone far enough. The idea of offering further economic adjustments in exchange for continuing security guarantees was not part of their mentality.20

20Hanreider is particularly lucid on this topic in *Germany, America, and Europe*. 
Also, their perception of economic trends differed from Washington's. They viewed the United States as an economic giant whose expanding overseas investments were threatening to take over Europe. Although Western Europe was now exporting more to the United States than it was importing, American investments in Europe were three times larger than the reverse. Moreover, Europeans felt that America's economic problems were its own causing, and that Western Europe should not be held responsible for them. Many therefore saw Nixon's new policy as a raw assertion of national economic interests, as well as an irresponsible retrenchment from the decades-old American commitment to an open trading system. Beyond this, Nixon seemed to be trying to improve the U.S. competitive position in ways that might threaten Western Europe's economic growth and integration. This behavior did not connote joint cooperation, and some Europeans saw it as a virtual U.S. declaration of economic war.

The 1971 crisis led to acrimonious negotiations, with the West Europeans urging the United States to devalue its currency, and Washington demanding upward revaluation of European currencies, lower trade barriers, and greater contributions to American defense expenditures. The impasse temporarily was resolved that fall, when the major industrial powers adopted the Smithsonian Agreement. This accord, which devalued the dollar by about 10% and again froze exchange rates, met most of Nixon's wishes and also was satisfactory to the allies. The incident, however, left the West Europeans disturbed about the future and uncertain of their economic relations with the United States. Their response was to turn inward by focusing on developing their own relations within the EEC.21

During the mid-1960s, the EEC had experienced difficult times because of de Gaulle's nationalist stance and hostility to Britain, but following de Gaulle's departure, the climate had improved. France under Pompidou was now more cooperative, the Germans were eager to prove that Ostpolitik had not led them astray, and Britain was developing a more Europe-oriented stance. As a result, Western Europe's drive toward integration began picking up pace. In 1967, a single commission had been created to administer the EEC, the European Coal and Steel Community, and Euratom. In 1968, a customs union had been created, with a common external tariff. In late 1969, the EEC's members called for economic and monetary union, strengthened EEC institutions, and closer political cooperation. Following this, steps were taken in the early 1970s to admit the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Ireland to the EEC, thereby expanding EEC membership from six to nine.

Precisely how far and how fast Western Europe was prepared to travel toward full integration remained to be seen. Nationalism continued to exert its familiar centrifugal force, and the agendas of Western Europe's nations by no means were fully harmonized. Nonetheless, the steps being taken to expand the EEC and pursue eventual political union did have the effect of spawning a growing sense of European identity. This emerging European identity, in turn, con-

21 See Kissinger, The White House Years, Chap. 22.
tributed to a feeling of mounting separateness in transatlantic relations, a perception that was shared in Washington.

In an effort to reverse this negative trend, the Nixon administration in late 1972 embarked upon a public campaign to make 1973 the “Year of Europe.” Motivating the White House was concern not only about economics, but also about strategic affairs within NATO. With the allies aspiring to a coequal and independent status, the time had long passed when the Americans could dictate alliance security policy. Although the United States remained NATO’s leader, it now had to achieve consensus among the West Europeans, and this task was proving increasingly difficult. The French remained the sharpest thorn in Washington’s side, but West Germany and other nations were themselves showing an increasing predilection to different priorities.\(^\text{22}\)

Contributing to this problem were ever-mounting differences in how to handle relations with the USSR and NATO’s defense priorities. Because the achievements of détente had led to a growing feeling in Western Europe that the Cold War was ending, some allies were hoping that NATO’s defense shield could eventually be lowered. With U.S. security policy moving in the opposite direction, these West Europeans not only resented the accompanying pressures for greater military vigilance, but also worried that Washington’s stance was far off the mark. Underlying these issues was a more serious concern that many allies were losing enthusiasm for NATO itself. With talk starting to emerge of transforming the EEC into an independent security pillar, many U.S. officials worried that Western Europe and Washington were irretrievably drifting apart. Indeed, some worried that over the long run, competing economic interests and dissimilar strategic priorities might transform the United States and Western Europe from allies into adversaries.

This dark prospect seemed improbable, but the immediate differences were themselves justifiable cause for worry. What the White House had in mind for the Year of Europe was a joint U.S.-allied effort to redefine a common focus for the alliance in both economics and security policy. Nixon aspired to achieve agreement on a “Declaration of Atlantic Relations” that would spell out collective goals and visions for the future. Out of this declaration presumably was to come a sharpened sense of mutual identity. This, in turn, was to produce an improved willingness to cooperate together under NATO’s mantle and a consensus that the alliance could continue being effective in an era of shared power.\(^\text{23}\)

Although the Year of Europe had a laudable purpose, it was launched at an inappropriate time, and consequently fizzled in a way that made matters worse. In the United States, the initiative was dismissed as an attempt by Nixon to divert attention away from his Watergate troubles. In Europe, the allied governments, preoccupied with the EEC and wary of U.S. economic designs, showed little interest in the enterprise. To complicate matters further, the October War in the Middle East saw the West Europeans quarrel with the United States over

---


\(^\text{23}\)See Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, Chap. 5.
support of Israel. OPEC's subsequent imposition of a temporary oil embargo added further fuel to the fire—almost overnight, the West's already uncertain economic situation became precarious. Oil prices skyrocketed five-fold, raising serious questions about whether the West could afford its mounting energy bill even if the Persian Gulf sheikdoms were prepared to make their oil available. Accompanying the oil embargo came a recession that further exacerbated intra-alliance tensions. By the time 1973 came to a close, the alliance looked more battered than at any time in recent years. Preoccupied with a host of other travails, neither the United States nor Western Europe were in a state of mind to focus on security problems regardless of the deteriorating international situation.