The man who was to play a leading role in Washington's efforts to reinvigorate U.S. defense policy and NATO was James R. Schlesinger, the new Secretary of Defense. An economist by training, Schlesinger had first served in the Nixon administration as director of the Bureau of the Budget's national security division, where he became immersed in the defense budget. In quick succession, he had become Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and then director of the Central Intelligence Agency. At the CIA, he ran headlong into the intelligence community's debates over the Soviet military buildup and its implications for the United States and NATO. In the summer of 1973, Nixon asked him to move to the Defense Department, where he was to replace Elliot Richardson, who became Attorney General.

Schlesinger thus arrived at the Pentagon with ample experience in executive management and national security policy. Moreover, his style was well-suited to the times. His predecessor once removed, Melvin Laird, had tried to alert national opinion to the Soviet military buildup. But because Laird's warnings were delivered in the flamboyant and exaggerated style of a politician, they often were dismissed as bureaucratic bluster. Schlesinger had no such liabilities. A strategist by temperament, he was capable of delivering his arguments in a reasoned and scholarly manner that commanded instant respect. In short, he was credible—a quality demanded by the role awaiting him.

Within the Pentagon, Schlesinger, tilting management back toward centralized civilian leadership, grappled skillfully with the complex force structure and budgetary problems that preoccupy the Defense Department. But he also moved to take a public stand on the core issue of the day: the West's defense preparedness in the coming post-détente era. In doing so, his aspirations extended well beyond the marshaling of support for the budgets he would be submitting. He also aimed at provoking a searching and far-reaching debate on the fundamentals of Western defense policy itself. The outcome, he hoped, would be a national and alliance consensus in support of a new vision for the future, one that would recognize the enduring need for a strong defense posture in the uncertain years ahead.¹

¹Schlesinger's philosophy is presented in his two DoD posture statements, Annual Defense Department Report for FY75 and Annual Defense Department Report for FY76 and FY77, GPO, Washington, D.C., 1974 and 1975.
NEW HORIZONS FOR U.S. DEFENSE POLICY

The task that Schlesinger set for himself was a difficult one. While the feeling was spreading that détente had been oversold, public attention was focused on Watergate, not international affairs. As an outgrowth of the nation's confusion over how to deal with the ambiguities abroad, elite opinion was becoming highly polarized on national security policy. Liberals, reacting to Vietnam and still hopeful of détente, looked with anathema on the idea of a resurgent Western effort to contest the Soviet military buildup. Conservatives saw the need for this step, but were prone to overreaction and indiscriminate policies. Almost totally lacking was a moderate center that favored an affordable defense buildup along with continued efforts to work with the USSR to maintain world order. Yet it was this center that was needed and that Schlesinger set out to create.

Schlesinger's task was made more urgent by the ominous military developments taking place in the Soviet Union, including in the nuclear realm. As a result of its buildup since the mid-1960s, the USSR had gained a small lead over the United States in total numbers of ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers, but the United States still maintained a large 3:1 edge in total nuclear warheads (see Table 13.1). The reason was that the United States had been deploying MIRVed warheads on its ICBMs and SLBMs whereas the USSR still deployed only single warheads on its SS-9, SS-11, and SS-13 ICBMs. Moreover, the Soviet ICBM force was not particularly effective: It lacked sophisticated guidance technology, warheads, propulsion systems, silos, and launch techniques. As a result, it was capable of devastating U.S. cities, but it posed no immediate surprise attack threat to the U.S. nuclear posture.

This situation had begun to change about the time Schlesinger took office. By late 1973, four new Soviet ICBMs were under advanced development: the SS-18, SS-17, SS-19, and SS-16. Moreover, the Soviets were now testing MIRVed warheads. The heavy SS-18 missile—far larger than the U.S. Minuteman ICBM—appeared capable of carrying 5–10 large warheads of 1–2 megatons apiece. The medium-sized SS-17 and SS-19 missiles seemed designed to carry 3–5 similar warheads. The Soviets did not appear on the verge of enlarging their ICBM force; the new missiles were slated to replace older models. Even so, the impending deployment of these new ICBMs with MIRVed payloads promised to alter the strategic nuclear balance by increasing the number of warheads in the Soviet force. The Pentagon was predicting that within a few years, the Soviet

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ICBM/SLBM force would number fully 7,000 warheads, nearly as many as the United States deployed. A situation of rough numerical parity in both launchers and warheads thus loomed ahead, and the Soviets, by virtue of their larger missiles and payloads, would have a significant edge in throw-weight and total megatonnage.²

Quite apart from producing a numerical advantage in some categories, the Soviet ICBM buildup had potentially malevolent operational consequences. In contrast to the old models, the new missiles and warheads were potential hard-target killers. Within a few years, the USSR appeared likely to have enough warheads to launch a surprise attack against the U.S. ICBM silos, bomber bases, command posts, and communication networks. Even after this attack, the Soviets would still have ample forces left over to destroy American cities, while withholding a strategic reserve. Additionally, the Soviets were developing accuracy-creating guidance systems, propulsion technology, hardened silos, launch techniques, and intelligence and command structures. All of these gains promised to increase Soviet ICBM lethality several times over, thus threatening to provide a broad spectrum of targeting options, including a destabilizing counterforce capability.

This impressive modernization effort suggested an emerging Soviet nuclear strategy that went well beyond traditional American conceptions of deterrence through second-strike retaliation. Moreover, Soviet military planners seemed to have views of their own about nuclear warfare which suggested a traditional preoccupation with seizing the initiative and acting boldly. As a result, Pentagon officials worried that the USSR was endeavoring to establish a form of nuclear superiority over the United States.

Most worrisome was the possibility that the Soviets were trying to acquire the capacity to wipe out the bulk of U.S. land-based missile forces and military industry in a surprise first-strike attack. In this event, the United States had a large bomber force and an SSBN/SLBM force at sea, both of which could deliver devastating retaliation. Pentagon planners, however, were unenthused about the prospect of having even one leg of the strategic triad come under risk. The ICBMs provided important insurance; indeed, a survivable triad was a bedrock of the U.S. deterrent strategy. Also, ICBMs had unique capabilities, and they played important roles in U.S. war plans calling for the targeting of hardened Soviet military targets. Beyond this, the possibility existed that if the Soviets achieved the capacity to destroy the U.S. ICBMs, they somehow might also acquire the ability to destroy the bombers and submarines as well. The stability of the strategic nuclear balance thus was becoming uncertain.

To make matters worse, the Soviet theater buildup, under way since the 1960s, was beginning to gel into place. The Soviets were deploying more tactical nuclear warheads and delivery systems, including tube artillery rounds and tactical air bombs. This development threatened to give them an impressive capacity to wage a battlefield nuclear war, thereby negating NATO's traditional advantage in this area. Furthermore, Soviet conventional forces were becoming

far stronger. By 1973, Soviet tank and motorized rifle divisions had acquired fully 20% more soldiers and weapons above their mid-1960s levels. New T-64 and T-72 tanks, with improved armor plating and larger guns, were beginning to enter the inventory, and modern infantry fighting vehicles and self-propelled artillery were not far behind. Additionally, the Soviet Air Force was receiving new combat aircraft and was acquiring an improved ground attack capability to go along with its air interceptors. The effect was to bolster Soviet/Warsaw Pact offensive power, especially for a fast-moving blitzkrieg attack on NATO.

Together, these nuclear and conventional improvements did not augur well for the cause of stability, and they suggested a Soviet security policy far removed from the spirit of détente as the West understood that term. By mid-1973 they had given rise to a searching reappraisal in the West over what the future held. In years past, some experts had maintained that the Soviets pursued preponderance in Europe as a defensive and deterrent measure to help offset American nuclear superiority. Whatever the accuracy of this interpretation for past Soviet conduct, it no longer was a plausible explanation for Moscow's current behavior. Nor could the West be accused of stimulating the USSR through threatening gestures of its own. The West was not blameless for the arms race, but in recent years, its military policy had been quiescent. In the interim, the Soviets had caught up in areas where they had been behind, and had gained further ground in areas where they already had been ahead. The explanation for this expansive behavior had more to do with Moscow's ambitions than the West's conduct.

Not all Western experts feared for the worst, and some still held out hope for détente and arms control negotiations. With the full dimensions of the USSR's buildup now becoming clear, however, a growing number were coming to the sobering conclusion that the Soviets were pursuing a comprehensive military strategy aimed at gaining overall military domination of the West. Contributing to this assessment was the fact that, although the Soviets were achieving strategic nuclear parity, they were showing no signs of scaling back their theater posture. Indeed, their modernization programs were marching forward on all three fronts: strategic nuclear, theater nuclear, and conventional forces. Moreover, Soviet policy in each area seemed aimed at acquiring a capability that could be used for offensive purposes. The effect was to provide an array of options that, to many observers, suggested far more than a defensive agenda.

Still unclear were the exact policy goals behind the Soviet buildup, and this gave rise to differing interpretations in the West. The most credible explanation held that the Soviets were aspiring to use their growing military strength to gain political suzerainty over the West, especially in Europe. An even more diabolical thesis held that the Soviets also were seriously preparing to wage some form of offensive military campaign, most likely aimed at overrunning Europe while deterring an American nuclear response. Especially because the United States and NATO still remained militarily potent, this explanation seemed far-fetched to many experts. But U.S. and allied military planners, who were paid to be prepared for the worst and to plan conservatively, could not afford to dismiss it.
Faced with the job of warning the Western public about the Soviet threat, Schlesinger chose to communicate largely through his *Annual Defense Department Report*, which he was required to send the Congress each year outlining the Pentagon’s budget. Apart from McNamara’s tenure, these reports had a reputation for being dry and uninspiring, providing little insightful analysis of policy alternatives. Schlesinger, however, transformed his reports into powerful treatises on defense policy and strategy whose purpose was not only to inform, but also to educate and persuade. Influential far beyond Capitol Hill, they helped the United States clarify its thinking and form a coherent philosophy about its future security requirements.3

In portraying the threats ahead, Schlesinger steered away from anti-communist rhetoric, caustic dismissals of détente, and alarmism about the Soviets. Acknowledging the diplomatic progress made since 1971, he indicated that the USSR did not appear on the brink of military adventurism and that prospects for peace were good if Moscow continued to act with restraint. Asserting that a return to the militancy of the Cold War was not in order, he stressed that the West’s central goal should continue to be a durable structure of peace. However, he went on to say, East-West relations had only begun moving from confrontation to cooperation, and the process would take years to complete. Along the way, the West could anticipate that periods of cooperation would alternate with periods of competition.

Part of the problem, Schlesinger argued, was that the Soviet Union was pursuing a mixed policy which aimed for stability in some areas but pursued a more dangerous course in others. As a result, the West could expect a relaxation of tensions, but not their complete eradication. In areas where friction continued to exist, he held, the risk of confrontation, miscalculation, and crisis would remain. The world itself, moreover, was still a turbulent place filled with potential hotspots. There would be a continuing risk that one of the USSR’s more exuberant allies (e.g., North Korea) might embark on aggression and draw in the superpowers. Nor could the possibility be dismissed that a crisis similar to 1914 might occur, touching off a chain reaction that could embroil the superpowers. The Middle East, he noted, bore a striking resemblance to the Balkan tinderbox that touched off World War I. None of this, in his view, was cause for immediate alarm, but it did create worrisome uncertainties that called for prudent conservative planning.

Schlesinger’s core message was that the United States needed to reawaken to the dangers ahead but should not act rashly. Management of the international situation, to him, required a sense of vision, firm resolve, and a patient, steady hand. The Soviet military buildup obligated the United States to remain involved in international affairs and to preserve a strong defense establishment. Above all, Schlesinger asserted, the United States could not allow any potential adversary to achieve a unilateral advantage over itself and its allies. Consequently, the United States must remain militarily equal to the Soviet Union in

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3Indeed Schlesinger’s posture statements were praised for their logic and clarity even by his sharpest liberal and left-wing critics.
appearance as well as reality. Second class status was not acceptable to him because it could create vacuums and incentives that might tempt the USSR or any other adversary to misbehave. In essence, he said, progress toward enduring peace demanded that the United States maintain a stable balance of military power.

In assessing the West's defense needs for the years ahead, Schlesinger avoided siren calls about the deteriorating military balance. Absent from his analysis was any hint of hysteria or exaggeration; present was a sober appraisal that was not blind to the West's strengths or the USSR's weaknesses. Candidly acknowledging that the current balance was generally stable, his concern was for the future, especially if the Soviet buildup went unanswered. He pointed to the USSR's nuclear buildup, but he also singled out the conventional buildups taking place in Europe, the Far East, and at sea. Like McNamara, Schlesinger felt that conventional forces remained usable instruments of intimidation, coercion, and conquest. His fear was that the Soviets might amass the kind of local superiority that could spell trouble in a crisis or even outright defeat for the West in a war. He declared that while this risk was a matter of growing concern in distant areas around the globe, it was particularly serious in Central Europe, where large NATO and Warsaw Pact armies continued to confront each other.

Schlesinger dismissed the idea that the West could purchase security cheaply by trying to deter with a military posture that could not defend if war came. Rejecting this idea as a "dangerous illusion," he asserted that an adequate defense capability was the only sure way to achieve deterrence. He further declared that an adequate posture could not be built simply by amassing nuclear weapons. He called for a balanced U.S. posture that could support a coherent strategic concept and respond to a wide range of contingencies. Such a posture, he said, would need to be capable of maintaining nuclear deterrence, contributing to a stable conventional balance in Europe, responding to lesser contingencies elsewhere, and ensuring freedom of the seas.

Schlesinger stopped well short of implying that the proper remedy was a massive and expensive U.S. buildup. Rather, he maintained, steadfastness was in order. He especially rejected the "feast and famine" approach whereby spending is brought far down in tranquil times only to be increased sharply in stressful times. This approach, he said, made sound management impossible and could result in poorly prepared forces at the moment of truth. He held that the United States needed to come to grips with its enduring military requirements by providing, from year to year, stable and adequate funding. He acknowledged that funding requirements plausibly could be reduced through efficient management, but while declaring that the Defense Department was well-managed, he held out little hope for major savings this way.

His philosophy led him to favor a reversal in U.S. spending priorities and an end to the post-Vietnam trauma. Whereas defense spending had recently drifted steadily downward, he argued, now it needed to start climbing back upward. While this important turnabout did not necessitate a wholesale increase in any one year, it did mandate a slow but steady increase over several years. In essence, he was proposing that the United States "settle down for the long
haul." He did not spell out how far and how long this upsurge should continue, but he implied that a significant infusion of funds was needed, one large enough to halt the steady erosion of the nation’s defenses in recent years.

Schlesinger rejected the argument that the United States could not afford a defense budget of the magnitude required. Asserting that defense was an important public good and a form of insurance, he pointed out that the Pentagon’s budget was not consuming a growing share of the nation’s resources. In fact, he argued, defense spending had shrunk as a proportion of GNP, federal expenditures, total public spending, and the economy’s manpower and capital base. Defense spending in FY76 was slated to consume less than 6% of GNP, well below its share during the 1950s and 1960s. This, he asserted, was a level that the nation could afford without unduly sacrificing its domestic priorities.

Schlesinger backed up his words with concrete action. Shortly after taking office, he submitted an FY74 supplemental request for $6.2 billion, thereby increasing that year’s budget by over 7% to $87 billion. For FY75, his first full budget, he requested $92.6 billion; the following year, he asked for $104.7 billion and projected a $148 billion budget by FY80. In total, this amounted to nearly a 30% increase in only two years and an eyebrow-raising 80% increase over six years. Citing urgent military requirements, Schlesinger made no apologies. Indeed, much of the increase, he said, was needed to offset inflation, which was running high and showing signs of increasing further. Inflation discounted, his five-year program amounted to an average real increase of only about 2% annually, no more than the economy was expected to grow. Schlesinger’s implicit formula for the long haul thus was straightforward: The defense budget should keep pace with the economy, increasing enough each year to offset inflation and provide a small margin of real growth for funding new initiatives.4

Schlesinger’s stance touched off an uproar, one largely confined to the national security community but no less intense for its limited constituency. His endorsement of sustained real budget growth found favor in the Pentagon but was not well-received on Capitol Hill, where prevailing opinion called for keeping a tight lid on defense spending. Indeed, the White House itself, immersed in its own budgetary battles, looked askance at his spending projections. What triggered even greater controversy was his endorsement of a resurgent military strategy. Conservatives mostly applauded, but because Schlesinger had challenged the liberal community’s deeply held views, some elements of it reacted with outrage. Although angrily attacked, Schlesinger, confident that his thesis was persuasive, held his ground and thereby gave rise to the national debate that he wanted.

Breaking new conceptual ground, Schlesinger laid down three standards for shaping the U.S. nuclear posture: deterrence and assured retaliation, essential equivalence, and multiple options. Of these, deterrence and assured retali-

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4See Schlesinger’s posture statements for FY75 and FY76. See also the FY77 report of his successor Donald Rumsfeld, which carried forth many of the budgetary projections and defense concepts developed by Schlesinger. Donald Rumsfeld, Annual Defense Department Report, FY77, GPO, Washington, D.C., 1976.
tion—measured in terms of the ability to inflict devastating second-strike destruction on the USSR's industry and urban areas—was nothing new. Essential equivalence, however, was a departure. In 1969 Nixon had dodged the issue by endorsing sufficiency, but the debate then was about whether the United States should remain numerically superior or could accept parity. Now the debate was focused on whether the USSR could be allowed to achieve superiority, and Schlesinger left no ambiguity about where he stood. He asserted that U.S. nuclear forces must remain equal to Soviet forces not only in actual capability, but in the public eye as well. Arguing that perceptions mattered by influencing worldwide political expectations, Schlesinger said that the United States could not allow major asymmetries in total warheads and delivery vehicles, throw-weight, yield, reliability, and other public measures of nuclear potency. Essential equivalence did not require equality in each measure, but it did mean that, when all the indicators were added up, the United States must be equal, and be seen as equal.\footnote{See Schlesinger, Annual Report, FY76 and FY77, pp. 1–13 and 1–14. See also Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, pp. 377–392.}

Schlesinger's endorsement of multiple targeting options reflected a combination of continuity and change. Early in 1974 Schlesinger unveiled new departures in targeting doctrine reminiscent of the counterforce concepts tabled by McNamara in 1961 but later downplayed. Schlesinger rejected the idea that strategic stability could best be pursued by planning retaliation against only Soviet cities: the hallmark of the assured destruction concept. Continued reliance on this doctrine was unwise, he said, because the Soviets were aspiring to a more ambitious strategy and the United States needed to keep pace. Beyond this, he asserted, the United States required the capacity to destroy other targets, including hardened ICBM silos and soft military targets, for purposes of its own. In particular, he held that the United States needed flexibility in order to respond to the full spectrum of crises that might occur, and to climb the escalation ladder deliberately. Citing the fact that U.S. war plans always had provided some flexibility, Schlesinger announced that measures were under way to broaden their options and to configure U.S. forces to better execute them.\footnote{See Desmond Ball, "The Development of the SIOP, 1960–1983," and William T. Lee, "Soviet Nuclear Targeting Strategy," in Ball and Richelson (eds.), Strategic Nuclear Targeting, Chaps. 3 and 4, respectively.}

Prior to Schlesinger's arrival, assured destruction had been the centerpiece of U.S. nuclear strategy and the anchor of contemporary theories of strategic stability. McNamara had first introduced this concept in the mid-1960s, and while it was not originally intended to be the sole focus of U.S. strategy, over time it muscled other concepts out of the way. Partly this owed to the fact that assured destruction served as a convenient budgetary tool. Also, public discussion of alternative doctrines emphasizing flexibility was deemed too inflammatory and therefore taboo. Early in his administration, Nixon had called for a flexible nuclear targeting doctrine, but his efforts received little notice. In succeeding years, the SALT negotiations moved onto center stage, with the result that assured destruction increasingly embedded itself into the public consciousness.
Behind the scenes, Pentagon planners had never viewed nuclear doctrine solely through assured destruction lenses. Although they sized the nuclear posture according to assured destruction and triad principles, they designed its war-fighting capabilities according to broader standards, including options and flexible targeting. Consequently, Schlesinger's doctrinal shift was a less dramatic departure than appeared to be the case. Nonetheless, it still was an auspicious event, and especially so in the public domain. There, Schlesinger's stance spelled the death knell for assured destruction as declaratory policy. It also meant that, SALT negotiations notwithstanding, the United States would now be a less restrained participant in the nuclear arms race than had been the case in recent years.

Schlesinger, however, stopped well short of opening the nuclear faucets. Although he said that the United States needed to broadly match the Soviets, he did not propose to mimic them; there came a point of diminishing returns where more weapons would add little security. Further, Schlesinger was insufficiently alarmed about the nuclear balance to alter the Pentagon's budget priorities; he planned no wholesale shift of funds from conventional forces to buy more nuclear weapons. Schlesinger also rejected the idea of planning U.S. nuclear forces on the basis of worst-case analysis that would procure weapons to meet implausible threats. For example, he gave first-strike scenarios due regard, but he also disputed the idea that the Soviets readily could acquire a confident ability to destroy the U.S. ICBM force. Finally, he had no narrow nuclear fixation or belief that the United States should try to regain nuclear superiority over the Soviets. In accepting equality as a permanent condition, his main argument was that, although the United States needed to shore up its nuclear deterrent, the chief threats it faced were in the conventional realm.

For these reasons, Schlesinger's nuclear program was of modest dimensions and oriented more to the distant future than the near term. The modernization program that Schlesinger had inherited from Laird focused on deploying the MIRV-equipped Minuteman III ICBM and Poseidon SLBM, and procuring the new Trident submarine to replace the aging SSBN fleet. Schlesinger elected to continue this steady-state effort with a set of improvements of his own, all of them useful but none earthshaking. In particular, he sought to strengthen the Minuteman ICBM force through silo upgrades, a new guidance system, a new warhead (MK 12A), and installation of the Command Data Buffer System to allow for more rapid retargeting. In addition, he acquired more Trident submarines, Trident I SLBM missiles, and SRAM missiles for the B-52 bombers. His long-range nuclear research and development programs, however, had more import. He stepped up development of the B-1 bomber, the M-X missile, the cruise missile, and the Trident II missile. All four of these systems were to play key roles in the nuclear policies of both the Carter and Reagan administrations.

Because Schlesinger's centrist stance on nuclear policy challenged entrenched positions and rubbed raw nerves on both sides of the spectrum, it was greeted with displeasure in many quarters. To liberals, Schlesinger's rejection of assured destruction and endorsement of essential equivalence and multiple options threatened to further accelerate the arms race and wreck arms control
negotiations. Conservatives, meanwhile, felt that Schlesinger's modest programs did not go far enough, and that he attached insufficient importance to regaining nuclear superiority. As a result, the political community plunged into a heated partisan debate that was to continue for many years, and indeed abated only when the Cold War began ending in the late 1980s.7

Though his critics attacked his nuclear policies, Schlesinger's views on conventional defense were equally portentous and far more costly in budgetary terms. As of late 1973, U.S. military disengagement from Southeast Asia was nearly complete, and South Vietnam was left to an uncertain fate with declining U.S. security assistance to support it. With the Vietnam War thus nearing a final and unhappy resolution, the Pentagon's critics recognized an opportunity to scale back the U.S. overseas military presence and to gain a sizable peace dividend by cutting the conventional force posture. Schlesinger saw the need to relegate the Vietnam War to history, but he disagreed with any return to global neo-isolationism and spoke out strongly against it.

Schlesinger's principal argument was that the United States still had vital overseas interests that were threatened in many regions, especially by the USSR. To him, global order and equilibrium demanded continued constancy. In particular, America's allies required reassurance to ward off their own post-Vietnam traumas, which centered on fear that they also would be abandoned by the United States. He argued that especially because strategic parity had finally arrived, nuclear deterrence could not be relied upon to forestall military aggression. Consequently, he asserted, the United States needed to maintain a strong conventional defense posture, even if this meant sacrificing any peace dividend.

Schlesinger set about to breathe renewed intellectual life into the calculus of U.S. force requirements. He maintained that defense planning should be driven by analytical constructs more enduring and coherent than intuitive reactions to the prevailing political winds. He also argued that the United States should not attempt to "carbon copy" its opponents by designing forces to exactly match them. Recognizing that the goal was to deter the enemy, not mimic him, something more selective and responsive to the West's unique geostrategic situation was needed.

To this end, Schlesinger articulated a strategic concept of deterrence and collective security that officially resurrected the "1 1/2 war" strategy, which had slipped from public consciousness since 1970. The U.S. force posture, he asserted, should continue to be sized to meet a major contingency in either Europe or Asia and a simultaneous minor contingency elsewhere. Requirements for each contingency, in turn, were to be based on careful analysis of the enemy threat, allied contributions, and Western defense goals and strategy. Schlesinger stressed the need to meet early requirements for short violent wars,

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but he also maintained that the United States and its allies should be prepared to fight long wars as well.

Schlesinger acknowledged that his strategic concept was focused on the Soviet military threat to Central Europe, but he also pointed out that the United States had continuing defense commitments in northeastern Asia. In particular, he stressed the need to continue supporting Japan and South Korea, whose governments were particularly nervous about a wholesale U.S. withdrawal from Asia. To meet enduring obligations in these theaters, Schlesinger called for a military posture that kept sizable forces in both Europe and northeastern Asia, backed up by large reserves in the United States that could swing in either direction. In this efficiency-enhancing way, the United States would take advantage of its geography to meet requirements that otherwise would require far larger forces.

Schlesinger’s emphasis on military strength and continuity directed policy away from force drawdowns and budget cutbacks. He called for U.S. forces to remain in Europe at least at their present levels of four divisions and eight air wings, and for a Western Pacific posture of two divisions, three air wings, and three carriers. He expressed temporary acceptance of the current total active posture of 13 Army divisions, 3 Marine divisions, 22 USAF wings, and 13 carriers. These forces, he stressed, were to be sufficiently modernized, ready, and sustainable. His planning philosophy, moreover, implied that a force expansion might be in order; indeed, a year later he was to approve plans for adding three Army divisions and five air wings. Especially because the financial cost of defense preparedness was rising, the net effect was to lay down a marker for sustained budget growth in the years ahead.

Schlesinger’s concept was at once intellectually appealing and politically controversial. Notwithstanding the acknowledgment given to Asia, it called attention to the growing importance of NATO’s defenses and invited the military services to focus on the European theater. Sensing the danger posed by the mounting Vietnam backlash, the JCS and services responded with enthusiasm. Building upon the changes made in the early 1970s, they further intensified their focus on Europe, in the process deemphasizing other theaters even more than under Laird’s reign. As a result, the budgetary battles with Congress ahead were now destined to be fought over whether and to what degree NATO needed to be defended against the growing Soviet conventional threat.

TOWARD REINTEGRATING NATO

Because Schlesinger endorsed NATO’s existing strategy of forward defense and flexible response (MC 14/3), his strategy pulled U.S. defense planning toward stronger conventional forces in Europe. Schlesinger, however, was not prepared to see the United States pursue this course alone. For military and political reasons, the allies would have to pick up pace in their own defense efforts. As a result, Schlesinger broke new and controversial strategy ground here as well.
MC 14/3 had allowed considerable leeway regarding NATO's precise conventional defense goals, and in recent years the allies had comfortably settled back, believing that an "initial" defense was enough. By this was meant a conventional posture that could defend for, at most, a few weeks—longer than under the old strategy of massive retaliation but not nearly long enough if nuclear escalation were eliminated as an option. Schlesinger chose to confront the allies' relaxed attitude and limited ambitions head-on. He argued that NATO should aspire to build a "stalwart" conventional posture that could do more than defend only a few days or weeks before nuclear escalation was necessary. He called for a Central Region posture powerful enough to stop a full-scale Soviet invasion in its tracks, and he argued his case boldly, proposing a joint U.S.-allied effort to achieve this goal.⁸

Schlesinger first delivered this message to his NATO colleagues at a meeting of the Defense Planning Committee in Summer 1973. Several months later, he communicated the same message to the general public in his posture statement. In both forums, Schlesinger bluntly told his audiences that while the American nuclear commitment remained intact, the United States and the entire alliance could not afford to accept the modern-day equivalent of a trip-wire strategy. NATO's goal, he asserted, should be to build an effective conventional deterrent that would raise the nuclear threshold to a more acceptable level. He further declared that there was no inherent reason why the Warsaw Pact should enjoy conventional superiority in Europe. Together, the NATO allies commanded vastly greater economic, manpower, and technological assets than their adversary did. The question was whether the alliance could muster the political will to commit adequate resources and cooperate together.⁹

To buttress his arguments, he presented the results of recent Pentagon analyses concluding that even in the most demanding situation of a quickly mobilized enemy attack, NATO would be able to field impressive forces. In this event, he said, the Warsaw Pact could deploy about 60 divisions and 2800 aircraft, but NATO could muster 30 divisions and 2700 aircraft. Although NATO thus would be outnumbered on the ground, it would possess offsetting advantages in other areas, including more antitank weapons, more infantry and total manpower, better logistics, and qualitatively superior tactical air forces, especially in ground attack missions. In addition, the Warsaw Pact would operate under serious liabilities of its own, including difficult terrain in many places, inadequately trained reserves, weak logistics, poorly configured air forces, and questionable allies. These were all arguments that McNamara had made several years before and, Schlesinger asserted, they were still valid. As a result, he concluded, an approximate balance existed in immediately available forces in Europe.

Schlesinger was less sanguine about NATO's prospects in the event of a fully mobilized attack after a few weeks of reinforcement. He reported that the Soviets could marshal fully 80–90 divisions and about 4000 aircraft, enough for a

⁸See Schlesinger's FY75 and FY76 posture statements.
⁹The results of the 1973 DPC were widely reported in the Western press. See Michael Gertler, "Study Insists NATO Can Defend Itself," Washington Post, June 7, 1973.
theaterwide offensive. NATO, however, would have opportunity to reinforce itself. Schlesinger especially pointed to the Pentagon's ability to dispatch eight active Army divisions and 900 tactical combat aircraft. Coming later would be additional National Guard divisions and brigades. Much depended, he said, on whether these reinforcements would arrive in time.

Schlesinger acknowledged that NATO's posture was not strong enough for assured success, especially if the Soviets were to mobilize quickly and attack with a full 90 divisions. Thus, he did not disagree with SHAPE's pessimistic assessment of the bottom line. He pointed out, however, that Soviet military leaders themselves would not enjoy any margin of confidence. He concluded that NATO already had committed most of the assets that were needed to meet its military requirements. The problem was one of eliminating specific shortfalls, which could be accomplished at modest additional cost. To solve NATO's problems, he endorsed a fulfillment of AD-70's unmet priorities, including additional aircraft shelters, air base enhancements, better air employment doctrine, more antitank weapons, more ground reserves, and larger war reserves. Provided these measures were pursued, he said, NATO's defense prospects would brighten.

In Europe, Schlesinger's message was greeted enthusiastically by Goodpaster, but allied officials and NATO bureaucrats were taken aback. Although the Americans had been saying similar things off and on for several years, a powerful U.S. strategy and force posture presentation like this had not been heard since McNamara's time. In the interim, American pressure had slackened off somewhat and the NATO community had settled back into a pessimistic interpretation of the balance. Schlesinger's presentation stunned them, and for reasons that went beyond his claims about the balance.

To a degree, Schlesinger had resurrected NATO's old strategy debate about how conventional defense and nuclear deterrence were to work together. The alliance was far more agreed on military strategy in 1973 than it had been in the late 1960s; in the interim, MC 14/3 had slowly inculcated itself into military thinking on both sides of the Atlantic. Complete accord, however, was not yet achieved. Once again, American preferences for a confident and sustainable conventional posture confronted allied hesitations about parting company with nuclear escalation. Moreover, Schlesinger's programmatic agenda went against the grain of Western Europe's fiscal proclivities, and some allies feared that he was laying the groundwork for either a U.S. troop withdrawal or a renewed push on burden-sharing.

Despite these fears, the allied response was far from negative, as normally occurred when the United States exerted strong leadership on any defense issue. The defense ministries in many allied capitals, including Bonn and London, had become worried about the Soviet buildup in ways that left them sympathetic to Schlesinger's call for greater military vigilance. Moreover, many conservative West European political leaders agreed as well, and urged their governments to respond. Principal opposition continued to come from liberal and left-wing quarters, finance ministries, and foreign ministries that valued détente above alliance resurgence. The political balance in Great Britain, West
Germany and other nations, however, was slowly shifting in a more conservative direction. Once they had satisfied themselves that they were not faced with a wholesale change in flexible response, or a U.S. troop withdrawal, or a burden-sharing fight, the allies began to be more forthcoming. Schlesinger's briefing led to agreement to commission a trilateral review of the conventional balance by the United States, Britain, and West Germany. This study was initiated shortly thereafter and was to last nearly two years. In the end, the West European nations continued to be more pessimistic than the Americans about NATO's defense prospects, but broad agreement was reached in favor of the programmatic initiatives that Schlesinger had outlined. The issue now facing NATO was not whether an enhanced conventional improvement effort made sense, but whether it would be funded.

Schlesinger's efforts to breathe life into NATO were given added impetus by the increasingly firm but positive pressure that the U.S. Congress began to exert in 1974–1975. A leading figure was Senator Sam Nunn (D. Ga.), a congressman with an abiding interest in defense affairs who used his position on the Senate Armed Services Committee to press for a strengthened NATO. Joining him were several other senators, at first mostly Republicans but eventually Democrats, who helped transform senatorial opinion away from U.S. troop withdrawals. With the House of Representatives following suit, the two legislative bodies began playing a constructive role in the mounting debate over how the West's military deterrent should be strengthened. Previously the Congress had seemed preoccupied with paring back the defense budget and overseas force commitments. This sentiment had not entirely gone away, but it was now supplemented by a growing interest in finding ways to get more out of the defense dollar and otherwise strengthen U.S. and allied forces.

Nunn worked hard to turn the public spotlight on NATO's need to bolster its conventional defenses and use its resources more efficiently. A persistent foe of poor management, he argued for innovative departures in the handling of U.S. forces, NATO's military doctrine, and alliance burden-sharing. In particular, he agitated against (1) NATO's lack of ground combat forces and (2) heavy investment in support units that apparently would contribute little in the short, violent war to be fought in Central Europe. In 1974, he issued a report entitled Policy, Troops, and the NATO Alliance, which called for accelerated NATO defense programs to raise the nuclear threshold in Europe. At his instigation, Congress in 1975 and 1976 passed legislation designed to encourage the United States and its allies to work together in defense planning. This legislation called for progress in such areas as weapons standardization, interoperability, armaments cooperation, readiness, sustainability, and burden-sharing.10

Partly as a result of congressional prodding, the Pentagon decided to deploy two additional combat brigades in Central Europe (Brigades 75 and 76). One was to be stationed in northern Germany, where it could help redress NATO's vulnerability in the exposed NORTAG area by serving as a vanguard for later

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U.S. reinforcements. These brigades were manned by troops from rear-area support units, thereby reflecting an effort to improve the Army's "tooth-to-tail" ratio in Europe. In addition to encouraging innovations like this, reform-minded congressional pressure went well beyond specific programmatic matters. It also helped call public attention to NATO's defense situation, and exerted pressure on the allied nations to follow the U.S. government's leadership.

PROSPECTS FOR COALITION PLANNING

Faced with this mounting pressure and concerned about the military balance themselves, most allied officials agreed to cooperate with Schlesinger's defense agenda to the extent possible. As a result, the United States in 1974 concluded a bilateral agreement with West Germany that, when coupled with allied purchases of American-made military equipment, was sufficient to offset the U.S. defense balance of payments deficit in Europe. This agreement helped further reduce congressional pressures for troop withdrawals, and better enabled the Defense Department to focus on initiatives for strengthening NATO's defenses. U.S. and allied defense cooperation also began picking up momentum in other ways, with efficiency-enhancing initiatives in rationalization, standardization, and interoperability (RSI) becoming a common theme.

Against this background of intensified cooperation in defense planning, progress also was being made on restoring sound alliance political relations as well. In June 1974, NATO's members, meeting on the alliance's 25th anniversary, signed the "Declaration of Atlantic Relations." This important document reaffirmed the transatlantic community's common values and NATO's continued existence in the years ahead. It also called for enhanced defense efforts, the continued stationing of large U.S. forces in Europe, and appropriate efforts by the NATO allies to share the defense burden. At the ministerial meeting that fall, NATO's members called not only for enhanced defense efforts but also for closer collaboration to help solve the economic difficulties confronting the allied countries. This emphasis on joint security and economic cooperation was repeated the following May, 1975, when the Heads of State met in Brussels.11

Economically, the Western nations still found themselves facing serious problems. The Smithsonian Agreement had proven to be short-lived, thereby exposing the need for further devaluations and eventual movement to flexible exchange rates to keep trade relations in balance. The subsequent oil crisis, OPEC's emergence as an economic power bloc to be taken seriously, and the self-serving trade practices pursued by several newly industrializing countries reinforced the conclusion that the world economic system needed fundamental reform. Solutions, however, were not easily found. By late 1974 the United States and nearly all its West European partners confronted growing energy costs, rising inflation and unemployment, troublesome balance-of-payments deficits, and painful recession.

These nations were coming to realize, however, that they needed to cooperate together. The task ahead was to find a new equilibrium that would be acceptable on both sides of the Atlantic and would also respond to global economic conditions. Their first attempt to achieve this goal had been taken at the Washington Conference in early 1973, an effort that highlighted their differing policies. As 1974 unfolded, however, agreement was reached on measures to conserve energy resources and to strengthen international credit mechanisms for keeping the West's industrial economies going. Additionally, progress was made in the Tokyo round of the GATT negotiations, which had been launched in 1973 in an effort to further reduce tariff-driven trade barriers. In these forums, the United States asserted its leadership based on the principle of cooperative action, and a Washington-Bonn-Tokyo axis began emerging for guiding the West's trade and monetary policies.

In November 1975, the leaders of the United States, France, West Germany, Britain, Italy, and Japan met at Rambouillet, France, to discuss joint economic action to counter recession and promote economic growth. There agreement was reached to allow floating exchange rates. The following July, the same nations, joined by Canada, met in Puerto Rico in what was officially characterized as an "economic summit." These two meetings inaugurated the practice of holding annual summit meetings to address economic issues in a larger political and strategic context. By marking an important procedural step for tackling the troubling issues facing the West, the annual economic summit inspired growing confidence that solutions could be found. It soon became a valuable forum for airing grievances, forging common stances, and coordinating positions. It helped restore the Western community's cohesion and morale and its sense of common destiny.12

To be sure, the barriers to cooperation that had surfaced in 1971 had not gone away. The United States was continuing its slide toward stagnation, and with the oil and energy crises posing long-term threats, Western Europe's own economic health was now uncertain. Governments on both sides of the Atlantic were cognizant of their vulnerabilities brought about by interdependence and by OPEC, and still eyed each other warily. Most nations continued to pursue domestic agendas which emphasized social welfare goals, thereby producing fiscal and monetary policies that relied on favorable international trade to preserve economic health. Lacking the resources for industrial renewal and influenced by special interests, many nations also found themselves drifting slowly to protectionism, an attitude that did little to enhance their cooperative spirit. The United States itself was now too preoccupied with its shaky economic health to subordinate its interests to the collective good. Too battered by inflation to pursue expansionist policies at home, it turned to the German economy to serve as the engine of global economic growth. Fearing inflation itself, the FRG preferred relying on an export strategy rather than internal stimu-

12See Kissinger, Years of Upheaval; Nau, The Myth of America's Decline; and Gilpin, The Political Economy of International Relations.
lation. The result was a world economy that only slowly crawled out of recession, amidst mutual recriminations from Washington and Bonn.

Awareness had grown, however, that the Western alliance needed to surmount its monetary and trade frictions not only for its long-term economic health, but also to permit continued collaboration in security affairs. Without a system that advanced the vital economic interests of all nations, the consequence easily could be retaliatory protectionism, a decline in world trade, recession, and a reversal of postwar liberal trade policies. In this negative environment, cooperation in defense affairs could hardly survive. On these important principles the United States and Western Europe were agreed, and this agreement enabled them to intensify their search for enduring remedies in a spirit of compromise and mutual adjustment.

As the Ford administration ended in early 1977, the core issue was no longer whether the alliance would fall apart due to absence of a common security bond and growing economic troubles. By this time, NATO had successfully navigated its way through détente, and wound up realizing that collective defense was still needed. Also, the alliance had come to recognize that although a new and threatening economic era had arrived, its problems could be surmounted if the Western community continued working together. The question now was whether a still-united but uncertain NATO could muster the willpower to answer the ever-mounting Soviet military challenge while also attending to its economic problems. As in the past, the answer lay in NATO's ability to make coalition planning work.

One good sign was that the United States appeared to be coming out of its post-Vietnam military doldrums. Schlesinger had departed office in late 1975, when he was dismissed by Ford and replaced by Donald Rumsfeld. He left behind the positive legacy of helping reawaken the United States to the security requirements of the new era. During 1970–1974, the U.S. defense budget had remained level at $75–80 billion, but inflation had eroded its purchasing power. Under Schlesinger, the budget had begun climbing upward again: to $85 billion in FY74, $88 billion in FY75, $96 billion in FY76, and $108 billion in FY77. Once again, inflation took a serious toll, thereby eroding what had been intended to be a margin of real growth. The last budget, however, did exceed the amount needed to offset inflation by a small amount, thus taking a symbolically important step toward real growth.13

The FY77 budget marked a point of departure, a recognition that the United States would have to face the unpleasant fiscal consequences of staying competitive with the Soviet Union. Ford made this point dramatically when, on the eve of his departure in early 1977, he submitted an FY78 defense budget of $122 billion and a five-year program of $723 billion leading to an FY82 budget of $166 billion. His program called for steady real increases: fully 5% in FY78 and 7% more than needed to offset inflation over the five-year period. Whether the incoming president, Jimmy Carter, would support these increases remained to be

13See Rumsfeld's FY77 posture statement.
seen, but beyond doubt, the United States was starting to adopt a new attitude toward defense policy and military strategy.

The mid-1970s also witnessed some important changes in the U.S. defense posture that benefited NATO. Under Schlesinger’s leadership, the Pentagon came up with a plan to enlarge the Army by three divisions (from 13 to 16) and the Air Force by 5 wings (from 21 to 26). Army force expansion was to be achieved by converting support units into combat formations, and by a program to affiliate reserve brigades with active divisions. USAF’s growth was to come from increased procurement. Both innovations were driven by a desire to strengthen the U.S. contribution to NATO. Further steps in this direction included an Army decision to convert two divisions from infantry to mechanized status, and intensified efforts to develop improved tactical doctrine for armored warfare in Europe. Meanwhile, the Air Force endeavored to strengthen its ground attack capability, especially by procuring the A-10 aircraft and a variety of new munitions.

These Army and Air Force programs worked together to bolster the capacity of U.S. forces to meet their commitments in Europe. Nonetheless, the Defense Department continued to labor under the weight of five years of low funding, and this trend was only starting to be reversed. Especially in the Army, morale remained low, but the Air Force and the Navy were affected as well. Some new weapons—for example, the F-15 fighter—were becoming available, but many others were stuck in the development cycle, including the XM-1 tank and the YF-16 aircraft. Procurement of existing systems was proceeding at a slow pace, thereby leaving all three services behind schedule in modernizing. Funding shortfalls had resulted in maintenance backlogs and inadequate training, thus leaving U.S. forces insufficiently ready in these areas. Little progress had been made in enlarging DoD war reserve stocks, thereby producing insufficient sustainability. Finally, the C-5 transport aircraft had been acquired, but the Pentagon still lacked adequate mobility to deploy its forces to Europe rapidly. Coming at a time when NATO was worried about short-warning attacks, this lack of a rapid reinforcement capability impinged on the U.S. contribution to the alliance’s defenses.

Across the Atlantic, the allies were making progress on improving their defenses, even if in a slow way. The mid-1970s had witnessed a spate of troubles along NATO’s turbulent southern flank: the Greeks and Turks clashing over Cyprus, Portugal tottering on the brink of Socialist revolution, and the communist party coming close to entering government in Italy. In Central Europe, however, the outlook was more sanguine, and especially so in West Germany. Brandt was replaced in 1974 by Helmut Schmidt, who deemphasized Ostpolitik and attached greater importance to shoring up relations with his NATO allies, including the United States. Détente had been a success for Bonn by enhancing Germany’s international position, safeguarding West Berlin, and opening relations with the East European nations. But it also had consolidated the status quo in Europe, thereby pushing reunification even further into the future and leaving West Germany facing a mounting Soviet military threat across its borders. Reacting to this mixed legacy, Schmidt pursued a policy aimed at both
restoring Western economic cooperation and breathing greater life into NATO’s defense preparations.\footnote{See Hanrieder’s Germany, America, and Europe, and Jeffrey Herf, War By Other Means: Soviet Power, West German Resistance, and the Battle of the Euromissiles, The Free Press, New York, 1991.}

Schmidt’s stance found favor among the other West European powers, including France. Now led by Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, a political moderate, the French government continued to maintain its arms-length relationship with NATO’s integrated military command. But it also was determined to bolster France’s military power, and it was coming to see value in informally working with NATO to strengthen the West’s defenses. Because they were faced with economic problems, most other West European governments had no intent to accelerate their defense efforts in the way that the United States preferred. But they were willing to do what was possible, including taking steps to improve NATO’s efficiency and effectiveness. Great Britain, long pro-NATO and suspicious of the USSR, was the most forthcoming. Although economic exigencies compelled it to slash its defense budget and troop strength, it endeavored to avoid any cutbacks in its NATO commitments. Meanwhile, Belgium bolstered its defense spending (in real terms) by fully 14% during 1975–1976, while the Netherlands, Denmark, and Canada increased their spending by about 4%.

Compared to the early 1970s, overall allied defense spending was now rising at a somewhat faster pace of 2–3% annually in real terms. As a result, allied forces were modernizing at a more desirable pace, and they were doing fairly well at meeting NATO’s readiness requirements. They still lacked sustainability by virtue of chronic deficiencies in ammunition stocks and replacement equipment. The Germans, however, were building a reserve Territorial Army, and France’s more cooperative attitude meant that NATO’s commanders could place greater stock in French forces to provide added staying power. Also, the allies were entering into cooperative NATO programs. In particular, two important efforts were launched to buy AWACS aircraft and the F-16 fighter; these programs promised to enhance NATO’s air defenses. Although NATO’s infrastructure programs remained underfunded, interest began picking up in selective measures, including enhancements to air bases, NATO’s POL system, and communications technology. Overall, the allies were not keeping pace with Soviet improvements, but within the limits of their slowly growing defense budgets, they were now working harder together to bolster NATO’s military power.\footnote{See Rumsfeld’s posture statement for FY77; and DoD, Report on Allied Contributions to the Common Defense.}

As Schlesinger had pointed out, the Soviets were still well short of a confident ability to overrun Western Europe, and NATO’s powerful nuclear forces were always available to make up any shortfalls in deterrence. Nonetheless, the alliance’s defense situation was tenuous. NATO was showing encouraging signs of progress, but with each passing day, what had been a manageable military balance in the late 1960s was threatening to tilt in the wrong direction. The exact state of the balance was a matter of dispute, but many experts feared that NATO was falling short of the capacity to execute its own military strategy of
forward defense and flexible response. Alliance military commanders publicly expressed concern about NATO’s capacity to conduct an effective and sustained defense, and in contrast to the late 1960s, its civilian leaders were now less inclined to dispute this worrisome appraisal. Nearly all experts—civilian and military—agreed that the balance was within recall, and that NATO had the physical resources to meet even growing military requirements. The question was whether it would choose to use them. Leaving behind a legacy of many accomplishments in national security but unfulfilled goals, the Nixon-Ford era came to a close on this uncertain note.
The Carter era can best be described as a transition period in U.S. national security policy. A liberal-centrist Democrat, Carter entered office not sharing the conservative critique of détente or the Ford administration's dark foreboding about international affairs. As a result, Carter aspired to keep a lid on defense spending and to promote arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. Four years later, he left office having cast aside this agenda in favor of an anti-Soviet defense buildup as great as the Ford administration had bequeathed him. His administration thus was marked by a dramatic shifting of gears in its approach to defense strategy and budgets.

This gear-shifting was a product of deteriorating international conditions, but it also reflected Carter's own ambivalent style. Carter brought to the White House complex traits that interacted with the ambiguous times to prevent him from developing a coherent foreign policy, and especially so in regions other than Europe. A former governor of Georgia with little experience in national security affairs, Carter was part human rights idealist, part geopolitical visionary, and part pragmatic engineer. Because this combination did not mesh well, Carter was unable to establish a core theme and a consistent style to guide his approach to world politics. To a degree that dismayed supporters and critics alike, he behaved like a president in search of a mission, unable to bring into focus global affairs or to establish an integrated agenda for dealing with them.

Moreover, Carter's senior advisers were sharply divided in ways that exacerbated Carter's worst traits. Whereas NSC adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski thought in terms of geopolitical realpolitik, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance had a lawyer's penchant for addressing issues on a case-by-case basis. While Brzezinski viewed the USSR with suspicion, Vance aspired to a modus vivendi. From the outset, the two men failed to harmonize their views, thereby confronting Carter with contradictory advice on superpower relations and a host of other foreign policy matters. Rather than choose between them, Carter wavered back and forth, never allowing either man to lead. The result was a foreign policy that vacillated between competing impulses, never achieving the consistency needed to mobilize domestic support or to deal with the serious problems confronting the United States.

Carter's defense strategy reflected these foreign policy flaws. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown brought to the Pentagon strategy instincts in favor of nuclear essential equivalence and strong conventional forces for carrying out
flexible response. But no diplomat, Brown turned to the White House for the foreign policy guidance needed to breathe political direction and focus into this strategy. What he got was ambivalence on the most important issues of all: the degree to which the USSR was an implacable military adversary, which indicated the degree to which the United States should enhance its military powers.

Once again, the result was inconsistent policy. During Carter’s first two years, Brown was told to make do with only a slowly growing defense budget animated by an emphasis on fiscal restraint and a lack of clear international goals. The situation changed late in Carter’s term, when rapidly deteriorating global conditions allowed the President to resolve his ambiguities. But by then, the damage had been done. Because Carter had been far from indifferent to national defense, the United States retained the strength and versatility to respond, but the Carter administration, badly defeated in the 1980 election, was on the way out.¹

Carter’s NATO policy, however, was marked by far less ambivalence and wrenching change. Aware that the Soviet buildup was eating away at Western security in Europe, Carter arrived in Washington feeling that NATO’s defenses needed to be strengthened. Although he himself had no blueprint, he expressed his policy intent to his advisers early in his tenure.² Instructing them to prepare an adequate program, he made clear his willingness to expend U.S. defense funds and diplomatic capital to accomplish this goal. His guidance set the tone for the policy actions that his administration pursued in Europe throughout his tenure. Exerting leadership, Carter by mid-1977 launched the alliance on the path of a sustained military buildup. Although Carter’s defense program for NATO underwent internal changes by becoming more nuclear and less focused on Central Europe, it never departed from its original goal.

For this reason, history is likely to give Carter higher marks for his handling of NATO than his often-vacillating performance elsewhere. To be sure, Carter’s record in Europe is not unblemished. In the 1988 neutron bomb fiasco, for example, Carter displayed his worst traits in a manner that damaged alliance solidarity. On the whole, nonetheless, his administration behaved with greater vision, leadership, and competence in Europe than it showed elsewhere. Carter did not achieve all that he set out to accomplish, but he did transform a number of his designs into reality. As a result, NATO weathered these transition years and emerged sufficiently united and strong to deal with the turbulent 1980s.


²See Cyrus Vance, Hard Choices, pp. 32 and 45.
NATO POLICYMAKING UNDER CARTER

Although Carter was involved in setting basic goals toward NATO, he benefited from the support provided by his senior advisers. Fortunately Vance, Brown, and Brzezinski all shared Carter's concern for beefing up NATO's defenses. As a result, Carter's interagency process worked effectively in hammering out NATO policy. This performance stood in marked contrast to other policy areas, which often saw inconsistent behavior and even paralysis brought about by unresolved interagency conflicts over priorities and objectives. The result was a Carter stance toward NATO defense policy that, while not free from controversy, was steady and coherent.

Within the Pentagon, Brown was an experienced defense manager with stellar technical credentials who favored an emphasis on NATO and Europe. From the onset, he was willing to use his authority over the Pentagon's budget and his influence with allied defense ministers to achieve this end. Brown was aided by several talented and tough-minded civilian advisers who shared this vision. Chief among these was Robert Komor, who served as Brown's NATO adviser and later as Under Secretary for Policy. A recognized NATO expert and a former ambassador to South Vietnam and Turkey, Komor was a good choice for leading the Defense Department's focus on Europe. He brought to the Pentagon not only a sense of strategy and programs, but also a well-earned reputation for being able to push his ideas through resistant bureaucracies. Surrounding him were a number of other knowledgeable civilians who also were NATO-oriented, and who profited from Brown's willingness to employ the OSD staff in managing the Pentagon. Together, they provided the intellectual and bureaucratic horsepower needed to breathe life into Brown's activist approach to NATO.

Previous civilian attempts to steer the Pentagon in any single direction often had run afoul of opposition by the military services and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In this case, however, a somewhat different pattern prevailed. The uniformed military was disgruntled by Carter's stringent defense budgets and by Brown's efforts to impose civilian control over the Pentagon, but reacted favorably to a NATO focus. This especially was the case for the Army and Air Force, both of which expected to profit from a NATO-oriented strategy. The Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during Carter's tenure, Generals George Brown and David Jones, both Air Force officers, reacted in a similar way and were willing to work with Brown. As a result, Brown's emphasis on NATO commanded strong support throughout most of the Pentagon (minus the Navy), and this made his task far easier.

The same can be said for the SACEUR of this period, General Alexander Haig, who replaced Goodpaster in late 1974. Many Europeans initially regarded Haig,

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3Brown served as Secretary of the Air Force in the McNamara years.
4During the 1970s, Komor worked at RAND where he wrote studies on NATO defense improvements.
5Jones especially was noted for his innovative activities while Air Force Chief of Staff in the mid-1970s.
who rose to prominence on Kissinger's NSC staff, as a political general, and therefore were unenthused when Haig was given the NATO command after he left the White House. To their surprise, Haig emerged as a knowledgeable and enthusiastic advocate of stronger NATO defenses. When the Carter team took office, Haig began cooperating with Brown and Komer and was to remain helpful throughout his tenure, which lasted until 1979. Haig's focus was spread across the entire European theater, but was especially concentrated on Central Europe. There, he backed a broad range of defense improvement measures. His support provided the Carter administration an invaluable ally within NATO's military command and played no small role in the successes that were achieved.6

INITIAL STUDIES: PRM-10 AND PD-18

The process by which the Carter administration institutionalized its focus on NATO took place largely within Brown's Pentagon. Upon taking office, Carter's first step was to prune back the FY78 defense budget that Ford had left behind. He cut this budget from $122 billion to $117 billion; slicing real increases to only 1% in obligational authority and 2.6% in outlays. Once this was accomplished, Carter set out to commission a comprehensive study of national security issues with the intention of forging his administration's defense strategy and force posture.

The key study, called PRM-10, was not as analytically rich, insightful, and path-breaking as its 1969 predecessor, NSSM-3. Nor were its consequences entirely benign. PRM-10 failed to endorse the defense buildup that the military staffs wanted, and it particularly was unsupportive of ambitious strategic nuclear modernization programs. Also, two parts of it, taken out of context, were leaked to the press and caused minor sensations. One leak misleadingly implied that the Pentagon was contemplating an abandonment of NATO's forward defense doctrine in order to permit U.S. force withdrawals from Europe. The other implied that Carter's planned drawdown in Korea would destabilize the military balance there. Both leaks alarmed America's allies in Europe and northeastern Asia, and temporarily threw the Carter administration on the defensive.7

Despite this setback, PRM-10 produced useful results. It did not endorse wholesale defense cuts, as the military services had feared, and it drew attention to the Soviet military buildup. Moreover, it presented analyses of the shaky military situation in Europe and the need to enhance NATO's conventional defenses. These conclusions, supported by other studies conducted at the same time, helped deflate expectations among Carter appointees that the nation's security requirements could be met without enlarging the defense budget. This realization did not temper their zeal for efficient management, but

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6Interview material. See also Jordan, Generals in International Politics, Chap. 7.
7See Brzezinski's account of PRM-10 and PD-10, Power and Principle, Chap. 5.
it helped crystallize a belief, shared by the uniformed services, that the military forces of the United States and its allies needed to be strengthened.

Brown and other OSD civilians, many trained analysts, were skeptical of the warnings routinely issued by the uniformed services that the worldwide military balance was rapidly deteriorating. Their skepticism especially applied to the strategic nuclear balance and the maritime situation, where they felt that the United States was holding its own. In Europe, however, NATO genuinely seemed to be slipping behind. The USSR’s nuclear buildup of both intercontinental and theater forces was steadily eroding NATO’s already uncertain capacity to rely on nuclear deterrence of conventional attack. Meanwhile the Warsaw Pact’s relentless conventional buildup was broadening the USSR’s offensive options in Central Europe and eroding NATO’s strategy of forward defense and flexible response. NATO fielded a relatively strong defense posture that was slowly improving through modernization, but it still had important gaps and was not being strengthened fast enough.

Recognition of the need to strengthen NATO’s defenses alone did not resolve the troublesome question of whether, and to what degree, the U.S. defense budget should be increased. Nor did the White House fully agree with the pro-defense consensus emerging in the Pentagon. Carter nonetheless responded affirmatively to the Pentagon’s strategic appraisal if not to its precise budgetary implications. In August 1977, he issued Presidential Directive 18 (PD-18), which spelled out three goals for future U.S. defense strategy: preservation of an essential nuclear equivalence with the USSR; reaffirmation of NATO’s military strategy; and maintenance of a capacity to respond in other theaters, including the Far East. PD-18 thus validated the “1 1/2 war” strategy, with its balanced combination of active goals and prudent limits, that the Nixon and Ford administrations had pursued. It implied that the White House intended to keep a lid off defense spending and to establish a firm set of global priorities, but it also signaled clearly that the Carter administration was committed to improving NATO’s security.

ORIGINS OF THE LTDP: THE 1977 LONDON SUMMIT

During the period that the Carter administration was forging its defense strategy, it set about to mobilize allied support on behalf of its NATO goals. In early 1977, Vice President Mondale traveled to Western Europe, where he underscored Carter’s commitment to strengthening NATO’s posture. He informed the allies that although Carter was cutting the defense budget by $5 billion, the U.S. troop presence in Europe would not be affected. He also said that any increase in U.S. defense spending on NATO would have to be matched by West European increases. The Carter administration, he implied, was not prepared to accept a larger portion of the NATO defense burden in the interest of

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8Brown brought back to the Pentagon a number of civilians who had served under McNamara, including Russell Murray who headed the Systems Analysis Office, now titled “Program Analysis and Evaluation.”
improving alliance security. This tough-minded but reassuring stance helped get the Carter administration off to a good start in Western Europe, where concern had grown that a Democratic presidency in Washington might translate into less interest in NATO.9

Nevertheless, relations with the West European allies began showing signs of strain in the following weeks. Part of the problem was Carter's strident criticisms of the USSR's poor record on human rights. Although Carter's stance was consistent with the Helsinki accords and clearly unsettled Moscow, it gave rise to allied worries that the White House might erode the already shaky prospects for tranquil relations with the USSR in Europe. Then in March, Carter sent Vance to Moscow to propose that the SALT II talks be refocused on achieving deep cuts in nuclear forces. The Soviet government firmly rebuffed Vance, and SALT's prospects seemed to plummet, thereby giving rise to fresh West European worries about Carter's ability to negotiate with the USSR.

To complicate matters, Carter's initial actions suggested questionable economic priorities. Carter seemed more preoccupied with promoting economic expansion than with controlling inflation. Notwithstanding their own desires to surmount the recession that had dogged the Western powers in the mid-1970s, many West European nations, including the powerful FRG, felt that Carter's priorities were askew in ways that would damage the world economy. Also Carter seemed insensitive to specific West European economic interests. Shortly after taking office, Carter began criticizing West Germany's sale of nuclear reprocessing technology to Brazil. France was similarly criticized for its assistance to Pakistan. Carter's stance was consistent with Washington's long-established policy of discouraging nuclear proliferation, but it provoked resentment in West Germany, the allied nation most worried about Carter's handling of the Soviets. It also triggered complaints from other allied capitals, which objected to Carter's self-righteousness and his willingness to interfere with Western Europe's commercial ties in the Third World. Added to this came signals that Carter was preparing to launch a worldwide campaign to dampen weapons sales to the Third World, thus threatening Western Europe's lucrative arms export industry. To the allies, these steps hinted of a President that might perform clumsily in handling the complex economic, trade, and monetary issues facing the Western community.

For all their moral purity and technical coherence, Carter's early international policies thus were showing, in West European eyes, a lack of perspective. They also were displaying a worrisome knack for running afoul of the nations, allies, and adversaries that were the central focus of American foreign policy. West European concerns mounted further when it became apparent that Carter was running into trouble in the United States itself as a result of his controversial initiatives in defense strategy and foreign policy. In particular, Carter's decisions to withdraw U.S. forces from Korea and to reduce naval procurement, coupled with growing signals that he would cancel the B-1 bomber, all produced angry rebuttals from congressional conservatives. So also did his evident

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9See Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 292.
interest in completing a Panama Canal Treaty that would transfer control of the canal to Panama by the year 2000. His critics began charging that he was showing poor leadership marked by unwise departures, ill-coordinated policies, and unbalanced priorities. These signals were picked up and amplified in West European capitals, where allied governments were beginning to wonder about Carter’s capacity to steer a sound course at home and abroad.  

It was against this troubled background that Carter approached the upcoming Western summit, scheduled to be held during May in London. For personal and political reasons, a new president’s first summit with the West European allies always is an auspicious event, one that attracts considerable attention in the United States and Europe. Conducted in the glare of widespread publicity, this summit helps shape the new president’s image as a statesman and leader. For these reasons, Carter wanted a successful summit that would help set a positive tone for his administration’s handling of alliance affairs. The upcoming meeting was intended to cover economic issues, but Carter decided that he also wanted to address common defense problems. This important item accordingly was placed on the agenda, to be addressed by the NATO nations after the economic issues had been covered. The London Summit thus provided Carter a visible forum for spelling out his NATO defense goals and policies for the coming years.

As May approached, the Carter administration prepared for the London Summit by undertaking an internal review of its NATO policy, from which came a landmark decision. On the basis of advice from the Pentagon and the State Department, Carter decided that he would urge NATO to embark on a determined effort to reverse the negative trends in the European conventional force balance. He further decided that although the United States would lead this defense initiative, the allies would have to participate as well. This need for a coalition response was driven by both politics and policy. The Congress would not permit the United States alone to carry the increased defense burden, and allied help was needed if the effort was to be a military success.

Carter reasoned that the summit must do more than issue a superficially attractive but hollow declaration of purpose. He concluded that NATO would have to agree on a concrete plan, one that would commit alliance members to specific actions that had a realistic chance for success. Carter delegated the task to the Pentagon, and with Komer taking the lead, a plan was prepared. In a memo to Carter written by Komer, Brown suggested that the United States should seek NATO agreement on force improvements in three categories. The first category included a set of short-term and affordable measures that could help NATO overcome some of its easily remedied deficiencies in a year or two. The second category was made up of more costly and long-term solutions that would require significant resources over a full decade. The third category focused on armaments cooperation, an important but troubled area that would require one or two decades for success to be achieved.

10 See IISS, Strategic Survey: 1977, for an appraisal of Carter’s impact in Europe.

11 See LTDP accounts written by Brown, Thinking About National Security, pp. 103, 192–193; and Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp. 252–294. The LTDP’s components are discussed in Brown’s
Komer originally intended to name this plan "AD-80's," after the AD-70's effort a few years earlier, but he soon changed the title to "Long Term Defense Plan" (LTDP). Komer's reason was that he wanted NATO to focus on the distant future, well beyond next year's horizon. This approach, he felt, would encourage the United States and the West Europeans to address force goals in the absence of immediate budgetary constraints that would dampen expectations. The LTDP thus was to take aim at creating the kind of improved military balance that would render NATO secure over the long haul. It was to be pursued through the vehicle of a coalition response in which the United States and the allies worked together.

The Carter administration viewed the LTDP as a vehicle for enhancing NATO's solidarity by making Western Europe more secure, but it did not intend to bring about any major changes in NATO's internal arrangements. The administration wanted the allies to do more to defend themselves, but it was prepared to match their improvements with parallel American contributions. One reason for this stance was that the allies were unlikely to participate unless the United States led the way. Another reason was that the administration wanted to preserve American influence in NATO and Europe and therefore was not attracted to the idea of a separate West European pillar. As a result, the LTDP contemplated no alterations in NATO's traditional burden-sharing practices and division-of-labor policies. Its goal was a more secure alliance that would continue to be led by the United States, with American forces still playing a major role in performing continental defense missions.

Based on this design, the LTDP was similar to AD-70 in concept and policy thrust. It postulated that NATO not only needed a better defense posture, but also was politically capable of building one. Calculating that NATO's members already were devoting most of the resources needed for a strong posture, it asserted that the necessary improvements could be made with only a modest increase in defense spending. This increased spending, however, would have to be supplemented by a concerted effort to plan and manage effectively and to cooperate better. Part of the alliance's problem, the LTDP assessed, was that NATO's members were not using their existing assets efficiently. As a result, NATO's posture was not well aligned with its military strategy or designed with the Warsaw Pact threat in mind. This left gaping deficiencies that made NATO more vulnerable to an enemy attack than needed to be the case. The solution, the LTDP declared, was for NATO to embark on the difficult path of learning how to wage coalition warfare more effectively than in the past.

Carter approved the LTDP concept, and when the summit convened on May 10–11, he presented it to the assembled government leaders, who responded in a positive way. In particular, approval was forthcoming from the two leaders who mattered most: the FRG's Helmut Schmidt and Britain's James Callaghan. As expected, France's Giscard d'Estaing declined to associate with NATO's integrated military command, but he favored the idea of stronger Western defenses, and he could be expected to informally cooperate by strengthening French

forces. As a result, the meeting adjourned with the North Atlantic Council declaring that NATO would “initiate and develop a long-term defense program.” A week later, NATO’s Defense Planning Committee convened in Brussels, where the defense ministers announced that LTDP implementation would begin immediately.  

To help breathe life into the LTDP, NATO’s members took a second and equally important policy decision that had been recommended by Carter. They agreed that, for the foreseeable future, each nation should attempt to annually increase its defense spending by 3% in real terms (i.e., beyond inflation). The idea behind this standard was to elevate alliancwide defense spending in a gradual but steady way that, over a period of years, would have a powerful effect on NATO’s defense preparedness. In particular, higher spending would help enable NATO’s members to undertake important new initiatives without having to make painful sacrifices in other areas. The net result would be an improved posture across the board, rather than a defense policy that robbed Peter to pay Paul.  

Because the West Europeans previously had resisted U.S. pressures to commit themselves to any specific spending increases, this decision marked an important departure from the past. The new spending target did not commit every nation to achieve this ambitious goal: by consensus, the 3% standard was an objective to be reached, not a floor. But it did set an important benchmark by which NATO’s members, including the United States, agreed to judge themselves. Moreover, it had important implications for NATO’s internal planning system. It meant that the 3% standard would be adopted as NATO’s “resource guidance,” thereby allowing military planners to endorse lofetter force goals than before. This, in turn, would assist national defense ministries in their efforts to lobby their legislatures on behalf of more expansive military programs. In this indirect but powerful way, the 3% standard promised to help answer the LTDP’s call.  

Although Carter had won an important victory in asserting his leadership of the alliance, not all of the West European nations were uniformly enthusiastic about the LTDP. Any American defense initiative in NATO, regardless of its merits, was guaranteed to provoke a mixed response, and the LTDP was no exception. This resulted from differing strategic perspectives, but it also reflected chagrin at yet another ambitious American plan that would strain Western Europe’s political and budgetary capacity. Additionally, NATO’s bureaucracies, which had developed a reputation for stodginess, reacted uncertainly to the prospect of being besieged by someone as aggressive as Komer. Nevertheless, allied attitudes on military strategy and the European force balance had become more forthcoming in recent years. Compared to only five

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12 See NATO Information Service, NATO: Facts and Figures; IISS, Strategic Survey: 1977, provides an account of the LTDP’s adoption.

13 Previous U.S. attempts to induce the West European allies to accept formal fiscal targets had been rejected, thus creating ambiguity about how many resources were to be committed to defense. The 3% standard established a critical linkage between resource inputs and military outputs. See Garthoff, Detente and Confrontation, pp. 849-851.
years before, most allied governments now saw greater merit in a strong NATO conventional posture and were becoming alarmed about the ongoing Soviet buildup. The LTDP met the requirement for a formal NATO response, and it had the advantage of being both visionary and affordable. Moreover, it was an encouraging sign that Carter had the capacity to lead NATO and was willing to work with NATO’s military authorities and Western Europe’s defense ministries. For these reasons, the allies were mostly willing to cooperate.

With this cooperative attitude came a willingness to shift NATO’s planning machinery into higher gear. The defense ministers agreed to establish working groups of U.S. and allied officials in ten separate, high priority areas. Included were readiness, reinforcement, reserve mobilization, maritime defenses, air defense, electronic warfare, logistics, rationalization, nuclear planning, and C3 (command, control, and communications). The LTDP thus cast a wide net by aspiring to cover virtually all of NATO’s military deficiencies. The ten groups were charged to develop specific measures and to report their conclusions a year later, when a second summit was to be convened. At this juncture, the Carter administration hoped, NATO would be able to endorse a comprehensive, detailed and fully coordinated LTDP, covering both U.S. and allied forces, that could guide alliance planning for years to come.14

DISQUIETING INTERLUDE: THE NEUTRON BOMB DEBACLE

The LTDP’s expert groups began their work soon after the London Summit had adjourned, but over the next few months they were to labor in relative obscurity. In the United States, the Carter administration found itself embroiled in growing controversy over its efforts to scrub the B-1 bomber, to withdraw forces from Korea, and to reinvigorate the SALT negotiations on terms that bowed to the USSR’s refusal to discuss deep cuts. All of these controversies drew public attention away from NATO, but they did not damage Carter in Western Europe itself. What did get Carter into trouble with the NATO allies, in a way that relegated the LTDP to the back pages, was the neutron bomb debacle.15

The imbroglio began in early June 1977, when the Washington Post published a sensational series of articles on the Pentagon’s contemplation of the “enhanced radiation warhead” (ERW), the formal name for the neutron bomb. Prior to this, NATO’s efforts to improve its nuclear posture in Europe had gone unnoticed by the public, and U.S. defense officials had expected nothing different in this case. To them, the neutron bomb represented a normal modernization program rather than any new policy departure. They were unprepared for the controversy that erupted when the media introduced this new weapon to the public.

Compared to existing nuclear warheads, the neutron bomb’s chief virtue lay in its ability to emit high radiation over a short distance while generating limited blast effects. As a result, it was attractive to NATO military authorities because it could inflict attrition on enemy soldiers, including tank crews, while not destroying nearby urban areas. By enhancing NATO’s ability to defend Western Europe while limiting collateral damage, the bomb reflected the spirit of flexible response, according to U.S. and allied officers.

The Washington Post’s articles, however, imparted a less benign interpretation by implying that the neutron bomb’s macabre purpose was to kill humans (including civilians) while leaving the surrounding countryside intact. The articles thereby created the impression that the weapon was a product of a callous disregard for human life and a sinister design to make Europe safe for nuclear war. Because little had been done to explain the Pentagon’s rationale in advance, the Post’s assessment entered the public arena with no official arguments to contradict it, and consequently was quickly amplified. This was the case not only in the United States, but also in nuclear-sensitive Western Europe, where the neutron bomb’s military logic was similarly misconstrued.

Caught unaware, Carter responded to the public outcry on both sides of the Atlantic by seeking more information on the weapon and allied attitudes to it. He commissioned an internal review that, when completed in mid-August, reaffirmed the military need for the neutron bomb and endorsed a prompt go-ahead decision. Carter’s diplomatic exchanges with the West European governments, however, revealed that while they agreed with the Pentagon’s military logic, they were nervous about accepting public responsibility for the weapon. Nervousness particularly ran high in West Germany and the lowlands, where nuclear neuralgia was most deep-seated. This situation confronted Carter, whose own mind was torn, with a difficult decision. Reluctant to overrule the Pentagon on an important military requirement, he elected to mount a diplomatic campaign to persuade the allied governments to join the neutron bomb’s cause.

His decision resulted in a diplomatic minuet that exposed NATO politics at their worst. In November, Carter sent a letter to Schmidt indicating that he was prepared to decide in favor of the neutron bomb if the allies would share responsibility for the act. He further proposed that deployment of the weapon (which was not scheduled to come until two years after a procurement decision) might not have to take place if adequate progress was made in arms control negotiations. His stance thus was a reasonable one: it was responsive to NATO’s military requirements and yet sensitive to the possibility of using arms control to negate the need for a controversial decision.

Notwithstanding its sound logic, however, Carter’s letter put the monkey on the backs of the West European governments. In particular, it left Schmidt caught between Washington and many of his own countrymen. Displeased with Carter, Schmidt responded by trying to walk a tightrope between the two sides. He announced that he favored an early U.S. decision to produce the neutron bomb and use it as a bargaining chip in negotiations, but he also refused to tie himself to deployment. He maintained that the United States
should proceed unilaterally to procure the neutron bomb and only later seek NATO consultations on whether, where, and when to deploy in Europe. Because Schmidt seemed to be maneuvering Washington into taking the heat for a weapon that was intended to protect West Germany, his stance went down poorly in the White House. With both Bonn and Washington now upset, a weapon that was intended to enhance NATO's solidarity was well on the way to causing damage.

When the USSR mounted an anti-neutron bomb propaganda campaign aimed at fanning discord within NATO, the issue for Washington turned into a test of Carter's leadership, the allies' loyalty, and NATO's resolve. In this environment, Carter's advisers set out to fashion an acceptable compromise. They crafted a plan in which the United States would announce that it would produce the neutron bomb and begin deployment two years later. It also would declare willingness to forgo deployment if the USSR agreed not to deploy the SS-20 missile, an intermediate-range weapon that threatened Western Europe. In exchange, the alliance would issue a statement accepting deployment on European soil if the arms control negotiations failed. From January through early March 1978, U.S. officials, hammering on the theme that Carter was personally committed to the neutron bomb, canvassed Western Europe in an effort to build allied support for this proposal.

Schmidt initially resisted, but to the consternation of the SPD opposition in West Germany, he then relented on the condition that other West European nations accept deployment on their own soil. Great Britain also agreed, but since it was not a continental power, its support alone was not sufficient for Schmidt. Most of the other allies balked, but by mid-March the Dutch, Belgian, and Danish governments bowed to American pressure by saying that they would support the U.S. position, while leaving unresolved exactly where the neutron bomb would be deployed. On the basis of this shaky accord, a NAC meeting was scheduled for March 22, at which NATO's support of the U.S. plan would be announced.

On March 19, however, an angry Carter told his advisers that he was backing away from the deal. His reason was that Bonn and other capitals had not come far enough, thereby leaving him to shoulder the political burden for a weapon that they did not seem to want bad enough to accept the consequences. With the NAC meeting cancelled, a miffed Schmidt sent Foreign Minister Genscher to Washington, but Carter remained adamant. On April 7, Carter completed his about-face by announcing that he was postponing production, and that his final decision would be influenced by Soviet force modernization efforts. This decision triggered an angry outcry on both sides of the Atlantic from officials who had extended themselves on behalf of a controversial weapon that the White House had led them to believe, Carter wanted. Schmidt, who felt that he had been pushed out on a limb and then sawed off, was particularly dismayed, as was Britain's Callaghan.

The incident was to end on a happier note the following October, when Carter again reversed himself by announcing that new artillery and missile warheads would be built that could be converted to enhanced radiation status. He
also approved production, but not yet installation, of the ERW's critical components. This decision effectively put the ERW program back on its late-March schedule, but in the interim, NATO's unity had been frayed. Schmidt was not blameless, nor did he escape unscathed. By initially trying to avoid the political costs of the neutron bomb, he ended up under attack for both his support of this weapon and his maladroit handling of Washington. As for Carter, he unwittingly did himself serious damage at home and abroad. By behaving in a ziggurat fashion that disappointed even his friends, he weakened his standing in several allied capitals, thereby making the LTDP's already difficult task all the harder.

**LAUNCHING THE LTDP: THE 1978 WASHINGTON SUMMIT**

Carter fortunately blended his clumsy handling of the neutron bomb with more appealing actions elsewhere that culminated in the mid-1978 Washington Summit. The process of restoring public confidence began in January 1978, when Carter released his FY79 defense budget. This was the first Pentagon budget under his own control, and the NATO alliance watched to glean insights into his thinking. Carter initially had rejected the idea of real spending increases, but when reminded of the 3% commitment to NATO, relented enough to allow the Pentagon to deliver on his own pledge. Carter requested a defense budget of $126 billion in obligational authority (TOA) and $115 billion in outlays; his five-year program called for steady increases of nearly $12 billion annually, thereby producing an FY83 budget of $173 billion. Much of this increase was due to inflation, but it also provided for real growth. The FY79 budget called for real increases of 2.7% in TOA and 3.2% in outlays, and the five-year program called for a total increase of 13.4% in TOA and 16.0% in outlays. This was a substantial increase, enough to meet NATO resource guidance, which measured spending in outlays.\(^{16}\)

Although sending a reassuring signal to Western Europe, Carter's budget failed to satisfy all his critics at home. Brown had reported that the USSR was now spending 40% more on defense than the United States did. and Carter's critics leaped on this disparity to contend that the White House was still being too stingy. Brown's riposte was that a balanced relationship was being maintained because (1) America's allies were spending far more than the USSR's allies and (2) the Soviets had unique needs, including defending their Far Eastern frontier against the Chinese. The critical issue, Brown argued, was not whether the United States matched the USSR in spending, but whether the Pentagon's budget met the West's security requirements. On this issue, he expressed confidence. The military services thought otherwise, and some of Brown's own advisers agreed with them. Nonetheless, Brown loyally supported his boss, the NATO allies voiced no objections, and the Democrat-controlled Congress, poised to slice some funds from the budget, broadly agreed.

\(^{16}\)See Brown's posture statement for FY79, Chap. 9.
Carter forcefully argued that his budget reflected strategic vision when he addressed the North Atlantic Council in Brussels in January 1978. There, he reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to NATO and again called for vigorous actions to strengthen NATO's defenses. The meeting ended successfully, with the NAC endorsing the steps that thus far had been taken to develop the LTDP. Later that month, Brown issued a lengthy report on NATO standardization and rationalization that publicly unveiled the LTDP's visions. He outlined the short-term measures that already were being implemented and pointed out that the NATO working groups were developing a long-range plan. He also described steps being taken to coordinate Pentagon programs with the LTDP. Stressing that the LTDP was a multiyear exercise in which miracles would not occur overnight, his report was dry and factual, but nonetheless conveyed a tone of optimism.\textsuperscript{17}

All this laid the groundwork for the Washington Summit, which was held in late May, only a few weeks after the neutron bomb affair had hit rock bottom. There, the heads of state received the reports of the ten working groups and formally endorsed the LTDP's implementation. The meeting was one of the highlights of Carter's presidency and was a welcome relief from the recent tensions. U.S. officials came away satisfied, and the West Europeans seemed to reciprocate the feeling.

The LTDP thus had gotten off to a good start, but whether it would succeed was an issue about which many observers felt uncertainty. All depended on the critical matter of the LTDP's follow-through. If the LTDP erred, it was on the side of excessive ambition that purchased vision at the expense of practicality. Common wisdom held that coalition efforts are best undertaken one or two steps at a time, not ten. The LTDP shunted aside this advice in favor of a comprehensive plan to lift up NATO's entire military posture by its bootstraps. In doing so, it took on a huge load, perhaps more than it was capable of lifting.\textsuperscript{18}

Because of its demanding goals, the LTDP called on NATO's members to commit large amounts of money and political capital—more than was likely to be forthcoming. Additionally, its across-the-board agenda improbably required simultaneous progress on many thorny military problems, few lending themselves to easy solution. Within each of its functional areas, several nations, with different practices and predilections, were expected to work together in a coordinated fashion. They could achieve this cooperation only if they were given proper guidance, but the mere act of monitoring their progress, much less orchestrating their efforts, was itself a demanding task. Indeed, at the time the LTDP was adopted, it still had not been developed in sufficient detail to spell out what each nation was required to do and when. Although major coalition

\textsuperscript{17}Pursuit of the LTDP required significant organizational innovations in both the Pentagon and NATO Headquarters. In both places, existing bureaucratic structures did not readily allow for the multi-issue policy coordination required by the LTDP. As a result, special coordinating groups had to be established in both Washington and Brussels.

\textsuperscript{18}The LTDP was not the first NATO conventional program to suffer from an ambitious scope that diluted any attempt to set priorities. AD-70 also pursued multiple categories. Both initiatives were channeled through SHAPE and NATO Headquarters, which pushed for a comprehensive scope.
efforts are seldom embarked upon with the details all worked out, this lack of clarity made even the task of launching the LTDP a problematic undertaking.

In an effort to strengthen its managerial power, NATO had agreed to establish committees in all ten areas to oversee the LTDP's execution, but more was required than administrative machinery and good will. Also needed was a great deal of energy and leadership effort, perhaps more than even the LTDP's eager architects were capable of mustering. To a worrisome degree, the LTDP was so sweeping that it threatened to overwhelm its leaders by compelling them to scatter their finite resources in too many different directions. The downside risk was that, in attempting to do everything, the LTDP might wind up only marginally improving NATO's defenses in all ten areas. At a minimum, the LTDP seemed destined from the outset to fall well short of its lofty expectations.

Nonetheless, half a glass of water is better than none, especially when the drinker is thirsty. The U.S. officials who created the LTDP never believed that it would achieve all its goals, and they were prepared to be satisfied with less. They figured that solid progress on only a few of the LTDP's key measures might alone be enough to improve NATO's posture significantly, thereby rendering the military balance more stable. What they needed to do, they calculated, was to establish sensible priorities, while still casting as wide a net as possible. Provided they could adhere to this approach, they felt confident that the LTDP had the potential at least to usefully nudge NATO forward and, if things went well, perhaps to yield some major accomplishments.

They were optimistic partly because a number of the LTDP's goals (e.g., reinforcement) focused on American forces, which were under their direct control. So long as the United States did its part, the LTDP therefore could not fail. Moreover, if the United States led the way, many of the West European countries would be pulled along in its wake. Although few allied governments were expected to embrace the LTDP wholeheartedly, almost none were deemed likely to ignore it entirely. Their own security interests, reinforced by reluctance to offend the United States, ensured a forthcoming response that would help make the LTDP a success.

The LTDP's architects took heart from the tangible progress that, even as early as mid-1978, already was being made on the LTDP's short-term measures. As Brown noted in his report to Congress in 1979, NATO had decided to buy 47,000 anti-tank guided missiles by late 1978, thereby increasing its inventory by one-third. The United States was buying one-half of these missiles, but the West Europeans were buying the other half, thus suggesting a positive response by the allies. Programs also had been set in motion to increase NATO's war reserve stockpiles and to increase readiness so that NATO's ground forces could deploy more quickly to their forward positions. These gains were reason for concluding that the LTDP was beginning to make itself felt.19

The LTDP's fate, however, rested primarily on its long-term measures, where prospects seemed to vary from one area to the next. Progress beckoned most visibly in the categories of readiness, reinforcement, and air defense, where the

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19See Brown, Annual Report, FY80, Chap. 7.
United States and its allies were already pursuing programs that would start bearing fruit within a year or two. In the maritime defense category, prospects seemed bright for improvements in antisubmarine, antiair, and mine warfare, but NATO’s admirals were unlikely to get all the new ships they wanted. In the highly technical areas of electronic warfare and C3 systems, prospects were uncertain because goals, programs, and budgets had not yet been specified in sufficient detail for a concrete judgment to be made.

As for reserve mobilization, the LTDP’s future looked mixed. Virtually all military officers agreed that the absence of larger ground combat reserves was a critical deficiency that could result in NATO’s defeat in a war. Nevertheless, reserve mobilization had no political constituency in most West European nations, and allied defense ministries preferred to spend their money on active duty forces. The Germans were pursuing an important program to develop a reserve army, and although the force mostly was to perform logistics and rear-area functions, it did include six combat brigades. Meanwhile, the United States was trying to increase the readiness of its ground and air reserve forces. The efforts by these two nations promised to help close the gap, but not enough, and little else was being done. In particular, the Dutch, Belgians, and Danes—whose armies badly needed extra strength—had no plans to form additional reserve formations, and the orientation of France’s large but lightly equipped reserves remained as murky as ever. The LTDP’s architects realized that more was needed from these nations, but they were too preoccupied with other tasks to open this can of worms.

In the complex area of rationalization, good progress was being made in achieving better interoperability, i.e., the capacity of forces from different nations to fight together. For example, measures were under way to harmonize doctrine, develop air base cross-servicing, and procure common artillery munitions. These measures all promised to enhance NATO’s ability to wage coalition war, and they could be implemented without costly and difficult changes. By contrast, standardization—procurement of identical weapon systems by NATO’s nations—was a much tougher nut to crack. NATO’s nations agreed in principle that common weapons could enhance military proficiency and reduce costs, but many barriers stood in the way, including the profit motives of national industries. Nonetheless, some common-procurement programs were under way, including procurement of fighters and tanks, and the allies were trying to buy American weapons in order to help offset the cost of stationing U.S. forces in Europe. As a result, the trend lines were slowly moving in the right direction.

The LTDP category of common logistics was showing little signs of major progress, but some steps were being taken to improve upon NATO’s troubled situation in this area. Since the alliance’s earliest days, logistics had been regarded as a national responsibility, and this approach had bred enormous redundancy, inefficiency, and outright military vulnerability. For example, it severely hampered NATO’s ability to move its ground combat forces from one spot on the battlefield to another. Because combat forces could not readily draw on the logistics assets of other nations, they needed to bring their own
support units with them. This slowed them down, thereby hampering NATO’s ability to counter-concentrate against enemy breakthroughs.

The LTDP’s architects resolved to do something about this problem, but they encountered little enthusiasm for major moves toward multinational logistics planning. The West Germans and the lowland countries, however, did express interest in cooperating on a modest program to provide “host nation support” (HNS) for early-arriving U.S. reinforcements in wartime. This step promised to strengthen NATO’s logistic flexibility to an important degree, thereby allowing the U.S. Army to focus more intensely on combat missions.

The LTDP’s final category was theater nuclear forces, which originally had been added as an afterthought. Neither Carter nor Brown had entered office with a nuclear agenda for Europe, and during the months when the LTDP was born, they were under no special pressure from the West Europeans to undertake anything new. As a result, the LTDP was conceived primarily as a conventional defense initiative. Komer was responsible for the decision to add a nuclear category to the LTDP plan that was presented at the 1977 London Summit, and he made it with some reluctance. He knew nuclear forces could not be ignored, but he also worried that NATO might become too preoccupied with them that it would forget the LTDP’s main purpose. For this reason, he gave nuclear improvement measures a distinct second billing.

Komer’s worries proved to be well-founded. During Carter’s last two years, this category mushroomed into a major policy arena of its own and went on to consume much of NATO’s attention and energy. The process began at the London Summit, where the alliance’s leaders instructed SHAPE to prepare short-term measures and the Nuclear Planning Group to design long-term programs. In particular, the NPG was to focus on measures for improving NATO’s theater weapons, command and control systems, and target acquisition capabilities. The NPG was told to report back at next year’s summit in Washington. By the time this meeting occurred, nuclear modernization had floated to the top of NATO’s agenda, where it was to become an increasingly important focal point of NATO defense planning.
The Washington Summit was to mark an important transition point in the Carter administration's unfolding policy for European security affairs. Whereas events before then were focused on creating the LTDP, the remaining two and one-half years of the Carter era were devoted to implementing this ambitious plan. What actually transpired, however, was a wide departure from the administration's original script. Nuclear issues rose to a position of far greater prominence. Meanwhile, NATO's conventional plans did not grind to a halt, but they were diverted in new directions. The result was a NATO military posture stronger than before but configured to perform somewhat different missions than what the LTDP's architects had envisioned.

TOWARD NATO NUCLEAR MODERNIZATION

The immediate genesis of NATO's abrupt shift in the direction of nuclear solutions was a speech that Chancellor Schmidt gave in late 1977 to a meeting of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. During August that year, Carter had reaffirmed the U.S. intent to use nuclear weapons on behalf of Western Europe's defense if necessary. With Soviet theater nuclear forces improving daily, however, his reassurances failed to quiet growing nervousness on the continent. In his speech, Schmidt took up the issue of NATO's nuclear defenses and military strategy, with lasting effect.¹

The immediate focus of Schmidt's concern was the Soviet SS-20 intermediate-range missile, which first became operational in 1977. Prior to that year, the USSR's theater nuclear posture opposite Western Europe had been composed of 600 silo-based SS-4 and SS-5 missiles, each carrying a single warhead, supplemented by 400 medium bombers. Although this posture itself posed a formidable nuclear threat, the SS-20 promised to enhance this threat further. The SS-20's were introduced as replacements for the older SS-4's and SS-5's and did not enlarge the total number of theater missiles in the Soviet inventory. However, they had greater capabilities than predecessor missiles, including higher accuracy, longer range, faster response time, and mobile platforms that made them more survivable. Most important, each SS-20 carried

three MIRVed warheads. As a result, the SS-20 threatened to triple the total number of warheads arrayed against NATO’s forces and Western Europe from 600 to 1800 warheads.

NATO hardly found itself unarmed against this emerging threat. The U.S. and British nuclear forces under SACEUR’s control and capable of striking the USSR included 144 SLBM missiles, carrying nearly 900 warheads, and 225 bomber aircraft. This force had been sufficient to create rough parity against the previous Soviet posture, but the SS-20 threatened to give the USSR a decided numerical edge in total warheads and targeting capacity. More important, many analysts felt, NATO lacked a ground-based missile that could strike back with comparable speed, accuracy, and devastation.

Fearing that the SS-20 would help create the appearance of Soviet military supremacy in Europe, Schmidt foresaw not only a worrisome military liability but a serious political threat. Contributing to this concern was his perception that the Carter administration was placing little stock in nuclear modernization and was unwisely pursuing a SALT negotiating strategy that left the deteriorating theater balance out of the picture. Schmidt especially feared that the SS-20 would give the USSR a war-fighting advantage that would “decouple” the U.S. strategic deterrent from the defense of Western Europe.

This decoupling presumably would occur because SACEUR would lack the capacity to respond in kind, thereby compelling reliance on U.S. strategic weapons that the United States might be reluctant to use in the absence of strikes against itself. The effect could be to unhinge NATO’s strategy of flexible response, thereby leaving Western Europe vulnerable to Soviet nuclear blackmail in peace, crisis, and war. Schmidt further feared that decoupling and Soviet nuclear supremacy in Europe might bring about the unraveling of NATO and American withdrawal, thereby leaving Western Europe ripe for Moscow’s plucking.

Not all military analysts agreed with this dark assessment, but Schmidt’s fears came across as genuine and deep seated. Common impressions to the contrary, Schmidt’s speech did not call on the United States and NATO to deploy intermediate-range nuclear force (INF) missiles in Europe. Indeed, he never mentioned this possibility, and he later was to proclaim that he was seeking American reassurances, not missiles, and that his main goal was simply to prod Carter into including the SS-20 in the SALT talks. Nevertheless, he did argue that the USSR’s achievement of strategic nuclear parity “magnifies the significance of the disparities between East and West in tactical and conventional capabilities.” To many observers, this elliptical statement seemed to imply a belief that NATO needed to establish a “Eurostrategic nuclear balance” to compensate for the SS-20.

Whatever his actual intentions, Schmidt’s speech set off alarm bells in Washington, where it was perceived as an effort to prod the U.S. government into action on more than negotiations. His speech was viewed this way for reasons that went beyond the literal content of his remarks. At the time, influential segments of the U.S. national security establishment wanted to proceed with NATO nuclear modernization for political-military reasons of their own.
Schmidt's speech gave them a cause célèbre to push forward their solutions in a suddenly receptive environment.

Within the Pentagon, the LTDP had been under the control of conventional defense advocates, but there also existed a powerful nuclear bureaucracy with a different set of priorities. Like Schmidt, the Pentagon's nuclear staffs had also become concerned that the SS-20 missile was altering the nuclear war-fighting balance in Europe. In their view, the SS-20's mobility, survivability, and accuracy gave the Soviets a military advantage in responsive targeting that could not be offset by either NATO's existing theater systems or U.S. strategic forces. Their preferred solution called for NATO to deploy missiles in Europe that could give SACER equivalent options, including the capacity to strike military targets in the USSR. Because the LTDP advocates were preoccupied with conventional defense matters, their proposals quickly sailed through the Pentagon and became departmental policy.\(^2\)

Normally a Pentagon plan to alter NATO's nuclear posture would have been subjected to critical review in the interagency process, but these were not normal times. Parts of the State Department and the NSC staff did disapprove, especially after the Pentagon seemed to prematurely commit the United States in a meeting of NATO's newly created "High Level Group" (HLG) in early 1978. But as 1978 wore on, the interagency consensus changed. Senior officials began to agree that the United States urgently needed to bolster NATO's nuclear posture, and in a visible way.

Their reasons were heavily political. To them, the Soviet nuclear buildup in Europe, the talk about decoupling, and the neutron bomb mess all added up to a growing crisis of confidence in NATO. The Pentagon's scheme to deploy nuclear missiles in Europe, they felt, offered an attractive way to shore up NATO's nuclear deterrent, restore alliance unity, and bolster the West's leverage in arms control negotiations. A number of them recognized that American sponsorship of a nuclear missile program would stir up controversy in Europe, but since the German government seemed amenable, they felt that the gains were worth the costs. An unopposed coalition thus emerged within the executive branch that favored a nuclear hardware solution for a complex set of different but consistent reasons. As a result, the idea sailed through the interagency process. By late summer 1978, the Carter administration had made the momentous decision to alter previous U.S. policy, established since the early 1960s, of not deploying missiles in Europe capable of hitting the USSR.

In January 1979, Carter met at Guadeloupe, West Indies, with Schmidt, Britain's Callaghan, and France's Giscard d'Estaing. There the four leaders forged what became NATO's "two-track" decision, which called for missile deployments in tandem with negotiations. The missiles were to be deployed no

later than 1983, thereby allowing for three to four years of negotiations with the Soviets. In the following months, NATO staff work intensified in an effort to forge alliance consensus behind a single program. By April the HLG had reached agreement on a deployment of 200–600 missiles, and by September the final plan had been set. This plan called for a combined force of 108 Pershing II ballistic missiles and 464 GLCM cruise missiles: 572 missiles in all. The Pershings and about one-fourth of the GLCMs were to be deployed in West Germany. Pending agreement by the other governments, the remaining GLCMs were to be based in the United Kingdom, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

This plan was a product of complex considerations, some technical, others political. Missiles could have been deployed on ships at sea, but this idea was rejected for cost-effectiveness reasons and because basing on West European soil would bring maximum political visibility. The decision to deploy missiles to several nations rather than just West Germany reflected the judgment that Bonn should not have to bear the burden alone. The size of the posture, 572 missiles, was the product of a strategic calculus establishing both upper and lower bounds on the deployment. Militarily, a posture this large was needed to offset the SS-20 and to provide SACEUR adequate war-fighting options. Politically, this posture was deemed necessary to establish proper coupling to the U.S. strategic deterrent. A smaller force would have been too insubstantial, whereas a larger posture would have gone too far in the opposite direction, thereby weakening coupling by reducing SACEUR's reliance on U.S. strategic weapons for his full targeting requirements.

The Pershing II/GLCM program thus was artfully crafted, and because allied governments played a major role in its design, it was more than an American invention. Irrespective of what he originally had in mind, Schmidt consented to the idea as long as other allied nations participated. The British were the most forthcoming of all, and while many of the other governments were squeamish about deploying missiles on their own soil, they approved the idea in principle. Once again, the combination of American leadership and a growing external threat to Western Europe's security had allowed NATO's governments to forge a consensus behind a powerful military gesture.

As 1979 unfolded, the program ascended through NATO's internal review. Aiding its progress was a deteriorating international situation, especially in southwestern Asia. Once the program entered the public realm, however, it began encountering tougher sledding. Almost immediately, liberal and leftist groups across Western Europe began agitating, and the Soviet Union launched a vigorous propaganda campaign against it. Most worrisome, Schmidt's own SPD Party, which had fallen under the influence of Egon Bahr and other liberals, began staking out a stance against the Chancellor himself. This development threatened to undercut Germany's support for a defense program that Bonn originally had initiated. Like the neutron bomb, the Pershing II/GLCM program was soon transformed into a test of American leadership, German fealty, and NATO resolve.

The neutron bomb fiasco, however, had taught both Washington and Bonn an important lesson in alliance management, and consequently they handled
this challenge far better. Because the two governments remained closely allied, NATO's foreign and defense ministers approved the two-track decision in December 1979. The decision called for the program of 572 missiles to enter deployment in 1983, and for the withdrawal of 1,000 tactical nuclear warheads from Western Europe. Negotiations with the USSR were to begin as soon as possible, with the goal of establishing equal and verifiable limits on U.S. and Soviet LRINF (Long Range Intermediate Nuclear Forces) missiles at the lowest possible levels. The Soviet Union thus was offered the opportunity to trade its SS-20s for cancellation of the Pershing II/GLCM program.

The act of deciding to deploy these missiles dismayed many NATO critics, and even among NATO's supporters, it had its downside. For the past decade, the alliance had been mercifully free of divisive nuclear politics, and the United States had not been seen as a proponent of nuclear moderation. All this had now changed. The Pershing II/GLCM decision threatened to plunge NATO back into the nuclear maelstrom, this time with the United States becoming a chief advocate of nuclearization and therefore a lightning rod for leftist outrage. Meanwhile, the political consensus in Bonn was sent down the path of erosion in ways that threatened to fan growing anti-American, anti-NATO, and neutralist sentiment. The risk was that Washington's and Bonn's efforts to promote deployment might weaken their own leadership positions, damage NATO's unity, and divert the alliance's attention away from other pressing matters.

The wisdom of the decision rested on the issue of whether these missiles, in fact, were militarily needed to shore up the force balance and NATO's strategy. The experts were divided into two camps. Some argued that NATO needed new missiles to counterbalance the SS-20, while others argued that the SS-20 threat was inflated and NATO's existing nuclear forces were adequate for deterrence. The truth was hard to discern, but there was little arguing with the thesis that notwithstanding the Soviet missile buildup, NATO's main military deficiencies in 1979 were conventional, not nuclear. The Pershing II/GLCM missiles promised to bolster NATO's already sizable nuclear arsenal, but they did little to counter the Red Army or enhance NATO's ability to defend against it. That task remained in the uncertain hands of the LTDP, in a political atmosphere of growing nuclear debates that diminished NATO's awareness of its conventional deficiencies.

Nonetheless, the Pershing II/GLCM missiles undeniably promised to perform an important role in NATO's political strategy. Even if the SS-20's appearance had not altered the military balance in technical terms, the impression was spreading that the USSR was acquiring a politically exploitable nuclear superiority. For its own peace of mind, NATO leaders believed the alliance needed to do something to counteract this damaging view, and the Pershing II/GLCM missiles filled the bill nicely. Indeed, their ability quickly and accurately to strike targets in the Western USSR seemed to strike fear into the hearts of the Soviet defense ministry. These missiles therefore seemed likely to bolster the West's bargaining position in the hoped-for arms control negotiations.

Quite apart from reestablishing the perception of military balance in Europe, the missiles laid to rest concerns about decoupling and reassured Bonn that the
United States and NATO were capable of providing West Germany nuclear protection. Equally important, they showed that NATO was still a vibrant security alliance. Many years had passed since NATO had last done something dramatic to bolster its defense posture, and the feeling had spread that the alliance had lost its youthful vigor. For all its ambitious conventional plans, the LTDP promised security enhancements only over many years, and then in a quiet and diffuse way that might escape public notice.

By contrast, the Pershing II/GLCM decision provided the alliance a visible injection of energy-enhancing political glucose, thus helping tide NATO over until the LTDP could take effect. It enhanced NATO’s prestige, and it inspired growing confidence in official circles that the alliance could still muster the political courage to make a tough decision to act boldly. Provided it served as a supplement and stimulant to the LTDP’s other measures, rather than a substitute for them, it promised to play an important contributing role in NATO’s emerging security policy for the post-détente era. Actual deployment of the missiles was still several years off, hard political battles lay ahead, and the outcome was uncertain. Nonetheless, NATO had crossed an important threshold.

TOWARD CONVENTIONAL DEFENSE IMPROVEMENTS

While public attention was focused on NATO’s nuclear dilemmas, Brown, Komer, and their allies were waging a campaign behind the scenes to launch the LTDP’s less glamorous but important conventional measures. Their efforts partly were focused on the difficult task of encouraging the West Europeans to carry out the LTDP’s mandate. Komer, sometimes bullying and sometimes cajoling, played the leading role. Working through NATO headquarters and SHAPE, he tried to get the LTDP defined in more specific terms and to incorporate its provisions in NATO’s force plans. He also approached allied defense ministries individually in an effort to goad them into carrying out the LTDP’s various measures. His aggressive version of coalition diplomacy took the West Europeans aback, but it had the effect of moving them into action. Gradually the LTDP showed signs of coming to life.

Within the Pentagon, meanwhile, Brown and Komer set about the equally important task of getting the Defense Department to support the LTDP. The mere fact that Carter had blessed the LTDP was no guarantee that the military services would use it as a blueprint for designing their programs and budgets. The LTDP was not the nation’s only defense concern, and the services continued to pursue their own priorities, only some of which were aligned with the Carter administration’s goals. Magnifying the problem was that defense funds were anything but plentiful, thus producing an ongoing struggle for resources in which the LTDP was but one competitor.3

To Brown and his aides, the situation called for a reassertion of civilian control of the sort that had not been seen since McNamara’s days. Like McNamara,

3The analysis in this section is based on Brown’s posture statements, interview material, and personal recollections.
Brown pursued his goals by using his authority to manage the Pentagon's planning, programming, and budgeting system, which produced the Defense Department's budget submission to Congress each year. The PPBS process had changed since McNamara's time, primarily by giving the services a larger role, but it still offered the Secretary ample scope for putting his imprint on the annual budget and five-year defense program (FYDP). This particularly was the case after Brown took steps to reform the PPBS in ways that better enabled him to gather the reins of power in his hands.

The PPBS process began each year some 15 months before the budget was submitted to Congress, and fully 24 months before the budget was enacted into law. Under the Brown regime, the process was initiated in the fall, when Brown prepared his guidance to the services, to be issued in early winter. Upon completion of this planning phase, the programming phase began with each service preparing a Program Objective Memorandum (POM), which spelled out how Brown's guidance was to be translated into programs. These lengthy documents were then reviewed by the OSD staffs, which wrote issue papers challenging service decisions not in accord with Brown's guidance. During the summer, Brown reviewed the issue papers with the help of his senior civilian and military advisers, and made necessary adjustments. The budgeting phase took place the following fall, when detailed spending estimates were prepared and final adjustments made to last-minute changes in the President's fiscal guidance. The process came to an end in late December, when the FYDP was issued and the Secretary's budget for the coming fiscal year (still ten months away) was transmitted to the President for submission to Congress.

Brown's most important reform was his decision to strengthen the PPBS's planning phase. Prior to his arrival, the Secretary's guidance had been policy-oriented and abstract, thus giving the services wide room for discretion. Brown changed this by beefing up his guidance document, which he entitled "Consolidated Guidance" (CG). The CG began with a chapter on U.S. defense policy and strategy, including endorsement of a coalition perspective. Then came lengthy chapters on the West's defense situation in key theaters and missions, including NATO and Central Europe, followed by detailed treatments of each service's force structure. At the end, the CG laid out fiscal, logistic, and acquisition guidance to the services. The CG thus spelled out the Secretary's policy goals in penetrating detail and told the services how to prepare their programs and budgets to best achieve these goals.

Brown intended the CG to have an important impact on the services' POMs. To this end, he issued two forms of guidance in the CG: mandatory guidance that the services were obligated to follow, and suggestive guidance, which they were encouraged to carry out. Moreover, Brown compelled the services to rank their programs in priority order, thus distinguishing the essential from the marginal. This zero-based budgeting approach enabled Brown and his adviser to scrutinize the services' budgets closely, separating the wheat from the chaff.

Brown assertively used his PPBS process to emphasize NATO and support the LTDP. In the CG, he told the services that NATO was to receive top priority on the basis of a "first things first" philosophy. In the issue paper cycle he regu-
larly intervened to ensure that service expenditures flowed in NATO’s direction. This management style did little to endear Brown to the services, especially to factions not favoring NATO. Nevertheless it did help drive the Pentagon, often kicking and screaming, along the path Carter wanted to travel. It especially was appropriate for an administration that was trying to keep a lid on defense spending and therefore needed to establish firm priorities in order to achieve its most important security goals.

The focal point of Brown’s pro-NATO policy was his emphasis on rapid reinforcement programs, which were designed to speed up the deployment of forces from the United States to Europe in a crisis. A 1978 OSD study on the Central Region balance showed that NATO was not hopelessly outgunned by the Warsaw Pact, but that U.S. reinforcements were critical to the outcome. Air units were needed to bolster NATO’s ground attack capability, and ground units were required to give the front-line forces adequate reserves. USAF air wings were capable of deploying rapidly if adequate bases were available to bed them down, but Army divisions, with their massive amounts of equipment, deployed at a snail’s pace. Pentagon studies suggested that the outcome might hinge on whether these units could arrive in time. Full reinforcement would bolster NATO’s posture from 40 to 55 divisions, the amount needed to contain a 90-division enemy attack. These divisions, however, took two to three months to deploy, which was not fast enough.4

Prior to the Carter administration, the Pentagon had prepositioned equipment in Europe for three Army divisions. Because equipment was far harder than manpower to transport quickly, this program had helped facilitate reinforcement, but it fell well short of what was needed to shore up NATO’s posture. Brown fashioned a program to take this prepositioning philosophy a giant step further. He instructed the services to preposition sufficient equipment to deploy six Army divisions and 12 air wings in only ten days. The Army equipment was to be stored in POMCUS (Prepositioning of Materiel Configured in Unit Sets) sites, and the air equipment at collocated operating bases (COBs) that also were used by the allies. Brown’s program was enough to provide a total U.S. posture at D-Day of ten divisions and 20 wings: a doubling of both in-place U.S. ground and air power. To support this program, he ordered the Air Force to enhance its strategic airlift capabilities and the Navy to organize an effective sealift force. The allied HNS program was designed to further speed reinforcement by allowing the Army and Air Force to deploy combat forces, while leaving support assets behind.

Brown also endeavored to ensure that these reinforcements were used properly. The air reinforcements were to be primarily A-10 and A-7 attack aircraft, which were tailored for the important close air support role. In particular, these aircraft were to be used for attacking Soviet tank columns, which posed a grave threat to NATO. Three of the reinforcing divisions were to strengthen the U.S. V and VII Corps, which guarded critical attack corridors in southern Germany.

The remaining three divisions were to form a new corps to reinforce NATO in highly vulnerable northern Germany. By helping remedy key deficiencies in areas where additional forces were badly needed, the effect was to give NATO's posture an important shot in the arm.

With characteristic vigor, Brown and his advisers tackled the problem of mobilizing the resources needed to bring this rapid reinforcement program to life. Involved was a multibillion dollar effort to procure Army weapons, Air Force support equipment, and supply ships. Also required was acquisition of storage sites, prepared airfields, and reception facilities in Europe. The task did not promise to be easy. A major effort was required not only to procure the necessary hardware but also to work out the myriad details required to create a coordinated plan that could be executed quickly and efficiently. Complicating matters was the fact that the Army and Navy proved to be reluctant dragons: The Army was hesitant about placing so much equipment in Europe, and the Navy had little enthusiasm for the sealift mission. Also, the allies tended to drag their feet when asked to commit manpower and money to the task. By 1979 Brown had the program under way, but it was expected to take several years to complete.

Although the rapid reinforcement program was the centerpiece of Pentagon efforts to strengthen NATO, Brown and his advisers also encouraged the services to better prepare their forces for fighting in Central Europe. Focusing on NATO's ground strategy, Brown felt that the U.S. Army needed to take the threat of enemy breakthrough operations more seriously. He urged the Army to broaden its focus beyond southern Germany to include the entire Central Region battlefield, and to depart from its attrition-oriented doctrine by placing greater emphasis on maneuver. He also asked the Army to convert more of its forces from infantry to armored/mechanized status, and to trim down its support assets in order to field more combat forces. Finally, he encouraged the Army to increase the readiness and combat power of its reserve component forces, and to orient them to Europe.

Brown also was concerned about improving NATO's air strategy and the USAF's contribution to it. Brown felt that firepower was the alliance's "ace in the hole," but that NATO needed to learn how to use its powerful air forces better. Winning the air battle was not enough; NATO's air forces also had to help the outnumbered ground forces. To this end, Brown urged the Air Force to revise its doctrine, missions, and sortie allocation schedules to serve NATO's overall strategy rather than just its air component. He encouraged the Air Force to develop a better ability to work closely with the Army, especially in the close air support mission. Additionally, he exerted pressure on the Air Force to spend more money on modern munitions, air base enhancements, shelters, support stocks, and maintenance capabilities. These were unglamorous measures, but they affected the Air Force's ability to fly at a high tempo and to fight effectively.

Brown's emphasis on enhancing the U.S. contribution to NATO's defenses in Central Europe led him to look favorably on the Army and Air Force at budgetary time. He did not radically alter how the Pentagon's budget was distributed, but he did shift more funds toward these two services and encouraged
them to invest in NATO-oriented programs. His five-year plans kept their force levels constant: the Army at 16 active and 8 National Guard divisions, and the Air Force at 26 active and 11 reserve wings. The bulk of these forces continued to be focused on NATO and Central Europe, and they were instructed to train and prepare accordingly.

Brown’s plan for strengthening Army and Air Force combat power called for major modernization programs, supplemented by improvements in readiness and sustainability. He approved a program to enlarge the Army’s inventory from 9,000 to 15,000 tanks, and from 15,000 to 19,000 armored personnel carriers. He also authorized procurement of a host of new and highly capable weapons, including the M-1 tank, the Bradley infantry fighting vehicle, the AH-64 attack helicopter, the MLRS rocket launcher, the Patriot air defense system, improved TOW antitank missiles, and modern artillery munitions. Meanwhile, he authorized the Air Force to continue buying new F-15, F-16, and A-10 combat aircraft, as well as the AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) command and control aircraft. The effect of this modernization effort was to propel both services down the path of enhancing their combat capability, especially for waging modern warfare in Central Europe.

For the most part, the Army and Air Force cooperated with Brown. Senior generals from both services constantly lobbied for larger budgets, and they often resented Brown’s meddling intrusions into their programs, weapon systems, and doctrines. Also, their priorities sometimes were different from Brown’s, and this led them to drag their feet when implementing his initiatives. Nevertheless, they agreed with Brown’s emphasis on NATO, supported NATO’s forward defense strategy, thought in coalition terms, and appreciated the need to innovate. As a result, a harmonious relationship developed that enabled the OSD, the JCS, and the services to work together to strengthen NATO’s continental defenses.

By contrast, naval policy saw unrelenting bureaucratic warfare that began almost immediately after Carter took office and continued throughout his presidency. The source of the dispute was the Carter/Brown program to fund NATO continental defense measures at the expense of scaled-back maritime programs that fell far short of the Navy’s ambitions. The battle began in early 1977, when Brown announced that the Carter administration would halt the construction of large aircraft carriers. Later that year, he unveiled a FY79 defense budget that called for procurement of only 15 other ships, mostly inexpensive frigates. His five-year plan called for the Navy to receive a marginally smaller share of the DoD budget and for the Navy’s posture to remain constant in size at about 520–540 ships.

Improvement efforts were to focus on enhanced readiness and qualitative upgrades, thereby allowing modernization to take place only at a slow pace. The life span of existing carriers was to be increased through an expensive service life extension program (SLEP). Procurement was to provide for new attack submarines (SSN-698), new destroyers with the Aegis air defense system (DDG-47), new guided missile frigates (FFG-7), and more F-14 fighters and P-3 antisubmarine patrol aircraft. In the long term, the Navy was to acquire the
F-18 fighter and Aegis-equipped cruisers. These modernization programs were designed to strengthen the Navy's existing carrier battle groups with better AAW/ASW defense capabilities and improved air strike forces. They did nothing, however, to enlarge the number of carriers, surface combatants, submarines, and support ships in the Navy.

These steps were a product of the administration's desire to control defense spending and its belief that, because the Navy already had 13 aircraft carriers and 510 total ships, procurement slowdowns would not harm national security. Whatever the merits of this position, it deeply offended the Navy, which had become alarmed about its declining force levels over the past decade and wanted to expand. The Navy's goal was a posture of 15–16 carriers and 600 ships, including a greater amphibious assault capability than Carter was willing to provide. Also, the Navy was worried about declining readiness, brought about by reduced training time and by maintenance/repair backlogs, and wanted a larger infusion of funds to satisfy its needs in this area. The stage had been set for troubled relations with the Navy that were to plague Carter's entire tenure.

To make matters worse, Brown and the Navy disagreed over naval strategy. Because Brown and his advisers were focused on Europe, they evaluated naval strategy in terms of its impact on the Central Region balance rather than as an end in itself. They were concerned with protecting the North Atlantic sea lanes (SLOCs) to Western Europe so that NATO's supply convoys could safely transit from the United States. This approach led them to favor an unglamorous maritime strategy focused on screening the Atlantic from Soviet naval and air forces, and on escorting NATO's resupply convoys.

As its vehicle for executing this strategy, the Brown team emphasized the concept of constructing a maritime barrier across the "GIUK gap"—the area stretching from Greenland and Iceland to the United Kingdom. This concept obligated the Navy to work with allied naval forces, which were oriented to sealane defense and coastal protection. It called for investments in ground-based antisubmarine and antiair forces, a SOSUS surveillance system, and related capabilities. It required a large force of AWACS aircraft, P-3 aircraft for anti-submarine patrols, and land-based interceptor aircraft. It also demanded destroyers, frigates, and cruisers to escort NATO's convoys. It did not, however, require a sizable force of aircraft carriers and attack submarines heretofore the centerpiece of the Navy's force posture.

The Navy saw things quite differently. Of all three services, it was the least attracted to a focus on NATO and Europe. Its view was distinctly global, and it placed great emphasis on the Navy's historical mission of maintaining a big presence in the Pacific. As for Europe, the Navy was not preoccupied with the Central Region. Instead it was oriented to NATO's flanks—the Mediterranean Sea and Norway. The Navy worked closely with British forces, but this cooperation aside, it did not have an established tradition of emphasizing coalition warfare. It viewed allied naval forces, with their absence of carriers and attack submarines, as useful for coastal defense, but the job of handling "blue water" missions, it felt, was to be its own. This perspective, so vastly dissimilar from
the Brown team’s emphasis on Central Europe, led the Navy to stress quite different missions, and added up to a requirement for a larger and more offensively capable posture.

The Navy reacted with profound distaste to a purely defensive strategy anchored on the GIUK gap. This concept, its admirals felt, reflected a passive mentality that violated a fundamental principle of naval warfare: the need to seize the initiative. Historically, navies had tended to lose when they allowed the adversary to dictate the terms of battle. The Navy had ruefully learned this lesson in World War II’s early days; Pearl Harbor and the Solomon Islands were still vividly remembered embarrassments. Victory had been gained only when the Navy went on the offensive and took the fight to the Japanese. Remembered less vividly was the Atlantic sea battle, in which victory was gained only when allied naval forces became good enough at convoy defense to defeat the German U-boat campaign.

The Navy also worried more about Soviet maritime ambitions than did the Brown team. Historically, the Soviet Navy had been a coastal defense force, but in recent years this pattern had begun to change in worrisome ways. The USSR still did not have carriers or a serious power projection capability at long distances. It did, however, pose a direct menace to northern Norway, where NATO had intelligence and communication assets that played an important role in its entire Atlantic strategy. Also, the Soviets were acquiring a potent force of attack submarines and missile-carrying Backfire bombers that posed a serious threat to NATO’s control of the North Atlantic sea lanes. Exactly how serious was a matter of debate within the Pentagon, but the Navy’s appraisal was sober if the Soviets were allowed freedom to operate at times and places of their own choosing.

As a result, Navy admirals felt that NATO’s naval strategy should be anchored on an offensive doctrine, with U.S. forces leading the way. To them, the highest priority was not to protect convoys but to assert control over NATO’s waters by seeking out and destroying the Soviet Navy early in a conflict. This strategy required the U.S. Navy to sail north of the GIUK gap at the onset and to conduct aggressive operations in the North Sea and beyond. It also required offensive operations to sweep clean the Mediterranean. In the Navy’s view, this was a strategy that could be executed only with powerful carrier forces and modern attack submarines, which the United States alone could provide.

Reinforcing this view was doubt among Navy admirals that NATO’s efforts to defend Central Europe would succeed. Most probably, many felt, NATO’s forces there would be quickly overwhelmed, and the Soviet Army would sweep to victory and conquer all of Western Europe. Moreover, the Soviets likely would advance in the Pacific as well, and possibly succeed in conquering South Korea and subjugating Japan to military blackmail. What had begun as a short violent war therefore would revert to a prolonged struggle of global dimensions in which the United States would have to mobilize and conduct a long uphill fight. The key to success would be control of the seas, and this required a U.S. military strategy anchored, as its first principle, on unquestioned maritime supremacy.
The Carter administration and the Navy thus had profoundly different views on Western military strategy and the role of maritime operations in it. The Navy's approach was based on sound tradition and history, but the Brown team was not prepared to divert the scarce funds needed to fulfill this vision. Partly this reluctance stemmed from a more skeptical appraisal of Soviet naval forces and global capabilities. Moreover, the Brown team worried that if the Navy sailed north, NATO's resupply convoys, carrying vitally needed equipment and stocks, would suffer serious losses during the weeks required to attain total maritime supremacy. As a result, the Navy would gain its victory at sea but, in the process, NATO might find itself defeated on land.

Brown and his advisers thus had a different interpretation of what was meant by "first things first." This interpretation stemmed not only from a belief that Europe was America's highest global priority, but also from a more optimistic appraisal of NATO's prospects in Central Europe and an elevated sense of coalition planning. To Brown, the most important goals were deterrence, forward defense, and alliance unity. These goals, he felt, could be best achieved by confronting Soviet continental power head-on. An indirect maritime strategy might promise control of the seas, but it also risked undermining the West's purpose by ceding to the Soviets domination of the most important theater: Central Europe.

This strategy dispute between Brown and the Navy was not absolute. Brown was not entirely indifferent to the northern and southern flanks or to maritime requirements for offensive operations. After all, the flanks contained important NATO nations—Norway, Italy, Turkey, and Greece—that had a legitimate right to be defended, and they were indeed tangibly threatened by Soviet power. Nor was the Navy totally opposed to a GIUK barrier as long as it did not interfere with northern operations. The difference between Brown and the Navy was largely over emphasis. It also was over timing: whether an offensive campaign would be conducted relatively early, or later, after the North Atlantic SLOCs first had been swept clean of enemy interference.

The difference, nevertheless, was deep enough to cause major fights in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill, especially at budget time. The Carter era thus witnessed a complex pattern of defense politics. Whereas the Pentagon's civilian leadership was on the same wavelength with the Army and Air Force, the Navy was left odd man out, relegated to the role of vocal critic. The Navy's opposition did not directly impede the Carter administration's ability to craft a NATO-oriented defense program. It did, however, help inflame the mounting public debate over Carter's competency, thereby undermining his ability to maintain the national support needed to stay in office beyond one term.

BUDGET INCREASES, THE PERSIAN GULF, AND THE RAPID DEPLOYMENT FORCE

The year 1979 marked a critical turning point in Carter's defense policy and the U.S. military effort. In January that year, Carter had submitted to Congress an FY80 defense budget of $135.5 billion. He also submitted a five-year plan
calling for expenditures to rise to $178 billion by FY84, for a total of $781 billion. This plan provided for real increases averaging about 2.5% in TOA and 3.0% in outlays, and therefore met NATO’s resource guidance. Nonetheless, it deeply disappointed many Pentagon officials and conservatives on Capitol Hill. The reason was that Carter’s plan reflected no change in the slow upward glide path established the year before. Moreover, inflation seemed likely to be higher than Carter had estimated, thus threatening to eat away at all real increases.5

Carter later requested a supplemental of $4 billion, but since most of this money was to cover pay increases and rising fuel costs, it provided no funds for remedying what was rapidly becoming a procurement crunch in the Pentagon. Because it faced growing requirements across the board, the Defense Department had wanted to accelerate acquisition of several new weapon systems that were emerging from the research and development (R&D) process. Unavoidably, however, the Pentagon had been compelled to spend fully $104 billion of FY80 funds on personnel, operations and maintenance (O&M), and other accounts. This left only $35 billion for procurement, which was far from enough, and the long-term spending profile provided inadequate relief. The threatening consequence was a slowed and inefficient procurement effort that would not permit U.S. forces to modernize fast enough.

Within the short span of only a few months, this disturbing picture was to change dramatically. In January 1980, Carter submitted a radically altered FY81 defense budget of $171.2 billion in TOA and $157.6 billion in outlays. Minus inflation, this budget yielded a real increase of fully 5.4% in TOA and 3.3% in outlays. His five-year plan also projected a rapidly rising upward slope. It called for real TOA increases averaging 4.8% per year, a budget of $249 billion by FY85, and a total expenditure of $1,013 billion. This projection was fully $150 billion above what would have been budgeted had the previous program been retained, and much of the increase was allocated to procurement. This program better suited the Pentagon’s tastes, but more important, it signaled that Carter was changing his thinking.

Several factors contributed to Carter’s abrupt turnaround, and domestic politics was one of them. With the 1980 presidential election looming ahead and his administration badly slipping in the polls, Carter wanted to shore up his support, quiet his critics, and steal the march on his Republican opponents. Liberal segments of his own party were unenthused about a defense buildup, but the Pentagon’s influential complaints about unmet requirements, declining readiness rates, and aging weapons were an important factor in the equation. The White House, the Office of Management and the Budget, and the OSD had reviewed the services’ budgetary demands and were themselves coming to the conclusion that the cost of national defense was rising. Recognizing the validity of this judgment, Carter understood that, for reasons including domestic politics but going beyond them, he would have to embrace a new defense platform.

Disturbing evidence coming from the Soviet Union was also an important factor behind the emerging strategic consensus that drove the Carter adminis-

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5See Harold Brown, Annual Report, FY80 and FY81.
tration's new defense thinking. In past years, Western experts had been sharply divided on the meaning of the Soviet military buildup, but with the passage of time, the weight of opinion had shifted to a sinister interpretation. As Brown reported in his annual report to Congress, the still-swelling Soviet defense budget was now fully 50% larger than U.S. defense spending. Analysis further showed that over the past decade the USSR had outspent the United States in military investment by over 25%, and was currently outspending it by fully 85%—a sobering margin. With Brezhnev at the helm, moreover, the Soviet buildup showed no signs of slowing down; Western estimates were projecting a steady spending rise of 3-5% annually for the foreseeable future.6

By any fair measure, the Soviet buildup had long since passed the point where it could be attributed to cautious defense planning and a desire to catch up to the United States. The argument in favor of continued U.S. budgetary restraint had been based on the proposition that, notwithstanding the USSR's buildup, the international system remained stable. With a shocking crash, however, this proposition had come tumbling down as 1979 unfolded. The problem was not in Europe or northeastern Asia, the traditional focal points of Western concern. Rather, it was in the often-overlooked but important region of the Persian Gulf, where the Soviets suddenly seemed poised to launch an effort aimed at seizing control of the West's vital oil lifeline.

The year 1979 had begun well enough with the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty in March and the SALT II treaty in June, but in the Persian Gulf, events were taking a far different course. In mid-January, the Shah of Iran had been driven out by internal turmoil, leaving behind an interim government under Prime Minister Shahpur Bakhtiar. On February 1, the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini arrived in Iran and two weeks later, the Bakhtiar government fell. On April 1, an Islamic republic was declared with Khomeini as its leader. In the bloody aftermath following Khomeini’s takeover, U.S.-Iranian relations took a nosedive. Tensions especially rose in late October, when the now-exiled Shah entered the United States for medical treatment. On November 4, the U.S. embassy in Tehran was seized by anti-American demonstrators and its occupants taken hostage. Khomeini promptly began using the hostages as a pawn in a sinister game aimed at embarrassing the United States and mobilizing internal support for his own regime.7

The embassy takeover confronted Carter with a personal crisis that was to severely damage his presidency, but it also dealt the United States a far-reaching strategic setback. For years, Iran under the Shah had been a key American ally in the turbulent Middle East and Persian Gulf. Washington had poured massive military assistance into Iran, and the Shah had built an imposing military force. As a result, Iran had come to function as a pro-West military protector of the vulnerable and vitally important Persian Gulf oilfields. The Khomeini takeover changed all this. A staunch ally had been transformed overnight into a virulent adversary devoted to spreading an anti-Western

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6See Brown, Annual Report, FY80, p. 33.
7In their memoirs, Carter, Vance, and Brzezinski present accounts of U.S. policy toward Iran in this period.
Islamic revolution abroad. With Iran-Iraq relations rapidly deteriorating and the Gulf’s oil-rich sheikdoms trembling in fear, suddenly the entire Persian Gulf was convulsed in instability.

To complicate matters further, Khomeini’s regime itself appeared unstable, and many Western experts feared for the worst. One concern was that Iran would fall into civil war, thereby allowing its small communist party (Tudeh) to seize power. A larger concern was that the Soviet Union, bordering on Iran, might seize the opportunity to invade the nation and take control. Khomeini himself evinced distaste for the USSR’s atheistic ideology, but his revolutionary zeal had led to the unraveling of Iran’s Western-trained military establishment. Iran’s weakened condition meant that the Khomeini government would be hard-pressed to resist a Soviet invasion, should Moscow pursue this course.

The deteriorating situation in Iran played a large role in causing the shockwaves that passed through the West when the Soviet Union suddenly invaded Afghanistan on December 25, 1979. Brezhnev advertised his invasion as a product of internal events that required the USSR to dispatch troops in order to save an unstable pro-Soviet government there. Even so, the invasion marked the first time since the late 1940s that the USSR had used military force to expand its control abroad, and this alone was cause for Western concern.

More ominously, the invasion suggested darker regional ambitions, driven by the USSR’s growing military power, that posed a grave threat to the West. Although Afghanistan had long been at the backwaters of international politics, it occupied a geographic position that provided entry to the Persian Gulf and southwestern Asia. Even under the czars, Russia had sought access to this region, and the communist regime in Moscow had proven to be no exception. For this reason, Western experts grew alarmed that Moscow’s occupation of Afghanistan might presage a move against Pakistan or Iran. Of these two nations, Iran seemed a more probable victim. Not only was Iran weakened internally, but the USSR’s occupation of Afghanistan opened a second invasion corridor to its heartland. By conquering Iran, the Soviets might be able to seize control of the Persian Gulf’s vast oilfields, thereby gaining an economic stranglehold over the West. A grand prize this large, expert opinion held, might be too tempting for Moscow to resist, and indeed might even be the real reason for invading Afghanistan.

The invasion jarred Washington into action. In early January 1980, Carter announced a series of measures designed to signal American alarm. Included were decisions to postpone ratification of the SALT Treaty, to place a partial embargo on grain sales to the Soviet Union, to tighten the U.S. ban on export of military-related high technology to the USSR, and to curtail Soviet fishing rights in U.S. waters. Carter also withdrew American participation from the upcoming summer olympics in Moscow, and temporarily recalled the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union. All of these relatively minor steps seemed to lack bite, but what did convey a stern message was Carter’s State of the Union Address on January 20. There he proclaimed the “Carter Doctrine,” which declared that the
United States was prepared to resist any further Soviet encroachment in southwestern Asia, and by force if necessary.8

A serious gesture, the Carter Doctrine served notice that Afghanistan was a watershed, and that the United States now perceived a Soviet international threat requiring firm counteraction. The administration’s 1980 defense budget, released at the same time, reinforced this message by calling for an accelerated defense effort. Like the Carter Doctrine, it was intended to convey American resolve in language that the Soviet government could understand. It meant that the United States intended to back up its tough diplomatic talk by beefing up its military muscle.

During the month’s following proclamation of this doctrine, Carter’s defense policy was to become preoccupied with southwestern Asia in ways that shifted focus away from Europe, NATO, and the LTDP. Public attention was riveted on the torturous Iran hostage crisis, but within the Pentagon, defense planners were preoccupied with the Soviet threat to the Persian Gulf. In 1979 the Pentagon had begun analyzing prospects for deploying U.S. forces to southwestern Asia in response to a wide range of scenarios, and this effort took on a distinct anti-Soviet flavor after the Afghanistan invasion. It also began acquiring a sense of reality. Some officials feared an actual crisis within a few months, and although not everyone shared their alarm, few disputed the idea that preparations needed to be made.

In January 1980, Brown elliptically had announced the formation of a CONUS (Continental United States)-based joint task force to plan, train, and exercise units of a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) for overseas deployment in a crisis. Brown did not single out southwestern Asia and hastened to add that the RDF posed no threat to nations where it was not wanted, but he clearly had the Persian Gulf in mind. He noted that U.S. naval forces in waters near the gulf had been strengthened in late 1979, and he also unveiled several expensive programs to speed U.S. force deployment to distant areas.9

The most prominent measure was purchase of 14 Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS) to hold the equipment of three Marine brigades, which were to be stationed “in remote areas where they might be needed.” More antitank missiles and other weapons were to be procured and given to Marine Corps units assigned to the RDF. Also included were measures to extend the life of the C-5 heavy transport aircraft, to increase the airlift capacity of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF), and to add cargo ships and oil tankers to the Ready Reserve Fleet. All of these measures pointed in a single direction.

As the Pentagon was to reveal later, these initiatives were merely the start of something much bigger. As 1980 unfolded, the Defense Department intensified its analyses of Persian Gulf security against a major Soviet invasion. At first glance, the USSR seemed to have a huge advantage by virtue of its geographic proximity. Closer inspection revealed, however, that Soviet forces themselves

9For an analysis of NATO’s historical approach to out-of-area operations, see Elizabeth D. Sherwood, Allies in Crisis, Yale University Press, 1990. For a description of Brown’s early programs for southwestern Asia, see his Annual Report, FY81.
would have to travel a long distance over difficult terrain to reach the Gulf’s oilfields. This provided U.S. forces an opportunity to deploy there, launch tactical air strikes, and take up ground positions at key locations. Defense thus seemed feasible, and with it, deterrence.10

The Pentagon further concluded, however, that this mission would not be an easy one. Unlike its ties with Europe, the United States had no security alliance in the Persian Gulf, and its potential allies there were militarily weak and uncertain. Hence, American forces probably would have to do the job alone, but the United States had no combat units on the ground there, or even bases and facilities. Nor were Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab nations likely to invite U.S. forces to be permanently stationed on their soil. A large force of several divisions, air wings, and carrier battle groups therefore would have to be deployed from the United States in the midst of a crisis. Because no prepared infrastructure was available in the gulf, a massive logistic support force, with large quantities of supplies, was also required. These forces, moreover, would have to move there quite quickly; preferably within a few weeks or months.

In essence, the United States was faced with the challenge of being able to launch an operation as big as the Normandy invasion, but from its own soil, over a much longer distance, and in a far shorter time. The Defense Department, which heretofore had been focused on Europe and northeastern Asia, presently did not have this capability, or anything like it. The question was whether it could be built, and whether the nation was willing to pay the vast sums needed to acquire it.

The Carter administration, its determination to stand up to the Soviet Union recently hardened, decided in favor of safeguarding the West’s vital interests in southwestern Asia regardless of the cost. As a result, the Defense Department shifted into high gear, and in the Pentagon, 1980 became the year of the Persian Gulf. This frenetic activity soon began bearing fruit. By January 1981, Brown was able to announce that a major U.S. effort was under way to form a permanent RDF headquarters, to prepare an intervention force of the size required, and to secure access rights to facilities in the Middle East and southwestern Asia. He further announced that in Exercise Bright Star, U.S. forces would take the first step toward training in the Persian Gulf area. Much remained to be done and the entire program would take several years to unfold, but the Persian Gulf unquestionably had become a major focal point of U.S. military strategy.11

The Carter administration’s growing preoccupation with southwestern Asia was to have an indirect but significant impact on NATO’s defense planning during 1980. Carter officials recognized that a West European contribution to defense of the Persian Gulf was necessary for political reasons alone. After all, it was Western Europe and Japan, not the United States, that needed gulf oil, and neither the American people nor the Congress would react favorably if the United States was left bearing the entire burden. Moreover, a military inter-

11See Brown, Annual Report, FY82, pp. 169–197.
vention in southwestern Asia could not be mounted without allied help; one practical reason was that U.S. forces unavoidably would need to transit through bases in Europe and the Mediterranean on their way to the Gulf.

Carter officials consequently wanted the West Europeans to commit themselves to support the effort, but they wanted the actual allied force contribution to be small and symbolic. Political considerations mattered heavily here. NATO's history in mounting combined operations outside Europe had not been a happy one, and Washington feared that if the intervention force became a coalition enterprise, political squabbling might result in paralysis at the moment of truth. Beyond this, military efficiency and strategy also entered the equation. The United Kingdom and France normally deployed small forces in the gulf that might be useful early in a crisis. These units aside, however, the allies had neither the forces nor the lift capabilities for a major Gulf intervention short of denuding NATO's defenses in Central Europe. By contrast, the United States had the forces and flexibility to mount the operation, and therefore was best prepared to handle the task.12

Apart from a symbolic contribution in the gulf, what the Carter officials wanted from the allies was a concerted effort to backfill in Europe in order to compensate for the diversion of U.S. forces from NATO's defenses. Some RDF forces previously had been slated for deployment to Europe in the event of a NATO-Warsaw Pact war there. Principally affected were not early arriving forces that made up the D-Day commitment, but rather reinforcements to be deployed later, which were intended for use in Central Europe and on the flanks. Their dual-hat status raised no problems as long as Europe remained at peace during a gulf crisis, but U.S. defense planners feared that if the Soviets were to launch a war in the gulf, they might simultaneously turn the screws in Europe as well. Indeed, they might stir up a crisis in Europe as a stratagem to inhibit NATO's freedom to intervene in the gulf, thus providing Soviet forces a free ride there. Alternatively, the Soviets might feint in the Persian Gulf in order to draw in U.S. forces, and then attack in Central Europe. To offset this risk, the West needed the capacity to defend Western Europe and the Persian Gulf concurrently, and this required additional allied military contributions to NATO.

The Carter administration developed a two-phased plan of "Post-Afghanistan NATO defense measures" for the allies to undertake. This plan did not envision a literal allied replacement of the diverted U.S. forces, but rather a balanced effort to shore up NATO's defenses where they were weakest. The first phase called for a set of affordable short-term measures in such areas as ammunition stocks, electronic warfare, training, astern refueling, mine warfare, and land-based tactical air support for maritime operations. The second phase was composed of more costly long-term measures, including reserve mobilization, war reserve stocks, airlift enhancements, naval modernization, and aid to Turkey. The Carter administration was willing to acknowledge that these measures could be pursued by scaling back less important programs, but it hoped

12 See Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*. 
that the allies would add them atop the LTDP and increase their defense spending accordingly.

This hope proved to be largely frustrated. The DPC met in April 1980 and again in December to consider the U.S. proposal, and the allies agreed in principle to the two-phased plan. They specifically agreed to implement the less costly short-term measures, but they balked at the more expensive long-term programs, as well as at U.S. requests for accelerated spending on common infrastructure measures. Their reasons were partly financial, partly strategic. Few expressed enthusiasm for spending increases above the 3% standard. Additionally, several voiced reservations about the likelihood of a Soviet invasion of the Persian Gulf, especially conducted alongside a crisis in Europe. The Americans stuck to their assessment, and the December DPC meeting closed on a discordant note.

This setback led Brown to paint a somewhat somber picture of alliance relations in his final report to Congress, issued on the eve of his departure in early 1981. For FY82, Brown called for the same pattern of steady U.S. spending increases, nearly 5% annually in real terms, that the previous budget had envisioned. However, he also groused about the allies' failure to pick up their fair share of the growing defense burden. This failure, he said, could damage mutual interests on both sides of the Atlantic and inevitably would confront NATO with difficult problems in the years ahead. The American people, he warned, would not continue to support large defense budgets and overseas commitments if the allies, including Japan, were unwilling to share the burden more equitably.

This was strong language, especially coming from a defense secretary who had done so much to emphasize NATO. Nevertheless, Brown's final stock-taking was not entirely, or even primarily, negative. He did not call into question NATO's continued importance or endorse diminished American leadership efforts to improve the security situation in Europe. Further, he reported that the NATO-Warsaw Pact balance there remained stable, and that important progress was being made on implementing the LTDP. What the situation called for, he said, was not a crisis over burden-sharing, but rather a steady implementation of the LTDP and mutual recognition that the Persian Gulf situation required a new division of labor. Provided NATO met this challenge, he concluded, future prospects could continue to be bright. On this note of guarded optimism, he brought the Carter administration's defense policy to a close. As Carter left office in February 1981, NATO's future lay in the hands of a new administration led by President Ronald Reagan.
During the 1980 election campaign, Reagan charged that the 1970s had been "a decade of neglect," thereby pointing the finger of blame at Carter and all those who had presided over an allegedly insufficient U.S. defense effort. Although this sweeping charge made considerable political hay, it was an obvious rhetorical flourish rather than a measured appraisal of the decade's legacy. A fair-minded assessment of Carter's defense policy must begin with recognition that hindsight is always better than foresight. Carter inherited the decisions of his predecessors, and he occupied office during a complex transition period in which détente was giving way to mounting international tensions. The proper path ahead may have been easily recognizable in the aftermath, but at the time, it was not readily seen, and the decisions that Carter confronted were genuinely difficult ones. The same can be said for the Nixon and Ford administrations.

In appraising Carter's performance, the central issue is whether, taking circumstances into account, he managed this transition in a way that left the United States and its allies adequately defended. Historians will debate this issue, and there is much to be debated here. Carter's critics most commonly charge him for being weak and vacillating when the situation called for boldness and clarity. In his defense policy, their allegations hold, he underfunded the Pentagon, was too soft on the Soviets, failed to modernize the strategic nuclear forces fast enough, and mishandled the SALT negotiations. Related charges are that he tried to withdraw from Korea prematurely, neglected the Navy, and bungled both the Shah's downfall and the Iran hostage crisis.1

This is a long laundry list, with plenty of material for reaching negative conclusions about Carter. Yet, Carter inherited a slack defense effort that was only starting to gather momentum. As Table 16.1 shows, the 1970s may have been a decade of neglect, but the problem arose mostly in the years before he took office. During his first two years, he increased the U.S. defense program somewhat, and in his last two years, he significantly accelerated it. Carter arguably did not react fast enough at first, but by the time he left office, a major rearmament effort was definitely under way.2

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Table 16.1
Percentage Increases in U.S. Real Defense Spending (Outlays)

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<th>Previous Administrations</th>
<th>Carter Years</th>
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<td></td>
<td>-8.5</td>
<td>-8.5</td>
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In judging the legacy of the 1970s, an appropriate question therefore is whether the Nixon and Ford administrations themselves struck a proper balance in their national security policies. Conservative critics often have charged that Nixon and Ford both were hoodwinked by détente—acquiescing to the Soviet empire, neglecting defense preparedness, while achieving little of lasting value in East-West diplomacy. These allegations have some merit in that both administrations at times may have oversold détente and themselves occasionally seemed to fall under its spell. Moreover, détente did give rise to a worrisome neutralist drift in West Germany and to anti-NATO movements in Britain and other allied nations. In the United States, meanwhile, détente added strength to domestic attacks on the U.S. defense budget.

Détente, nonetheless, was hardly fruitless; the agreements produced did soften East-West political conflicts in Europe, thereby reducing the risk of war. West Germany and other allied nations benefited most directly, but U.S. security was enhanced as well. In the process, NATO's nations may have backed off in their vituperative criticisms of the USSR, but their governments still looked disapprovingly on communism and the Warsaw Pact. Carter's years witnessed a swing back to more strident criticisms of the USSR's performance in human rights, and the following decade was to show that the West had not forgotten the ideological dimensions of the Cold War.

THE DEFENSE LEGACY

U.S. military spending did slump during the Nixon and Ford years, but this trend owed less to White House policies than to congressional actions. Nixon was hardly blind to the Soviet arms buildup or to the continuing adversarial nature of U.S.-Soviet relations, and he would have preferred a larger U.S. defense budget. Ford seemed torn at first, but during his last year, he did launch a public campaign to enhance defense spending. In the final analysis, the decline in U.S. defense spending owed more to Vietnam, Watergate, and the weakened presidency than détente. The central legacy of the Nixon-Ford years is that a finely tuned international policy required a strong presidency and firm congressional support. In their absence, policy balance was likely to be lost.

Beyond doubt, the low defense budgets of the 1970s took a serious toll on U.S. defense preparedness, and consequently the task ahead promised to be both expensive and time-consuming. The war in Southeast Asia had propelled defense spending to a level 25% higher than in 1964, the last pre-Vietnam year
and an often-used baseline for gauging a well-funded peacetime budget. From its peak in 1968–1969, the Pentagon’s budget began plummeting, and by 1971 had declined to the 1964 level in real terms. From there it shrunk steadily over the next five years, ultimately reaching a level fully 20% lower than in 1964. Carter’s final five-year program promised to restore spending levels to the 1964 level, but only by about 1983.

As a result of the 1970s budgetary trough, the Pentagon lost about 15% of the funds that otherwise would have been available: roughly $150 billion. Because the portion of the DoD budget allocated to personnel, operations, and maintenance rose during this period, the Pentagon’s procurement account was hit especially hard. Total procurement funding for the 1970s was only $240 billion, or $80 billion less than if DoD funding remained stable. This procurement budget did not make modernization impossible, but the Pentagon was compelled to limp along at about 75% of the pace needed to sustain a proper effort. Research and development was similarly cut back. Consequently, weapon inventories aged and maintenance costs rose further. The Pentagon adopted a variety of stratagems to manage the problem, including pursuit of the high-low mix concept, qualitative upgrades to existing systems, and some reductions in posture. To a degree these stratagems helped, but nonetheless U.S. forces were modernized at a lower rate than required, and their combat power suffered.3

The entire experience illustrated the virtues of stable defense funding and the vices of a peak-and-valley approach. The budgetary savings of the 1970s were purchased at the expense of the massive and fiscally disruptive buildup that was funded the following decade. In the interim, the Pentagon was confronted with wild swings in spending that made long-term planning and sound management almost impossible. Carter was partly responsible for this procurement shortfall, but only about one-third of it, and he left office with the trends pointed in the right direction.

Largely because he tried to get maximum mileage out of limited defense dollars, Carter is also criticized for having military priorities that were askew. Especially in his first two years, he did, in fact, downplay the strategic nuclear forces, maritime strength, and the western Pacific/northeastern Asia region. His defense policy, however, was not blind to important goals. He placed emphasis on the U.S. conventional forces, coalition planning, flexible response, and forward defense in Europe and southwestern Asia. Some argued that these priorities were wrong, but they were consistent with traditional American strategic thinking.

The most damaging charges leveled against Carter’s policies have little to do with Europe, the theater where American interests were especially vital, and where the West most directly faced mounting Soviet military power. There, Carter stumbled in managing the neutron bomb mini-crisis, and his handling of the U.S. economy left the NATO allies worried not only about America’s economic vitality, but their own as well. Nonetheless, he very early saw the need to strengthen NATO’s defenses and tried to act to improve the situation. In the

3Cost figures are author’s estimates based on standard defense planning factors.
process, he initiated a major nuclear modernization program and launched a far-reaching coalition effort to bolster NATO’s conventional defenses. These policies had only begun to be implemented by the time he left office, but they were aimed at erecting a better deterrent to Soviet adventurism in Europe, strengthening NATO’s military strategy, and enhancing alliance unity.

In southwestern Asia, Carter may have failed to stand up to the Ayatollah Khomeini, but he did stand up to the Soviet Union. In the process, he initiated a major departure in U.S. defense strategy that pointed the way to an emerging military capability for protecting the West’s access to Persian Gulf oil. Additionally, he helped bring Israel and Egypt to peace, thereby encouraging a U.S. reconciliation with moderate Arab powers that was essential to America’s strategic interests in the Middle East. Together, these policies in Europe, the Persian Gulf, and the Middle East struck at the heart of the serious regional problems confronting U.S. national security and international stability.

Carter’s stewardship can partly be judged by whether he succeeded in his high-priority goal of bolstering the U.S. military contribution to NATO’s defenses. Here, a mixed but encouraging pattern prevailed. During his tenure, and throughout the 1970s, U.S. troop deployments in Europe remained constant, thereby reflecting the steady commitment that the allies wanted. Indeed, the U.S. manpower presence in West Germany rose somewhat during Carter’s years as additional combat aircraft and some other units were added. Notwithstanding occasional grumbling about the inconveniences created, the German government welcomed this upward trend (see Table 16.2).4

As of 1981, the United States still deployed in Europe four combat divisions, five separate brigades and regiments, and over eight tactical air-wing equivalents. In the Mediterranean, the 6th Fleet operated a carrier battle group, some Marine forces, and other units. All of these ground, air, and naval forces continued to play important roles in alliance plans for peace and war, and senior NATO officials called public attention to their importance. With congressional calls to pull out a thing of the past, these forces were in Europe to stay. If Carter’s tenure accomplished nothing else, it drove a stake into the heart of the idea that the United States should withdraw from Europe anytime soon. In doing so, it sent an important message to both the West Europeans and the Soviet Union.

Table 16.2
Trends in U.S. Force Deployments in Europe
(Manpower, 000s)

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4Taken from Secretary of Defense annual reports for three years.
By 1981, Carter’s program to improve U.S. ability to reinforce Europe was making progress, yet was still far from completion. POMCUS storage sites in Central Europe had been acquired, but the weapons to fill them were only beginning to flow across the Atlantic. A program to preposition U.S. Marine equipment in Norway had begun, but was still being developed. The HNS program was still under negotiation, and U.S. airlift and sealift capabilities were growing only slowly. Most of the required funds for these measures had been obligated, however, and only follow-through was needed.

A similar situation existed for Carter’s efforts to modernize U.S. ground forces in Europe and the United States. During his tenure, the logjam in Army procurement was finally broken, and a whole generation of new weapons began to flow into the inventory. By 1981, Carter had authorized procurement of 800 M-1 tanks, 400 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, 100 attack helicopters, 200 MLRS weapons, 800 new self-propelled artillery tubes, and 300 Patriot missiles. For 1982 and 1983, Carter-approved plans called for purchase of 1200 tanks, 900 Bradleys, 50 attack helicopters, 600 MLRS weapons, and 500 Patriot missiles. This important start was only the beginning. The entire modernization effort was slated to take nearly a decade to complete, but it promised to significantly enhance the U.S. Army’s combat power with weapons that could match, and possibly outperform, the USSR’s best.5

Parallel success was attained with the Air Force, and by 1981 its modernization effort, which had started before Carter took office, was more than one-half complete. During Carter’s tenure, about 600 modern F-15, F-16, and A-10 aircraft were procured, and an additional 400 were slated for purchase over the following two years. By early 1983, the Air Force was expected to outfit 75% of its active wings with modern aircraft, and 35% of its reserve wings. These new models were better than their Soviet counterparts, and promised to help maintain NATO’s qualitative superiority in the air.

Questions remained, nevertheless, about whether U.S. forces were properly structured for a European war. Of the ten U.S. Army divisions slated for early commitment to Europe, all were heavily equipped armored or mechanized units, and thus were well suited for mobile combat there. Moreover, the Marine Corps planned to send two divisions to the flanks and was showing signs of heavy up these units. The Army’s ten later-arriving divisions, however, included only three heavy divisions; the remainder were lightly equipped infantry, airborne, and airmobile units. These divisions had their uses, but their ability to stand up to Soviet tank columns was uncertain. Moreover, critics charged that fully seven of these divisions—National Guard units—were insufficiently ready to meet their deployment schedules. The same applied to the roughly 20 separate reserve brigades that also were slated for reinforcement duty.

The Army responded by arguing that it needed light forces for other theaters, and that reserve readiness could not readily be increased. To further complicate matters, senior Army generals began complaining that morale was still low.

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5Information taken from Brown’s posture statements over these four years.
training funds were inadequate, and sufficient support units were unavailable, especially for active-duty support, to back up the combat units. The Carter administration tried to sort out these problems, encourage the Army to innovate more, and channel more funds into training and readiness. By 1981, however, the Army's progress fell short of fully satisfactory. Carter left behind nagging controversies suggesting that although the Army was far better prepared to fight in Europe than before, not all of its problems had been solved.

As for the Air Force's posture, critics pointed an accusing finger at its preponderant number of fighter interceptors and lack of more ground attack wings. To them, this posture suggested a continuing fixation on the air battle and insufficient attention to ground combat. Critics also claimed that Air Force smart munitions were less smart than advertised. They further alleged that the Air Force was spending so much money on high-technology systems that insufficient funds would be left over for training, maintenance, and sustaining support. Senior Air Force generals denied these charges, and the Carter administration was left trying to find an appropriate way to balance its air programs. As it left office, controversy remained about whether it had found the right balance.

Finally, Carter left the presidency having partially bowed to the Navy's demands for a maritime buildup. In his FY83 defense report, Brown unveiled a five-year plan that abandoned the past goal of holding the Navy at 520-540 ships. The new plan charted a course for expansion to a 590-ship posture, through purchase of 13 submarines, 24 surface combatants, and 43 support ships. Brown held the line on carriers by authorizing no new construction and arguing that a 13-carrier force would remain adequate. With an incoming president expressing sympathy for the Navy, however, Brown's policy seemed unlikely to last long. The same appeared true for his naval strategy. Already the Navy was drafting a new maritime doctrine that would emphasize the offensive, including operations in the far northern waters.

ALLIANCE RELATIONSHIPS

Carter's stewardship can also be measured by his management of the NATO alliance and relations with the West Europeans. Here, the record shows a similarly mixed but positive overall pattern. Although Carter behaved erratically at first, he came to steer a more moderate and stable course as his tenure unfolded, and this approach was broadly endorsed by the allies. He neither withdrew the United States from international involvement nor was overly assertive. He pursued policies of containment and deterrence toward the USSR, but he also tried to promote negotiations, and did nothing to unravel what détente had achieved in Europe. His years saw no major progress toward resolving the standoff in Europe, but neither was there backsliding, and the allies recognized that this alone was something of an achievement.6

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Nixon had pursued a manipulative global policy that emphasized superpower politics and triangular diplomacy, and he often seemed to relegate alliance relations to the background. Carter's policy was more pragmatic and less attracted to Metternichian conceptual designs, and it placed higher stock on coalition diplomacy with the allies. Carter refrained from striking deals with the Soviet Union over Western Europe's head, and he showed no predilection for the sudden and uncoordinated departures that had unnerved the allies during Nixon's reign. His handling of SALT, MBFR, and CSCE negotiations was patient, consultative, and technically minded. As a result, the allies gained confidence that they would be consulted on Washington's policies for managing international affairs, and that the outcome would protect their interests.

Throughout his presidency, West Europeans continued to question Carter's competency in foreign affairs, and were perplexed by his repeated failures to gain congressional support for his actions. Many felt that he was insufficiently skilled at fostering détente with the Soviet Union, and in 1980 they grew alarmed about Washington's ability to handle the downward spiral in the Persian Gulf. They would have preferred a more skillful figure at the helm, and the cabinet shake-up that occurred after the failed hostage rescue effort in Iran further worried them. Most recognized, however, that worsening East-West relations were not Carter's fault, and many feared that while Carter was far from perfect, a different U.S. president might be even less restrained and even-handed.7

In economic affairs, Carter carried forth the policies initiated by Nixon and Ford aimed at fashioning a new international order which better served American interests. Reinforcing this trend was his domestic agenda, which placed even greater stress on social welfare goals and economic growth than did the previous administrations. This stance led Carter to seek flexible exchange rates that promoted American exports and inhibited imports, and he put pressure on Western Europe and Japan to further lower trade barriers. Simultaneously he demanded that the West Europeans carry a fair share of the defense burden. The effect was to reinforce the impression, growing since the early 1970s, that the United States was pursuing its own agenda at the expense of its leadership role.

Along with these pressures came Carter's failure to bring stagflation under control at home, which undermined West European confidence in the dollar and American leadership of the Atlantic economy.8 To a degree, Washington's combination of firm demands and shaky performance strained transatlantic relations. This especially was the case with the Germans, who increasingly were called upon to prop up the U.S. economy as well as the EEC, while also trying to attend to their own economy and strengthen their military forces. Bonn felt

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8See Hanrieder, *Germany, America, and Europe*, pp. 78-80, 302-306.
singled out by the multiple demands being levied on it, and its attitude toward Washington consequently cooled. To a lesser degree, similar feelings spread to other West European capitals, where domestic priorities and emphasis on EEC integration retarded their capacity to respond to Washington’s demands for trade reform in such areas as agricultural policy. The onset of a second oil price crisis in the late 1970s, which increased inflation and dampened economic growth, further compounded the problem.

The economic picture under Carter, however, was far from bleak. Carter’s style was less confrontational than Nixon’s, and with the U.S. trade balance improving, fear of economic warfare further subsided. No unbridled economic nationalist, Carter favored a liberal trade regime over wholesale protectionism, and he sought a mutually acceptable economic equilibrium with the allies. As gestures of cooperation, he tried to stabilize the dollar and to promote energy teamwork, and he reduced pressure on the Germans to provide payments for offsetting the cost of the U.S. troop presence in Europe. In particular, his last two years saw a growing sensitivity to the relationship between domestic instability and international economic problems. His appointment in 1979 of Paul Volcker to head the Federal Reserve Board suggested growing commitment to halt inflation, and this step pleased the West Europeans.9

Moreover, Carter sought to further institutionalize the transatlantic dialogue on economic affairs. During his tenure, the annual economic summit sank deeper roots as a permanent forum even as it encountered gnawing problems in achieving harmonious policies. The 1977 summit saw an American effort to convince West Germany and Japan to adopt stimulative domestic policies in order to achieve coordinated expansion of all three economies. Fearing inflation, both nations demurred, thereby complicating American trade problems by reducing allied imports of U.S. goods. As a result, the United States was forced to adopt an unwanted devaluation of the dollar. The 1978 Berlin Summit was less contentious, but in 1979, the United States again failed to convince Germany and Japan to accelerate domestic expansion, increase imports, and deemphasize exports. The result was an American economic contraction that helped set the stage for the recession of the early 1980s. The participants emerged from these events somewhat battered but nevertheless perceiving value in the annual summit framework.

In essence, the Carter era marked a further stage in the transition to a new international economic system. Replacing the old order dominated by the United States was an emerging system of relatively coequal industrial powers. Because the United States was no longer able to set the rules of discourse, orderly economic relations now required multilateral policy coordination based on negotiated bargains. Barring the way to easy compromise, however, were competing domestic economic requirements that pulled these nations in opposite directions. To a growing degree, the United States sought favorable trade and monetary relations to help offset mounting stagflation at home. These

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pressures ran up against countervailing German and Japanese policies aimed at curbing domestic inflation and using an export strategy to achieve stable growth. Motivated by powerful domestic constraints, the three dominant powers of the new system found themselves a good distance removed from harmony.

This situation posed the threat that the international economic order might break down entirely, driven by incompatible domestic agendas, nationalism, and protectionism. There were, however, powerful incentives for moderation. As Robert Gilpin has written, the situation facing the Western industrial powers was likened to a classic game of "prisoners' dilemma." Any single participant could hope to maximize its gains by pursuing self-serving policies, but only if the other participants followed moderate courses. If all participants unabashedly pursued their own goals to the exclusion of other nations' interests, the result would be a competitive economic war that would guarantee disaster for all. Moreover, unfettered economic competition might fracture the security relationships that these nations still depended upon now that the Cold War was heating up.10

Aware that a descent into autarky and unbridled competition would damage everyone, the Western powers recognized the need to find mutually agreeable solutions. Even partial accommodations required a complex package of adjustments that could be achieved only through technical negotiations and high-level policymaking. Fortunately the annual economic summits of the Carter years provided a useful vehicle for this purpose, and at least helped close what otherwise might have been a much wider gap. None of the participants came away completely satisfied, but none were left so frustrated that continued negotiations were deemed fruitless. Meanwhile, the Tokyo round of the GATT negotiations ended successfully with agreement to further reduce tariff barriers, and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) emerged as increasingly important vehicles for fostering international cooperation. Even if fully satisfactory economic policies still eluded the Western powers, at least progress was being made on building the important institutional mechanisms for collaboration.11

Like Nixon and Ford, Carter believed that the United States should continue to lead the Western alliance, and he did not promote the idea of an independent West European pillar. He adopted a benign stance toward integration by the EEC, however. Although the EEC had created the European Monetary System, a step toward economic union, until 1979 progress toward political unity in Western Europe was slow, but Carter himself was not at fault. Also, Carter's efforts to achieve a Middle East peace improved relations with OPEC and reduced the risk of another oil embargo, thereby reassuring the allies.

Perhaps most important, Western Europe continued its drive toward economic prosperity, and transatlantic trade and investments grew significantly. Indeed, the entire decade, notwithstanding its bouts with inflation and reces-

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sion, saw slow but steady economic growth on both sides of the Atlantic. The United States achieved an average annual increase of 3.7% in GDP and 2.4% in per capita income (PCI); allied increases averaged 2.7% in GDP and 2.0% in PCI. By the decade's end, the United States was still spending a larger portion of its GDP on defense. Even so, its per capita income was higher than in Western Europe, thus enabling it to shoulder a larger military burden. Overall, the U.S. and allied economies were not growing as fast as during prior decades, or as fast as Japan's economy during the 1970s, but they were making progress. With constructive interdependence on the rise, these trends gave rise to enhanced confidence in the Atlantic community's future, and took the edge off allied disgruntlement with Carter (See Table 16.3).  

Although Carter's economic and defense policies placed demands on the allies that often taxed their patience, they did not overload West European governments to the extent of destroying their willingness to cooperate with Washington's agenda. Carter sought changes in international trade and monetary practices in order to serve U.S. economic interests, but his goal was not to damage Western Europe's own economic growth. Moreover, the pressures that Carter placed on the allies for increased defense spending were not fundamentally in conflict with Western Europe's economic goals. The LTDP standard called for 3% annual real spending increases, but Western Europe's economies were growing at about this rate or slightly higher. Although the LTDP called for some sacrifices, each allied nation could make them without diverting a larger share of GDP or national spending to defense.

Table 16.3

NATO Economic Trends, 1971–1980
(1988 constant $ and exchange rates)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense spending (billions)</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Domestic Product (billions)</td>
<td>2963</td>
<td>4057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense spending as % GDP</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population (millions)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita income in 000s</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCI minus defense spending</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense spending (billions)</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Domestic Product (billions)</td>
<td>3443</td>
<td>4365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense spending as % GDP</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (millions)</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita income in 000s</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCI minus defense spending</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The LTDP therefore was affordable and did not threaten to seriously damage Western Europe’s economic health. The question for the allies was one of fiscal priorities; and allied economic ministries, which were pursuing agendas of their own, normally were not enthused about increased defense spending. The defense ministries in each nation, however, endorsed the LTDP’s force goals and resource guidance as legitimate expressions of NATO military requirements. Their stance helped maintain a sense of perspective and motivated allied capitals to pursue balanced policies that responded to Washington’s wishes.

Reinforcing this willingness to cooperate with Washington was the realization that the LTDP was not a thinly veiled plot to transfer the defense burden to the allies. After all, the LTDP obligated the United States to increase defense spending at the same rate as the allies. As the 1980s came to a close, moreover, the United States held the moral high ground because its defense spending was rising faster than 3% annually, and faster than its own economic growth. This trend hardly left even critical West Europeans in a position to argue that the United States was acting unfairly.

Nor were allied governments inclined to make this charge. The strategic deal being given them from membership in NATO was still a very good one. Because the United States was absorbing one-half the cost of defending Western Europe, the allies were continuing to get security on the cheap. The price they had to pay was a manageable increase in their own defense spending and cooperation with Washington’s economic agenda, but on terms that allowed their own economies to continue growing at a satisfying rate. By any standard, this price was a small one; as many allies were well aware, if anyone had the right to complain, it was the United States. For these reasons, transatlantic harmony on NATO defense obligations was maintained, and the West Europeans were inclined to accept Washington’s economic policies as an expression of legitimate national interests.

In the critical area of alliance defense planning, the West Europeans took heart at Carter’s reaffirmation of extended deterrence, and they developed a greater appreciation for NATO’s doctrine of forward defense and flexible response. With transatlantic support of MC 14/3 improving, military strategy debates slid further into the background. During Carter’s tenure, the main defense issues confronting NATO were programmatic in nature, and the allies supported Carter’s efforts to bolster NATO’s military posture. Surmounting their initial misgivings, they endorsed both nuclear modernization and the LTDP’s emphasis on enhanced conventional strength. The effect was to strengthen NATO’s unity, thereby creating a climate of opinion that better enabled the alliance to deal with the Soviet Union and Western economic problems.

The West Europeans did not share the enthusiasm for a rapid military buildup that took hold in Washington after 1979, but during Carter’s tenure, they did slowly increase their defense spending. As Table 16.4 displays, allied spending rose by an annual average of 2.45% in real terms. This rate was less than the LTDP’s goal of 3% annually, but the allies did show a steady upward track, reaching 3% in 1981. France, which officially kept its distance from the
Table 16.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low countries</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flank nations</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allied totals</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO totals</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes U.S. and Canada.

LTDP, was one of NATO's leaders. West Germany's performance was about average, and by 1979, the British had reversed their mid-1970s practice of steadily declining defense spending. The Low Countries fell well short of the LTDP’s standard, suggesting a worrisome pattern that NATO’s military fortunes and defense burdens increasingly were being entrusted to the major powers. The flank nations’ annual percentage, by contrast, was surprisingly high, but their total defense spending still remained quite low.\(^{13}\)

With Carter’s departure, the LTDP came to an end before its intended long-term effects could be judged. Even in 1981, a declining momentum was becoming noticeable as American attention turned toward the Persian Gulf. Nevertheless, the statistics suggest that the LTDP did have a positive effect on allied and NATO-wide defense spending. In the mid-1970s, allied defense spending had been rising at about 1.6% annually, and with U.S. defense budgets still declining, NATO-wide spending was actually shrinking by about 1% annually. The LTDP helped reverse this pattern, thereby sending a deterrent signal to the USSR that NATO was answering the call to compete militarily.

Equally important, the allied spending increases helped maintain alliance burden-sharing arrangements at their traditional levels. The United States still continued to pay about one-half of NATO’s conventional defense costs, a situation that led it to spend a far larger portion of GDP on defense than did the allies: 5.5% vs. 3.5%. By increasing their spending, however, the allies at least were helping ensure that the emerging U.S. military buildup did not result in an even wider burden-sharing gap.

Their growing defense budgets also enabled the allies to accelerate their modernization programs. As of the mid-1970s, the allies were spending only about 25% of their defense budgets on new equipment, but by 1981, the level had risen to about 33% of their now-larger budgets. The result was a combined 45% increase in acquisition spending, thus allowing the allies to purchase more new weapons. This greater budgetary freedom came at a fortuitous time because the allies, like the United States, were themselves entering a new modern-

\(^{13}\)See DoD, Report on Allied Contributions to the Common Defense: 1990.
ization cycle in which a number of high performance ground and air weapons were becoming available. Examples include new main battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, attack helicopters, anti-tank missiles, and such modern combat aircraft as the F-16, Tornado, and Mirage 2000. In the same way that U.S. forces were improving, these weapons promised to enhance allied conventional defense capabilities, thus helping fulfill Carter's vision for NATO.

In summary, NATO went through a difficult period in the 1970s, but by the end of the decade, the trend lines for both U.S. and allied forces were finally moving in the right direction. Just as Carter does not deserve all the blame for the failures of the 1970s, he also must share the credit for the successes, including the upward swing at the decade's end. The Nixon and Ford administrations also had tried to lead NATO toward greater defense preparations. If their efforts fell short of immediate success, they did keep the alliance together, and helped set the stage for the new climate of opinion that began emerging in Carter's tenure. The experience of the 1970s pointed to the importance of bipartisanship and consistency in U.S. foreign policy.

THE EVOLVING MILITARY BALANCE IN EUROPE

The Carter administration left office not having done a good job at managing the public debate over the international military balance. Early in his tenure, Carter had acquired the stigma of being soft on defense, and although many of his decisions bolstered the U.S. military posture, he was never able to shake this image. For his part, Brown produced analyses that were as compelling as Schlesinger's products, but these too never seemed to catch hold in the public domain. To a degree, American politics had become a media event, and because both men were far from media stars, they did not perform well at public relations.

Partly for this reason, the Carter administration found its defense policy more vulnerable to conservative attack than the situation merited. Early in its tenure, the administration failed to project the moderately upbeat interpretation of the U.S.-Soviet military balance that was needed to justify its restrained defense program. When it switched to a more expansive defense policy later, its efforts came across not as a sign of bold leadership, but rather as a weak refutation of its own strategic thinking. Beyond doubt, this failure at image-building left Ronald Reagan holding the high ground in shaping the debate over national security policy.

The 1980 presidential election brought about a sea change in U.S. defense policy. Its theatrical character, however, did little to shed light on the exact nature of the force balance. With debate raging across the United States, confusion reigned not only over the current defense situation, but also over how the complex military trends now under way would affect the future.

Controversy was greatest in the realm of strategic nuclear forces. Because of its massive buildup since the mid-1960s, the Soviet Union now deployed 1400 ICBMs, 950 SLBMs, and 150 strategic bombers, totaling about 7000 nuclear warheads. The U.S. arsenal stood at 1054 ICBMs, 656 SLBMs, and 360 bombers,
for a total of about 9000 warheads. The Soviet Union thus had a lead in total launchers as well as throw-weight and megatonnage, but the United States still led in warheads. Although the prevailing consensus held that essential equivalence still existed, experts hotly debated what the trends meant for the future.

The incoming Reagan administration embraced the alarming appraisal that the U.S. posture was becoming vulnerable to a Soviet first strike and was falling behind in counterforce and escalatory potential. The Carter administration disputed this claim. Brown's posture statements regularly produced quantitative data showing that the United States could retaliate effectively if the Soviets struck first. In his FY82 report, for example, Brown's analyses suggested that even in the extreme case of a Soviet surprise attack that caught U.S. forces not yet on full alert, the United States could still strike back with a powerful blow against residual Soviet forces and industrial targets. In the more likely event that American forces were on fully generated alert, the U.S. retaliatory potential would be all the stronger, and would match that of the USSR even though the Soviets had struck first. In Brown's view, these data provided grounds for reassurance, but not complacency, and he stressed the need to continue modernizing U.S. forces and to pursue SALT negotiations.14

Indeed, the ongoing Soviet nuclear buildup had been sufficiently worrisome to lead even the sanguine Carter administration to initiate a major change in U.S. nuclear strategy and targeting doctrine, one that carried the Schlesinger reforms a step further. This change took place in late 1979, when Carter issued PD-59, the product of a lengthy 18-month review of the strategic balance. Brown dubbed the new concept the "countervailing strategy," suggesting a conscious focus on maintaining competitive status with the Soviet Union. The new strategy called for a survivable deterrent posture that could do far more than simply launch a reflexive retaliatory blow against Soviet cities. It endorsed a posture that could absorb a Soviet attack and still provide multiple targeting options, including the capacity to strike Soviet military and industrial targets, to climb the ladder of escalation effectively, and to fight a prolonged war of several exchanges. Beyond this, the countervailing strategy proclaimed that U.S. forces were to remain equal to Soviet forces in appearance as well as reality. In proclaiming a more demanding standard for "essential equivalence," PD-59 aimed to deny the Soviets any semblance of nuclear superiority that might translate into political advantages in peace or crisis.

To implement this strategy, Carter and Brown bequeathed a nuclear defense program that was far more ambitious than what they had envisioned in 1977, or that Schlesinger had contemplated. The centerpiece was the M-X/MPS force, which called for procurement of 200 M-X missiles, each with ten warheads capable of killing hardened Soviet targets. In an effort to enhance the M-X's sur-

vivability, each missile design was to be based on a racetrack with 23 separate shelters, thereby compelling the Soviets to shoot at fully 4600 targets if their goal was to destroy the M-X. Additionally, Carter beefed up U.S. bomber forces by pushing rapid procurement of cruise missiles for the aging B-52s, and by launching development of the "stealth bomber," a technologically sophisticated aircraft capable of evading detection by Soviet radars. The new bomber, named the B-2, was to leapfrog the B-1, which Carter persistently stiff-armed. Finally, Carter continued to procure new Trident SSBN submarines at a pace of one per year and authorized development of the hard-target-capable D-5 missile for the Tridents. These programs were insufficient to satisfy the incoming Reagan administration, but Brown claimed that they were adequate to ensure the U.S. deterrent for the future.

Brown stated that the countervailing strategy was partly intended to underwrite NATO's doctrine of flexible response. He thereby acknowledged the continued importance of U.S. strategic forces in providing extended deterrence coverage over Western Europe. He left no doubt, however, that the United States had long since lost the nuclear superiority that might enable NATO to compensate for conventional weakness by resorting to strategic nuclear escalation. This situation, he stated, would remain the case regardless of whatever nuclear modernization programs the United States decided to pursue.

A similar situation existed for NATO's theater nuclear forces. NATO still deployed a massive posture of over 7,000 tactical and theater warheads, and the newly created Pershing II/GLCM missile program promised to bolster that capacity to match the SS-20 and strike the USSR itself. During the 1970s, however, the Soviet Union had carried out a full-scale modernization campaign that deployed not only the SS-20s, but also new shorter-range missiles and nuclear tube artillery systems. As a result, NATO faced a situation of rough parity here as well, and this situation did not promise to change with the deployment of the Pershing II/GLCM missiles. NATO's theater posture remained sufficient to deter a Soviet nuclear attack, but it no longer provided confidence that a non-nuclear attack would be deterred, much less defeated. On this important matter, the Carter and Reagan teams did not disagree.15

Nuclear parity thus left NATO confronting the perennial problem of its vulnerable conventional defense posture in Central Europe. During the early and mid-1970s, NATO had improved its forces less rapidly than did the Soviets, who attained a quite vigorous improvement rate by adding a steady stream of more weapons and new models to their force structure. The result was diminished confidence in NATO's security, but Western experts disagreed sharply on how far the Central European balance had deteriorated. By 1981 NATO at last was picking up pace, yet the Soviets were continuing to improve as well. The critical issue was whether NATO was gaining ground, falling behind, or staying about equal.

15Data taken from DoD publications, including Soviet Military Power, 1983.
Table 16.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NATO</th>
<th>USSR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1985*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S./U.K. SLBMs</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. F-111 bombers</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K. Vulcan bombers</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pershing II</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLCM</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total launchers</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total warheads</td>
<td>1352</td>
<td>1812</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*DoD estimate; Vulcan bombers assumed to carry two warheads apiece. French forces are excluded.

The analytical task was complicated by the West’s shifting appraisals of the Soviet/Warsaw Pact military threat. In the early 1970s, a standard Western estimate was that the Warsaw Pact could launch a full 90-division attack in Central Europe about one month after mobilization. By the late 1970s, this estimate had shrunk to only two weeks, and some experts were contending that a smaller attack could be launched even quicker. Indeed, many senior NATO commanders felt that an unreinforced GSFG might come across the Inter-German border within 4–5 days in an effort to catch NATO by surprise. In 1980, the Persian Gulf entered the analytical equation. Now some credited the Soviet Union with being able to attack in Central Europe and southwestern Asia simultaneously, with only a few days or weeks of warning to NATO.

Speeding up the day on which war was expected and then introducing a whole second theater increased NATO’s fear of the Warsaw Pact military threat. This more worrisome appraisal did not come about, however, because of major increases in Soviet manpower readiness levels and mobilization capabilities, which remained relatively constant during the 1970s. To a degree, Soviet readiness had improved, but not so far as to make a fully mobilized attack something that could be achieved overnight. To some extent, the shifting U.S. assessment was a product of ever-gloomier estimates of enemy buildup rates and strategy ambitions, all of which were safe-sided, open to interpretation, and adopted partly for programmatic reasons. These new paper estimates, in turn, created the impression that even with the LTDP, the West was rapidly falling behind in the military competition. No matter how hard NATO worked at improving its forces, it seemingly could not strengthen them fast enough to keep pace with its own accelerating intelligence treadmill.

Mobilization rates, of course, were a critical factor in assessing the balance. When controversy over them was set aside, however, a more positive appraisal rose to the surface. Overall, the two blocs as of 1980 seemed to be improving their ground and air forces at about the same pace, and NATO might even have been making a small net gain. The reason was straightforward. The two sides were now replacing worn out equipment at parallel rates, fast enough to offset...
normal obsolescence. Because the new ground equipment of both blocs was assessed to be of comparable quality, their land forces seemed to be improving by similar margins. In the air balance, meanwhile, NATO’s new aircraft were assessed as being qualitatively better than the earlier generation models that the Soviets were still producing. Moreover, the United States was also implementing programs to speed its ground and air reinforcement rate. These two developments worked together to tip the competitive scales somewhat in NATO’s favor.  

A cloud of uncertainty surrounded the whole process of trend analysis, thereby denying NATO precise information about what the future held for the military balance. For example, either side might elect to speed up or slow down its modernization programs, which would produce quite different trend lines. Also, experts had differing interpretations of what the data meant. Techniques for assigning numerical scores to new and untested weapon systems were based on subjective judgment as well as technical studies. Some analysts argued that NATO’s new ground and air weapons were better, compared to Soviet weapons, than these techniques suggested. Other analysts countered that the Soviets, seeing NATO catching up, would add more weapons and forces to the Warsaw Pact’s inventory. The result, they said, would be both a quantitative and qualitative gain for the Soviets, enough to offset NATO’s improvements and possibly exceed them.

Even if NATO was now improving more rapidly than the Warsaw Pact, this development did not mean that it was about to achieve a comfortable margin of safety anytime soon. In buildup scenarios postulating a full enemy attack after 2–4 weeks of mobilization, the Warsaw Pact was expected to remain numerically superior in ground forces by a margin of nearly 2:1 and to have rough parity in the air. NATO’s qualitative edge was expected to reduce somewhat the resulting disparity in combat power, but exactly how much was unclear. Balance analysis continued to remain hostage to debates not only about weapon systems, but also about force-to-space relationships, operational doctrine, support forces, leadership, training, morale, and blind luck. As a result, technical analysis was able to assess the materiel strength of the two military blocs, but it was hard-pressed to predict their performance in a war. The balance of materiel, however, was not grounds for high optimism about NATO’s prospects.

Figure 16.1 illustrates the adverse force-level dynamics of the ground balance in Central Europe in the late 1970s. It displays force levels on both sides in divisions during the buildup process. For both sides, three independent brigades are counted as a division; combat power is measured in WEI/WUV scores, which take different inventories and weapons quality into account. At the time, common estimates held that the Warsaw Pact probably could assemble about 90 divisions at the Central Region front after about 2–4 weeks of mobilization and reinforcement. Soviet military strategy evidently called for an attack to be launched as early as possible. Even an attack launched 2–4 weeks after mobilization promised to pose a serious threat to NATO’s security.

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Figure 16.1—Central Region Ground Balance: 1980 (Illustrative)

To defend against this threat, NATO did not need to match the enemy in numbers, but it did require enough ground forces to execute a forward defense strategy by forming a strong front line backed up by sizable operational reserves. This requirement equaled to about 45 divisions within 2–3 weeks of mobilization, and a total of 50–60 divisions after 4–6 weeks, enough to reduce the adverse force ratio to about 1.50:1. As the chart suggests, NATO by no means was grossly short of meeting these requirements. Nevertheless, NATO’s slow buildup rate, caused by the lack of more allied forces and the lengthy time needed to send American reinforcements from the United States, left NATO about 6–9 divisions short throughout the critical first six weeks. Eventually enough U.S. forces would have been deployed to shore up NATO’s defense, but in the interim, the lack of ground strength would have left NATO vulnerable. Because fully 30 divisions would have been needed to form a strong front wall guarding the FRG’s border, NATO especially would have lacked the reserves needed to replace losses and contain breakthroughs. This lack of reserves, creating deficiencies in depth and staying power, was a core reason for NATO’s worries about its conventional defense prospects.¹⁷

The Carter administration argued that although the Soviets could not be confident of military victory in a war, NATO would continue to face serious risks in Central Europe, and vigilance therefore was still needed. Brown, for example, was later to characterize the balance as an uncertain but doubtful proposition. Senior NATO military officers, had they expressed themselves in probabilistic terms, likely would have rated NATO’s chances as lower. On this point,

many incoming Reagan administration officials seemed to agree, and in terms
that emphasized NATO's enduring vulnerabilities.\footnote{See Brown, \textit{Thinking About National Security}, Chap. 6.}

Even so, the facts suggest that NATO had turned an important strategic cor-
ner. By building up its defense effort, it was now beginning to match the Sovi-
et's, blow for blow, in conventional and nuclear-force improvement rates.
Carter had helped forge this response, and now Reagan was proposing that the
West should begin swinging even harder. To some, the entire arms race in Cen-
tral Europe suggested a mindless stalemate. NATO's policy, however, had a
powerful strategic logic. Although the grueling military competition would go
on, the USSR could no longer count on amassing an ever-growing ascendency
of the sort that might influence security politics there.

NATO's decision to compete coequally frustrated the USSR's policy goals
that lay behind its hideously expensive buildup. The choice of what to do next
was the Soviet government's. Because the USSR was far less wealthy than the
NATO nations, it could perpetuate the military standoff with the West only at
further major cost to its economic development, especially in consumer goods.
Since its communist political system (and that of its allies) rested on a founda-
tion of questionable legitimacy, it could scarcely afford to pay this cost. Yet,
led by a stodgy ruling elite and motivated by an entrenched bureaucracy that
fed off a mammoth defense industry, the Soviet government decided to con-
tinue the military competition with no letup for either side. As the 1980s un-
folded, this decision was to prove fateful in ways that neither the USSR nor
NATO anticipated.
Strategic Resurgence and Sudden Victory:
The 1980s
By virtue of his landslide victory over Carter, Ronald Reagan swept into office in early 1981 with what many saw as a national mandate to rebuild America's military strength and resolve. Eager to carry out this mandate, Reagan proclaimed that the Cold War had entered a new and more dangerous phase requiring far greater Western vigilance. Branding the Soviet Union a malevolent outcast, he promised to reverse the "decade of neglect" with strong policies aimed at restoring containment, deterrence, and respect for American power. True to his word, he immediately launched new departures in military strategy and diplomacy that marched boldly in conservative directions, bringing with them equal measures of clarity and controversy. His foreign policy, it quickly became obvious, was going to be marked by a single-minded activism that had not been seen in many years.

As Reagan well knew, domestic support was a fleeting commodity, capable of disappearing rapidly if his administration stumbled. Reagan was proposing not only to refashion U.S. foreign policy on Cold War principles, but also to return domestic policy to the conservative precepts of limited government, diminished welfare statism, and enhanced free enterprise. The prospect of conservative reforms in both arenas was guaranteed to provoke intense opposition that, unless neutralized, could build quickly and paralyze the new administration's national security efforts. The temporary honeymoon normally given to a new president provided Reagan early freedom of action, but activism over the long term was critical, and it could be achieved only by developing a reputation for effectiveness.

To carry out his foreign policy of standing up to the Soviet Union, Reagan also required support from the West European allies, not all of whom shared his visions. With Cold War tensions returning to Europe as a result of NATO's INF decision and the USSR's heavy-handed opposition to democratic reform in Poland, the allies had been moving in an anti-Soviet direction in recent years. Nonetheless, most of them were not yet prepared to fully scuttle détente and arms control negotiations. Moreover, their own commitment to welfare statism left many nations nervous about Reagan's economic policies. Reagan's switch to conservative economics at home meant that the U.S. government would be pursuing similar policies abroad, in ways aimed at influencing the West Europeans to embrace policies unsuited to their tastes. Especially for West Germany, Reagan's two-fisted conservatism in security and economics doubled the
discomfort inflicted on the allies, and meant that their cooperation was anything but certain.

The Reagan era is a story of how these constraints were surmounted—through skill, cooperative allies, and good luck—to achieve successes in foreign policy that surpassed not only the expectations of his critics, but probably those of Reagan himself. Ignoring angry outcries at home and abroad, Reagan spent his initial years ramming home many of his initiatives in defense, diplomacy, and economics. Faced with mounting controversy as the middle years approached, he responded by embracing more moderate policies aimed at restoring domestic tranquility and alliance cohesion. As his tenure drew to a close, Reagan capitalized on Gorbachev’s peace feelers by aggressively pursuing an end to the Cold War. Shortly after Reagan departed, diplomatic rapprochement gave way to the collapse of communism. This development reflected Reagan’s pressures but was also a product of Western policy throughout the Cold War and of the deeply rooted contradictions in communism itself. What began as a decade of Western resurgence ended, to almost everyone’s surprise, in sudden victory for the alliance.

POLICY TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION

Assuming power as a dedicated conservative, Reagan found awaiting him in Washington an ideal political setting. In addition to winning the election by a landslide, Reagan brought with him a Republican majority in the Senate, the first in 26 years. The dispirited Democrats still controlled the House of Representatives, but even there the conservatives held an ideological majority. Furthermore, Reagan’s cabinet appointments shared the Cold War spirit that the new president brought to Washington. His Secretary of State was Alexander Haig, whose former position as SACEUR reflected his tough-minded stance toward the Soviet Union. Reagan’s National Security Adviser was Richard Allen, and his Director of Central Intelligence was William Casey—both noted Cold Warriors. His Secretary of Defense was Caspar Weinberger, a man whose nickname “Cap the Knife”—referring to his budget cuts—belied his true attitudes toward defense. As a result of these senior advisers and support on Capitol Hill, Reagan was given the political tools to lead the United States down the path of strategic resurgence.

Affecting Washington’s willingness to follow Reagan was the tense international situation. In the months before Reagan took power, U.S.-Soviet relations had slid downhill. Shortly after the Kremlin invaded Afghanistan in late 1979, it dismissed Carter’s warnings as “belligerent and wicked statements.” Confronted by mounting Western protests and sanctions, Brezhnev in February 1980 proclaimed that détente must continue and that “reckless imperialist forces must not be allowed to destroy its fruits.” He showed little willingness to back up his endorsement of détente with accommodating actions, however. Brezhnev said that the USSR was ready to withdraw from Afghanistan, but only when “outside interference ends.” The following month, the Soviet government rejected an EEC plan to neutralize Afghanistan in exchange for Soviet withdrawal. Similar
plans submitted by other nations were equally rejected, suggesting a determination to see the matter through regardless of how the West complained.\(^1\)

With Moscow continuously seeking to shield détente from Afghanistan’s backlash, its policy of stubborn obstinacy prevailed for all of 1980. In the spring, Brezhnev met with both Giscard d’Estaing and Schmidt and turned aside their pleas for withdrawal. Blasting Carter’s threats to beef up U.S. forces, in late June the Soviet Communist Party met in plenary session and resolved to increase the USSR’s military power “to the maximum.” In August, the USSR began jamming BBC and Voice of America broadcasts for the first time in eight years. Then in October, Brezhnev and Afghan president Karmal signed a joint statement pledging Soviet support until the opposition was crushed. Brezhnev said that Soviet troop levels in Afghanistan would be increased and that large forces would remain there until the conflict was settled. On the eve of Reagan’s arrival came another stern message when Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov said that peace was threatened by “the actions of American imperialism and the aggressive NATO bloc.”

On the day of Reagan’s inaugural address, the Soviet government continued to be led by an aging Brezhnev and a dour communist apparatchik seemingly uninterested in cooperating with the United States, especially on Reagan’s terms. The USSR’s military buildup continued unabated, arms control negotiations had all but collapsed, and the Soviet Union government thought little of rebuffing Western demands for a change of course. Events around the world, many feared, seemed to be moving in the USSR’s direction. Experts disagreed on the extent to which the Soviets were winning the global competition with the United States, and some felt that the current trends were little more than business as usual. There was little room for doubt, however, that international politics were becoming violent and that the USSR was profiting from the situation in ways that endangered Western interests.

Notwithstanding the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty that Carter had helped bring about, the Middle East remained volatile, with radical Arab powers turning toward Moscow for military assistance. Lebanon had now become the focal point of Middle East violence, with Israel and Syria engaged in air battles in a tussle for military supremacy. In the Far East, the USSR, profiting from its growing military strength in the region, was exerting pressure on Japan to diminish its security ties to the United States. The situation in Korea remained explosive, and U.S. officials there worried about a North Korean assault. In Latin America, the revolutionary Nicaraguan government, now exporting insurgency to neighboring El Salvador, was beginning to look like another Cuba. In sub-Saharan Africa, communist-supported violence continued in Angola, and Soviet influence was spreading elsewhere.

Thousands of Soviet troops were now based in Afghanistan and had embarked on a brutal effort to subjugate that nation’s mujahedden dissidents. Experts were coming to fear that the fighting would spread into Pakistan and draw Soviet soldiers onto the territory of a close American friend. Further west, the

\(^1\)See IISS analyses in *Strategic Survey*, 1979–1980.
Iranian hostage crisis had been settled, but the Persian Gulf still appeared unstable. Iran remained turbulent, hostile to the United States, and engrossed in a violent war with Iraq. It thus was still vulnerable to Soviet intervention, and Western defense planners continued to worry that Moscow might make a military move into that nation.

Accompanying this instability had come a growing presence of Soviet military forces around the world. The Soviet Navy had become particularly active. The USSR was continuing with its normal, heavy maritime operations in the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the western Pacific. Additionally, they were now conducting surveillance and antisubmarine warfare operations from bases in Vietnam, and their presence in the Indian Ocean had increased. Meanwhile, the Soviet naval presence in the waters around Cuba and other Latin American countries had increased ten-fold over the past decade, from 200 shipdays in 1970 to 2,000 in 1980.2

Equally worrisome to Washington, thousands of Soviet military advisers were now deployed beyond the USSR's borders, many aiding governments and political causes hostile to Western interests. In the Middle East and North Africa, scattered among Algeria, Iraq, Libya, South Yemen, and Syria, were fully 26,000 Soviet personnel, along with 7,000 Cubans and East Germans. In sub-Saharan Africa there were 6,000 Soviets, 26,000 Cubans, and 1,200 East Germans; fully 18,000 Cubans were deployed in Angola alone, and another 8,000 Soviets and Cubans were stationed in Ethiopia. In the western hemisphere, Soviet military aid continued to flow into Castro's Cuba; both Cuba and Nicaragua were acquiring worrisome military strength. In Nicaragua, 6,500 Cuban advisers were helping provide military aid to insurgents in El Salvador.

To the incoming Reagan administration, these trends suggested a Soviet Union that was beginning to throw its weight around. Then in February 1981 Brezhnev proposed an early meeting with Reagan and an active dialogue to ease U.S.-Soviet tensions. Shortly after, the two nations began discussing prospects for reopening arms control negotiations. The Soviet government, however, showed little willingness to budge on Afghanistan. For example, it turned down an EEC proposal for a two-stage international conference on Afghanistan with shrill denunciations of American meddling in the war there. Additionally, the USSR expressed strong hostility to Reagan's efforts to mobilize international opinion against it. Typical was a Pravda denunciation of U.S.-Chinese military cooperation, which was portrayed as having severe consequences for world peace. Meanwhile, a steady stream of radical powers (e.g., Syria and Libya) beat a path to Moscow's door, seeking military aid and sponsorship for terrorist activities.

Further contributing to the growing impasse was the deteriorating situation in Poland, which threatened to embroil Europe in the instability that seemed to be sweeping the rest of the globe.3 The upheaval had begun in July 1980, when

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higher meat prices there provoked labor unrest. By mid-August, strikes were occurring and workers from 22 factories had formed a joint committee which issued formal demands for reform. Amidst a fresh wave of labor walkouts, the Polish government allowed trade unions to be formed with the right to strike. By late September, Solidarity had been created and was seeking legal recognition. Voicing displeasure with the existing order, it soon called for reform of the secret police and openly questioned the Communist Party's leading role. This heretical statement was a bête noire and galvanized the communist government into a crackdown that drove Poland toward a messy confrontation of the kind that had produced disaster in Hungary and Czechoslovakia years before.4

Because the Polish Communist Party seemed unable to control the situation, Moscow and other Warsaw Pact capitals watched the unfolding events with deep concern. The first official sign of Soviet discontent came in late August, when Tass declared that an effort was under way to subvert socialist rule in Poland. In late October, both East Germany and Czechoslovakia restricted travel to Poland, and a few weeks later the GDR totally closed areas along the Polish border. With the USSR now openly criticizing Solidarity itself, Warsaw Pact leaders gathered in Moscow for a surprise summit on December 2. There, they renounced the use of force in Poland, but ominously, they also vowed that Poland would remain a socialist state.

Responding to this implied warning and the mounting chaos around them, the Polish Communist Party, Solidarity, and the Catholic Church all called for national unity and calm. Their appeals, however, went largely unanswered, and events in Poland continued sliding downhill as 1981 unfolded. February saw widespread strikes, leading to decisions by the beleaguered Polish government to dismiss 30 provincial workers and to recognize a rural Solidarity and a student union. In March, a brief nationwide strike took place in response to police violence against demonstrators in Bydgoszcz. April and May witnessed further unrest, additional gains by Solidarity, and budding signs of reform within the Polish Communist Party.

In early June, Polish Communist Party leader Kania denounced the "frightening trend of anti-Sovietism" in his nation, but to little effect. As a gesture of conciliation, the party's ruling Politbiuro was purged a month later, and secret balloting resulted in 40 Solidarity members being elected to the Central Committee. Nevertheless, plans were also announced to quadruple food prices, and in response, more strikes broke out. By early August, thousands were protesting in the streets, government-Solidarity talks had broken down, and Poland's industrial centers at times were brought to a virtual standstill.

Alarmed by these events, the Soviet government and its Warsaw Pact allies tried to aid Poland's economic plight, but they also began turning the military screws. The process began in late January, when the USSR accused Solidarity of

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4See the IISS account in Strategic Survey, 1980.
using physical violence and other criminal activity to undermine communist rule. Two weeks later, Soviet and GDR forces conducted joint maneuvers in the eastern GDR near the Polish border. The following month, the Warsaw Pact held a large staff and command exercise, including Soviet, Polish, East German, and Czech forces. Early June saw joint Polish-Soviet exercises in northern Poland, and August witnessed a large Soviet naval exercise in the Baltic Sea. Then came the culmination. In early September, the USSR held its largest military exercises since World War II, a week-long training involving thousands of troops conducting maneuvers near the Polish border. Unmistakably, these exercises suggested not only crude political pressure, but also preparations for outright invasion.

The West strongly protested the USSR’s increasingly provocative conduct. NATO’s first official act had come in December 1980. At this time, the foreign ministers warned that Soviet intervention in Poland would threaten détente and alter the entire international situation. The defense ministers, in turn, asked the United States to dispatch four AWACS aircraft to Western Europe to monitor the situation in Poland. Washington quickly complied with this request, thus signaling that NATO’s military readiness might increase as the Polish situation heated up. In the following months, West European leaders spoke out against Soviet pressure tactics; Helmut Schmidt was especially vocal. In early April 1981, Reagan sent a stiff letter to Brezhnev, expressing concern over Poland and Soviet military activities. In late July, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted a resolution warning Soviet and Polish authorities against using force to resolve the Polish situation.

During this period of mounting tensions, NATO tried to help Poland with economic aid, but it refrained from provocative military gestures. It did, however, give serious thought to what might be done if the Soviets did invade, and it was far from quiescent. In August, NATO conducted the largest naval exercise since the 1940s, Ocean Venture 81, which involved U.S. and allied operations in the North Atlantic. NATO continued to develop plans for its normal military exercise program that fall, to involve airlifting several thousand U.S. troops to Europe for the annual REFORGER field maneuvers. These exercises were part of NATO’s regular training routine, but they also sent a political signal of Western displeasure to Moscow.

As the Soviet government knew, NATO had stood by helplessly when Hungary and Czechoslovakia were invaded in past years, thus suggesting that Western vital interests were not engaged in Eastern Europe. The geostrategic situation had not changed greatly since then. Moreover, the West did not enjoy direct physical access to Poland. Short of outright war, it therefore would have been hard-pressed to help the Poles if Soviet tanks had come crashing into their country. Nevertheless, NATO’s nations were able to credibly threaten total suspension of economic and political contacts with the Eastern bloc. Well aware of this threat, the Soviet government evidently was reluctant to see détente come

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5The NATO AWACS program had been funded some years before, but the U.S.-built aircraft had not yet been deployed to Europe.
to a complete end, and this concern apparently did have a restraining impact. Whatever the reason, a Soviet invasion of Poland never took place, and as the fall of 1981 passed, fear of war receded.

Soviet reluctance to put the Brezhnev doctrine into effect, however, did not translate into a hands-off stance on Poland. The Soviets continued to use their many instruments to shore up Poland’s communist government, and their efforts helped bring the crisis to an uneasy conclusion. When Solidarity’s first national congress met in September, the USSR accused it of trying to seize political power. Shortly thereafter, Polish Prime Minister Jaruzelski announced his intention to use the army to crack down on lawbreakers and anti-Soviet activity. In early October, the Solidarity congress passed a resolution calling for a pluralistic political system and a freeze on price increases pending radical economic reform. The government offered to work with Solidarity to help end Poland’s food crisis, but it also dispatched troops into towns and villages to “maintain law and order.”

With strikes and violence still spreading, Solidarity leader Lech Walesa led an effort in November to calm unrest and to form a national front with the Communist Party and the Catholic Church. Jaruzelski responded by withdrawing his troops, but Polish police were used to disrupt a meeting by dissidents to form a new political party. Matters came to a head in December, when Solidarity called for a rally to protest the use of force and demanded a national referendum to determine whether Poles supported the union or the government. On December 11, Jaruzelski proclaimed martial law and placed Walesa under house arrest. Protests broke out across Poland, but Jaruzelski vigorously employed the army and police to restore order. By year’s end, communist control had been restored, and Poland seemed headed back into totalitarian rule.

The affair left the West angry and frustrated, with Washington leading the alliance in outrage. The crisis had stopped short of Soviet invasion and massive violence, and it had laid bare communism’s paper-thin support in Poland. Nonetheless, it also showed that the Eastern bloc’s communist rulers had no intention of relaxing their grip on power in exchange for Western favors. Furthermore, it cast a bright spotlight on the very real menace of Soviet military power and political intentions in Europe, thereby suggesting that Afghanistan was not an isolated event. It thus helped unveil the limits of détente in ways that brought into even deeper question the West’s diplomatic efforts of the past decade.

The deteriorating world scene confronted the West with a critical need to forge a new security policy toward the USSR. The message particularly was not lost on the United States, where it reinforced Reagan’s conservative approach to American-Soviet relations. The United States was hardly alone in its distaste for the Soviet Union’s loathsome conduct. Nevertheless, the Reagan administration and the NATO allies did not fully see eye to eye on what was to be done. Although Western Europe’s relations with the USSR had also slid downhill during 1980–1981, the falloff was not as bad as what took place in U.S.-Soviet relations. Like Washington, the allies felt that a convincing deterrent message had to be sent to Moscow, but they also had developed a pragmatic willingness to coexist
with communism as long as it stayed on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain. Fearing that a military confrontation would bring disaster and hoping that a relaxed environment might further erode authoritarian rule in Eastern Europe, they wanted to keep the détente process alive. This meant renewing the East-West dialogue, including arms control negotiations, once the dust over Poland had settled.

The West Europeans looked to the United States to lead the alliance in establishing a balanced security policy, and what they saw made them nervous. Reagan was an unknown commodity who often came across as a conservative ideologue of seemingly intemperate views. Many allied governments feared a repetition of the unpredictable and wildly fluctuating behavior that so often had characterized past American administrations in their early days. What they wanted from Washington was a blending of firmness and restraint, but they were uncertain about whether they would get it.

With the Polish and Afghan crises fueling White House anger as 1981 unfolded, Reagan responded by crafting a resurgent U.S. security policy that, while controversial, left little doubt about its vision and clarity. This policy saw the East-West relationship primarily in competitive terms, and was anchored on the proposition that a too-passive Western alliance had been suffering steady reversals in recent years. Like many of his generation, Reagan was haunted by the failure to stand up to Hitler in the 1930s. Profoundly distrustful of communist totalitarianism, he feared that the West’s passivity was producing modern-day appeasement that fed Soviet hegemonic ambitions. He felt that Western resolve had declined because of lost strategic bearings, and because the West had been victimized by the politics of marginalism, negativism, and accommodationism. In an effort to halt this dangerous erosion, he proposed to return the Western alliance to the clear priorities and sound principles of the past.\(^6\)

To his critics at home and abroad, Reagan was an intellectual lightweight who failed to understand the meaning of contemporary events and the constraints they imposed. Moreover, Reagan seemed to pay insufficient attention to detail and thus allegedly did not grasp the multiple considerations that had to be balanced in coordinating separate but interrelated policies and programs. Regardless of whether these allegations were true, however, Reagan brought offsetting strengths to the White House. Among these, his personal demeanor inspired renewed respect for the presidency, and his values and visions helped rekindle national morale. Moreover, Reagan had the ability to see the big picture from a fresh and critical perspective. He had a unique capacity to ask whether important goals were being achieved or instead were being lost in a thicket of compromised aspirations and secondary considerations. Along with this focus, he brought a heretical ability to probe the common wisdom and to critically examine the judgments on which current policies were based.

\(^6\)In his memoirs, Caspar Weinberger reports that the Polish crisis was an important factor in stiffening the incoming Reagan administration’s resolve to stand up to the USSR in Europe. See Caspar Weinberger. *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon*, Warner Books, New York, 1990.
As a result, Reagan refused to be impressed by convention or by arguments on behalf of continuity for its own sake. Unlike most political leaders, he was perfectly willing to call for wholesale policy changes when high priority goals were being sacrificed, original conditions had changed, or the premises underlying current approaches were fatally flawed. Time and again while in office, he showed the capacity to innovate in fundamental ways, thereby brushing aside the constraints and controversies that would have paralyzed less bold leaders. Sometimes Reagan seemed to move backward in time, but on other occasions, he leaped dramatically forward in ways that astounded his opponents. Confronted with the security environment that existed in 1981, he judged that the situation called for a return to past values, and he was prepared to employ his presidential powers to lead the United States and NATO in that direction.

Reagan placed heavy emphasis on the traditional goals of a strong Western alliance, containment, and deterrence. Although he understood the need for restraint and the importance of cooperating with the USSR in many areas, he distanced himself from the Metternichian notions of equilibrium that had characterized Kissinger's years. As Kissinger had used the term, "equilibrium" implied consensual management by powers with equally legitimate interests. It further implied a negotiatory policy of marginalist adjustments that preserved the status quo in a manner reflecting the balance of power. Reagan acknowledged the requirement for a balance of power if nothing better could be achieved. But he did not regard the Soviet empire as legitimate, he did not endorse the status quo, and he did not propose to work with the Kremlin to jointly manage international affairs on behalf of equilibrium.

Reagan's preferred vision of stability embraced a concept straight out of the 1950s. Anchored on unassailable Western strength, this concept envisioned waging the Cold War in ways that ultimately would achieve a global settlement on favorable terms. The new stability was to produce an end to the USSR's chauvinism and hegemonic ambitions, a receding of Soviet power, and the Kremlin's acceptance of legitimate Western interests. This vision left him opposed to a series of incrementalist bargains that softened the hard edges of East-West frictions but left the Soviet bloc intact and Western resolve weakened. In particular, he did not want to act in ways that portrayed communist rule as moral, and he was opposed to compromises that rewarded Soviet expansionism.7

Reagan felt that the West recently had become entangled in a self-imposed web of policy constraints that inhibited it from attending to its growing security requirements. Opposed to ambiguous policies that muddled the West's priorities, he was especially contemptuous of détente. He believed that détente had brought illusions that served to cloud Western awareness of the Soviet Union's malevolent intentions. Judging that the time had arrived for the West firmly to stand its ground, his security policy abandoned détente as a re-

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spectable term. Reagan proposed to throw down the gauntlet with the Soviets. To implement this policy, he called for the Western alliance to be reinvigorated under strong U.S. leadership and to be recast around anti-Soviet conservative principles.

A more astute man than his critics alleged, Reagan recognized the need for peaceful coexistence in order to avoid nuclear war. Accordingly, he had no intention of trying prematurely to roll back the Soviet empire, and he sought to avoid armed conflict or even crisis confrontations. Although motivated by ideology, his zeal did not extend to promoting military adventurism against dangerous adversaries. In particular, he acknowledged that the crises over Poland and Afghanistan had to be handled with diplomatic skill and settled peacefully. Also, he was prepared to cooperate with the Soviet Union in areas that offered tangible benefits to the West without contributing to the Kremlin's foreign agenda. For example, he showed a surprising streak of pragmatism when he reopened grain sales to the USSR in 1981, citing the need to protect the economic interests of American farmers.

Nevertheless, Reagan also felt that the West should set aside hope for immediate accommodation with the USSR and embark wholeheartedly on the task of rebuilding its strength and resolve. The centerpiece of this policy was to be an American military buildup that warned and unnerved the Soviets, and he hoped that the allies would follow suit. Accompanying this buildup were to be policy initiatives which cut off the Soviets from economic ties with the West that were militarily beneficial. Beyond this, Reagan's policy proposed to isolate the Soviet Union from the Western community and to treat it as a moral outcast. His term "evil empire," introduced in 1983, thus was more than a slogan. It said worlds not only about Reagan's perceptions of the USSR but also about the thrust of his policy goals.  

Reagan was willing to continue the dialogue on arms control. Indeed, 1981 saw decisions by his administration to open talks on intermediate nuclear forces in Europe, to reignite strategic arms talks, and to continue with the ossified MBFR dialogue. He proposed, however, to negotiate on vastly different terms than in the recent past. The old policy of seeking only marginal adjustments in the name of negotiability was to be abandoned. In particular, Reagan was opposed to agreements that merely placed a ceiling on inventories and, in their wake, left an overly relaxed West facing a still-existing threat. Reagan vastly preferred accords producing deep cuts that truly stabilized the military balance by stripping the USSR of its offensive power while leaving the West's defensive capacity intact. This stance became clear as early as Reagan's first week in office, when he scuttled the SALT II Treaty and announced that future

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agreements would have to reduce significantly the number of warheads on both sides. Replacing the acronym SALT came “START”—strategic arms “reductions” as opposed to SALT’s “limitations”—a term that reflected his philosophy to a tee.

Under Reagan’s approach, deep cuts would not be symmetrical. Because the Soviets had been pursuing military superiority, they were expected to do the lion’s share of the cutting. The West also would reduce, but not as much and only in ways consistent with its legitimate defense requirements. Reagan was in no hurry to reach settlements, and he refused to compromise his principles on the altar of political expediency. The choice thus was for the Soviets to make. If they were prepared for meaningful arms control under the West’s new terms, the White House was willing to reciprocate. But until satisfactory accords were achieved, the West would proceed to build up its forces unencumbered by false hopes for détente.

Reagan’s security policy, which was criticized by many in the United States as too conservative and outdated, was also greeted with mixed reviews in Western Europe. Its attraction lay in its promise of vision, strong leadership, consistency, and firmness toward the USSR. Tired of Carter’s wavering, many allies welcomed Reagan’s offer of greater steadiness and a vigorous alliance. Notwithstanding these positive features, however, Reagan’s conservative stance had several downsides. Most immediately, it threatened to cut off profitable West European trade relations with the USSR and potentially Eastern Europe as well. Indeed, when the West Germans in late 1981 signed a deal with Moscow to build a natural gas pipeline from the USSR to Western Europe, Reagan intervened crudely in an effort to induce them to cancel it. The incident was to deeply bruise U.S.-West European relations. Especially because it came only a few months after the White House grain sale decision, it left Bonn and other allied capitals wondering about Reagan’s fairness.

To many West Europeans, trade frustrations were only the tip of the iceberg. Because the Soviets had been hard-nosed in arms control talks, Reagan’s equally tough approach seemingly meant that the door was now closed to any agreements. The absence of a meaningful arms control dialogue, in turn, practically guaranteed tensions ahead. More fundamentally, Reagan’s policy seemed to violate the principle of balance as the West Europeans defined that term. To them, Reagan’s policy tilted so heavily in the direction of confrontation with the USSR that it seemed to doom whatever prospects still existed for accommodation. At worst, Reagan’s policy threatened to bring about renewed East-West political rivalry in Europe, and possibly a return to the crises that few West Europeans relished. At best, it seemed to offer a future of renewed military competition that, apart from producing parity at even higher armaments levels, would achieve little by way of genuine progress. In the process, Western Europe’s economic prosperity likely would suffer.9

Reagan's security agenda, moreover, was reinforced by economic goals that called into question the basic policies of many West European countries for the past two decades. Reagan seemingly wanted to wind back the economic clock and return to the simpler times of the past, and this lesson applied not only to the United States but indirectly to Western Europe as well. On both continents, federal interventionism and the welfare state were to be abandoned. In their place were to come fiscal and monetary policies that scaled back government spending, favored free enterprise, waged war against inflation, and promoted industrial growth. Transatlantic trade, monetary, and exchange rate policies were to depart from their recent emphasis on regulatory incrementalism. The new policies were to promote national economic reconstruction on the basis of free-market principles. All this harkened back to the halcyon days of the 1950s. Many West Europeans, however, questioned the wisdom and feasibility of escaping to the past.\(^{10}\)

Because of their firm goals and clear lines, Reagan's security and economic policies sharply divided liberals and conservatives in Western Europe (as they did in the United States). Reagan's policies went down best in Britain, where recently elected Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher agreed with not only Reagan's security policy but also his conservative views on economic reform. In France, Reagan confronted a less amenable ally whose government still embraced welfare statism and central planning. A member of the EEC, France was unenthused about having Washington dictate an economic agenda, conservative or not. Because France's economy was relatively weak, however, the idea of industrial renewal and enhanced productivity had appeal. Moreover, France's socialists were coming to criticize the Soviet Union in ways that resembled Gaullist attitudes. Consequently, Reagan's anti-Soviet stance struck a responsive chord. Indeed, when Socialist Francois Mitterand was elected to the Presidency in 1981, he adopted a stern stance toward the Soviets, thereby signaling harmony with the U.S. in security policy if not necessarily in economic policy.

In West Germany, Reagan's approach had a far more complicated impact. With Germany's economy booming and the deutsche mark strong, Bonn felt no special need for American advice on economic growth. Indeed, it looked askance at Reagan's conservative economic agenda, which it regarded as poorly conceived and too ideological. Moreover, Reagan's security policy was an uncertain blessing. It promised to reduce West Germany's vulnerability to Soviet pressure, but it also threatened to derail détente, in which Germany had a greater stake than most allied nations. Also, Reagan's policy threatened to destabilize Germany's bitterly contested internal politics. Schmidt had won reelection to the chancellorship in late 1980, but because his SPD Party required an alliance with the FDP for a majority, his hold on power was tentative. Reagan's policy alienated the powerful liberal wing of the SPD and cast a favorable

light on the conservative CDU. It thereby undercut Schmidt's ability to lead his own party and threatened to cast German politics into a searching debate that might cause a political realignment. As a result, Schmidt's government looked upon Reagan with a particular wariness.11

THE REAGAN DEFENSE BUILDUP

Reagan's policy of strategic resurgence was destined to succeed or fail on the basis of whether it brought about a sustained American military buildup. Because of the allies' ambiguous reactions, Reagan could not be sure of their cooperation, and American military strength was the one variable over which he had a large measure of personal control. If he bolstered U.S. military might, strategic resurgence would be a partial success even if all else failed. If the United States set a clear example, moreover, the West European allies and other friendly nations would more likely accept Reagan's leadership. Otherwise, they could be expected to dismiss Reagan's talk as hollow rhetoric.

Equally important, renewed U.S. military strength was, in Reagan's eye, the key to global stability. To him, the deteriorating international situation could be traced to the USSR's growing military power, the West's enfeebled response, and the accompanying negative shifts in the force balance. Postulating that the Soviets were now on the march because they were acquiring military supremacy, Reagan reasoned that they could be influenced to exercise restraint only if the West decisively stepped up its own defense efforts. Not everyone agreed with Reagan's views on either Soviet motives or Western defense strength, but because he occupied the White House and enjoyed widespread domestic support, his was the opinion that counted.

Reagan's primary instrument for guiding this buildup was Weinberger and the conservative team that joined him in the Pentagon. Weinberger had first acquired his reputation as a budget-cutter in the late 1960s when he worked under Governor Reagan as California's Director of Finance. He added to this legacy in the early 1970s, when he served as Nixon's Director of the Office of Management and the Budget. In this post, he showed a proclivity for slashing ineffective programs, but few noticed that he was not very hard on the defense budget. By 1981 Weinberger, himself a conservative in the classical sense, had emerged as an apostle of renewed American military strength and a firm international stance aimed at reassuring allies and warning adversaries. This attitude left him perfectly willing to preside over the massive buildup that Reagan wanted.12

Weinberger's approach to staffing the Pentagon's civilian echelons reflected this philosophy. Carter's political appointees were dismissed and replaced by Reagan loyalists. Because Weinberger tended to work on policy matters, he delegated much of the detailed budgetary work to his Deputy Secretary, Frank

11See Hanrieder, Germany, America, and Europe; and Herf, War by Other Means.
12See Weinberger's memoirs, Fighting for Peace, for his attitudes upon entering the Reagan administration.
Carlucci, a seasoned federal executive with a conservative bent. Weinberger’s key OSD policy appointments went to Fred Charles Iklé, Richard Perle, and Francis (Bing) West: all conservatives of anti-Soviet and budget-building temperament. Perle particularly was a noteworthy appointment for the reason that, as Assistant Secretary for International Security Policy, he presided over both NATO affairs and negotiatory policy. A protégé of Democratic Senator Henry Jackson, Perle by 1981 had emerged as a neoconservative hawk who brought a measure of bipartisan support to the Pentagon.

Another key appointment went to John F. Lehman, Jr., who became Secretary of the Navy, a service that was slated especially to benefit from Reagan’s fiscal largess. To the key job of heading the Defense Department’s huge research and development effort, Weinberger assigned Richard DeLauer, an enthusiast for high technology. Rounding out the Weinberger team were appointees to the Comptroller and PA&E offices who would provide sound technical management but not raise policy objections to larger defense budgets.13

Equally important, Weinberger was determined to delegate considerable authority to the JCS and military services. His management philosophy was one of centralized policy formulation and decentralized program execution. Since programs are often the lifeblood of Pentagon policy, this approach translated into a willingness to give the professional military wide latitude in setting the nation’s defense agenda. Weinberger brought this philosophy to life in early 1981, when he revised the Pentagon’s PPBS process. In particular, he altered the initial planning phase of PPBS by dramatically scaling back the Secretary of Defense guidance document that the Carter administration had left behind. Weinberger instead issued relatively thin guidance that laid out policy goals but said little about specific plans and programs. This innovation, which helped strip the OSD staffs of their previous capacity to intrude into military matters, did not imply that the services were to be given free license. But it did mean that the services were to have significant discretionary authority for designing their programs and budgets, subject to Weinberger’s policy-minded review later in the PPBS cycle.

Interestingly, the men who occupied the position of Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, during Weinberger’s tenure were seasoned professionals not known for their zealous advocacy of greater defense spending. Yet all were well aware of the Defense Department’s deficiencies and welcomed not only an infusion of funds but also the enhanced authority of their own office. Weinberger inherited Air Force General David Jones, a Carter appointee who soon came under public attack for having too complacently accepted the previous administration’s allegedly anemic budgets. Some conservatives demanded his ouster, but when other observers pointed out that it was bad precedent to fire senior military officers for being loyal to their civilian leaders, Jones kept his job. In mid-1982, Jones was replaced by Army General John Vessey, who later gave way to Navy

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Admiral William Crowe; both were respected officers who ably served Reagan and Weinberger.

The military services responded to Weinberger’s management reforms and amenable budgetary policies with gratitude. Not surprisingly, the military’s response was to throw off the shackles of the previous era and to call for a major upswing in defense spending that went well beyond what even the Carter administration’s last budget had in mind. Whether their specific priorities met the nation’s military requirements was a matter of debate, but the services undeniably were moving in policy directions that found favor in the White House. The same could be said for U.S. military commanders in the field, who were invited by Weinberger to voice their opinions on national defense matters that affected their own commands. This worked to NATO’s benefit because it allowed SACEUR, then U.S. Army General Bernard Rogers, to bring to Weinberger’s attention measures that benefited U.S. and allied forces in Europe.

With the Pentagon’s active collaboration, the White House moved quickly. Early in 1981, Reagan proposed to enlarge the FY81 and FY82 defense budgets— inherited from Carter—by about $20 billion in both budget authority and outlays. This was an appreciable amount, the bulk of which went into military pay hikes and readiness increases rather than long-term procurement. The White House also indicated that a major policy review was under way that could be expected to launch a multiyear defense buildup the following year. It further announced the first U.S. defense stockpile buildup in 20 years through the purchase of strategic materials and metals. That spring, Reagan also unveiled a record security assistance program totaling $7 billion. In addition to large aid packages for Israel, Egypt, and the Persian Gulf region, fighter planes were to be sold to Turkey, Pakistan, South Korea, and Taiwan. In a new departure, AWACS aircraft were to be sold to Saudi Arabia, and equally important, a decision was announced to begin providing military aid to China. Finally, Reagan announced his decision to build the neutron bomb and store it in the United States, thereby bringing NATO’s long-standing debate over this weapon to an end.

Throughout the summer of 1981 the Pentagon worked feverishly on the FY83 defense budget, which was to lay out the administration’s five-year defense program and overall military strategy. The fiscal guidance provided by the White House—$222 billion in budget authority for FY83—was generous, but even so, some tough decisions had to be made. The military services were prepared to spend at levels above White House guidance, and therefore priorities had to be established among their competing claims. Furthermore, complex plans had to be drawn up for phasing the Pentagon’s many procurement programs to ensure that requirements were met and costs kept under control. Also, OMB Director David Stockman and other members of the White House staff began getting cold feet when they came to realize the magnitude of the defense buildup planned by Weinberger. They launched an effort to trim $35 billion in FY83 budget authority, and although they succeeded in capturing only $8 billion in budget authority and $2 billion in outlays, they did cause some perturbations in the Pentagon.
Table 17.1
(Current $, Billions)

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<th>Category</th>
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<td>180</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>262</td>
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<td>(326)</td>
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<td>Real spending increases (%)</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7.7</td>
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<td>8.0</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For FY87, Carter's spending projections are estimated by the author.

By January 1982, the new budget and five-year program were finally ready for submission to Congress. What Weinberger unveiled in his posture statement was, to put matters mildly, eye-popping. Weinberger asked for an FY83 budget of $215.9 billion in outlays and $258.0 in budget authority. This budget was well above Carter's FY83 projection of $205.3 in outlays and $224.0 billion in budget authority. Weinberger's long-range projections were even more astounding. By FY87, he proposed to elevate the defense budget to fully $356 billion in outlays and $400 billion in budget authority. Some of this upsurge was expected to be eaten by inflation, but even so, Weinberger was lobbying for major real increases over the entire five-year period. His program called for annual real increases averaging fully 8.1% in outlays and 7.4% in budget authority. This was a much faster rate than envisioned by Carter, whose highest increases ran in the 4-5% range.\footnote{14}

Between FY83 and FY87, Weinberger was proposing to spend fully $1.4 trillion in outlays and $1.6 trillion in budget authority. By FY87, the United States was to be spending, in real terms, more than its effort at the height of the Vietnam War. In other words, Weinberger was proposing a steady increase to achieve the type of defense budget that would be funded if a large war was in progress. Because the U.S. economy was expected to grow at a far slower rate than the DoD budget, defense spending was projected to consume a significantly larger share of GNP than before. Carter's budgets had averaged 5.3% of GNP, rising to 5.6% in his last year. Weinberger's budget envisioned consuming 5.9% of GNP in FY82 and ever-larger amounts thereafter. The exact amount would depend on how fast the economy grew each year, and the White House was hoping for a supply-side miracle. In recent years, however, the economy

\footnote{14}{See Caspar W. Weinberger, \textit{Annual Report to the Congress}, FY83, GPO, Washington, D.C., 1982.}
had been growing at an annual rate of only 3.66%. If this rate continued, Weinberger’s budget would rise to 7.4% of GNP by 1987.

As Weinberger pointed out, this level was no more than the 7.0–7.5% experienced in the mid-1960s and was well less than Vietnam’s peak of 9.3% in FY68. Nevertheless, it was much higher than the nation had come to expect, and it promised to have a significant impact on national fiscal policy. For the five-year period, Weinberger’s budget proposed to consume about $225 billion more than if the Pentagon was given only 5.6% of GNP. This difference alone was enough to compel the Congress to face a difficult choice on whether to accept annual deficits, or reduce domestic spending, or increase taxes. It acquired greater significance when Reagan carried out his pledge to slash federal taxes, the Congress balked at cutting domestic programs, and the economy showed disturbing signs of faltering.

Weinberger privately acknowledged that his budget was a large one, but he also asserted that America’s growing security needs could be neglected only at great peril. Knowledgeable about national fiscal policy as a result of his OMB experience, he further argued that if the United States was prudent elsewhere, it could afford a large military buildup. Not all senior administration officials agreed with him, but he had Reagan on his side. Believing that a booming economy would solve his fiscal and monetary problems, the President attached highest priority to a tax cut, the control of inflation, and the military buildup. This stance left him willing to open the federal wallet to Weinberger and the Pentagon, and to keep it open. With Reagan’s backing, Weinberger, a lawyer with considerable skills as a debater and policy advocate, vigorously pressed his case on Capitol Hill. Openly contemptuous of liberal Democrats who balked at the idea of a big defense increase, he demanded that the entire program be funded and acknowledged no room for pare-downs.15

When Weinberger’s FY83 budget arrived on Capitol Hill, the nation already was sliding into recession, a large deficit loomed ahead, and debate had begun mounting on Reagan’s overall fiscal priorities. Consequently, the budget provoked widespread controversy and triggered growing Democratic opposition to the administration’s national security policies. Weinberger got most of what he wanted: for FY83, the Congress approved $253.6 billion in budget authority and $214 billion in outlays. The vigorous debate that year, however, was a forerunner of things to come. The defense consensus had held for a full year, but with domestic priorities and the deficit exerting a powerful tug, it already was starting to weaken. Weinberger had every intention of continuing to press the case for real spending increases, and Reagan continued to support him. Capitol Hill’s more skeptical attitude, nevertheless, suggested that his future budgets were likely to get a less welcome reception.

Even so, Reagan and Weinberger already had successfully propelled the U.S. defense budget upward onto a higher strategic plateau. Because of the actions taken during 1981, the Reagan defense budget for FY83 was now nearly 25%
higher in real terms than what Carter had funded for FY82, and about 35% higher than U.S. defense spending on the eve of the Afghanistan invasion. Moreover, Reagan's political capital was far from spent and he seemed capable of coaxing at least some real increases from Congress in future years. Exactly how much remained to be seen, but to observers, annual increases of at least 5% for the next three years seemed like a reasonable bet. If so, the net increase in real U.S. spending from 1980 onward would be nearly 50%. In the actual event, Reagan over the next three years extracted from Congress real increases averaging 6% annually.

Because the United States was largely preoccupied with its domestic fiscal travails, the international impact of Reagan’s FY83 defense budget hike seemed to escape public appraisal. But in all likelihood, it received top billing in Moscow. The United States was now taking quick, powerful strides toward recasting the strategic competition on coequal terms. Reagan, of course, was not the sole architect of this turnaround, which began under Ford and picked up steam during Carter’s era. It was Reagan, however, who stepped on the accelerator, increasing U.S. defense spending far faster than Soviet spending was growing. As a result, the spending disparity between the two superpowers was projected to narrow considerably over the coming years. To the extent that the USSR had been striving for military supremacy over the United States, Reagan’s buildup threatened to render that goal infeasible.

Comparative economic statistics tell the story. As of early 1980, Pentagon estimates held that Soviet defense spending was about 30–50% higher than U.S. spending. Because this estimate was based on a shaky methodology and uncertain data, it contained large room for error. Nevertheless, the strategic message that it imparted seemed broadly correct. Because the Soviets had been elevating their spending by 4–5% annually for the past 20 years, they had pulled well ahead of the United States in total financial resources committed to military power. For appearance’s sake alone, this was a disturbing development to Washington. To the extent that this spending difference translated into usable military forces, moreover, the USSR seemingly was on the way to actually becoming the dominant superpower.\(^{16}\)

Aware of this worrisome disparity, American officials had taken some comfort from the fact that the NATO allies were spending far more than the East European members of the Warsaw Pact. As a result, the two alliances were devoting similar fiscal resources to defense, thus preserving a semblance of parity in this area. Nonetheless, grounds for worry still remained. The Warsaw Pact did not labor under the inefficiencies of NATO’s coalition of truly independent na-

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\(^{16}\) Brown’s final posture statement presents a critique of the two methodologies for assessing Soviet defense expenditures. Because Soviet budgetary claims were not credible, methods had to be employed for gauging Soviet spending in absence of credible data on fiscal inputs. One approach was to gauge the cost of buying the Soviet military posture in the U.S. economy, another was to gauge the cost of buying the U.S. posture in the Soviet economy, and then to draw comparisons from both approaches. As a result of data uncertainties and methodological anomalies, Western estimates typically produced a wide range of variation on Soviet defense spending. Nonetheless, even the lowest estimates showed the USSR to be spending well more than the United States as of the late 1970s.
tions, and therefore was able to use its resources more effectively. Moreover, the spending imbalance was manifested in a more vigorous Soviet acquisition effort. Since the early 1970s, the USSR had outspent the United States by $130 billion in nuclear procurement, $320 billion in conventional procurement, and $130 billion in research and development. As of 1980, the Soviets were leading the United States by 80% in annual investments and the entire NATO alliance by 20%. This difference was enabling the USSR to far outproduce the West in military hardware while closing the technology gap. The result was a competitive imbalance that unnerved many U.S. officials and doubtless found favor in Moscow.

In one bold stroke, the Reagan defense buildup promised to sweep away the public appearance of a far larger Soviet defense effort and the prestige for Moscow that went with it. By drawing on its vastly superior economic resources, a resurgent United States had abruptly decided to place itself on the path of closing, perhaps eliminating, the military spending gap with the Soviet Union. Moreover, the U.S. increases meant that the NATO alliance now was threatening to pull ahead of the Warsaw Pact by a large spending margin of about 35%. Reagan’s buildup thus endeavored to work with allied defense budgets to transform the terms of East-West strategic competition. Whereas before the USSR was outperforming the United States and the Warsaw Pact was equal to NATO, now the superpowers were drawing equal and NATO was pulling ahead of its rival alliance. As the Soviet government doubtless was aware, this was a change of substantial importance. In the years ahead, it had the potential to reshape international security affairs by shifting the competitive balance in the West’s favor.

The impact on the force balance would depend, of course, on whether the additional U.S. funds were channeled in sound directions. Provided the buildup was properly guided, nonetheless, it promised to set in motion changes that would reverse many of the specific military advantages that the Soviet government had patiently accumulated over the past two decades. The West’s defenses in key regions and military missions were likely to improve, thereby undercutting the USSR’s ability to prevail in a war and the political influence that went with it. Moreover, American research, development, and procurement was about to switch into high gear. More American weapons would be coming off the production line, but perhaps more important, the U.S. scientific community might now fashion breakthroughs that would enable the West to surge far ahead of the Soviet bloc in technology. In important ways, this development had the potential to strip the USSR of its hard-won status as a coequal military superpower.\(^{17}\)

The Soviet defense budget, of course, was not frozen in concrete. In theory, the USSR could have stepped up its own defense spending and thereby sought to stay well ahead of the United States. Charging that Reagan’s buildup was aimed at achieving American superiority over the USSR, the Kremlin loudly

threatened to take precisely this course. As a practical matter, however, a further acceleration of the Soviet military effort apparently was infeasible. The buildup of the past two decades had consumed vast resources, thereby circumscribing the USSR’s options for the 1980s. This buildup had been accompanied by an effort to keep consumer goods at a satisfactory level, thereby resulting in low spending on investment and capital formation, at a cost to future growth. Already spending fully 12–14% of its GNP on defense, the USSR would have had to virtually double its rate of spending increases to maintain its edge: from 4–5% to 7–8% annually. With its slowly growing economy, the result would have been an even larger shift of Soviet resources to the defense sector, thereby further strangling consumer goods, investment, and economic growth.\footnote{For further analysis, see Myron Rush, “Guns over Growth in Soviet Policy,” \textit{International Security}, Vol. 7, No. 3, Winter 1982/83, pp. 167–179. See also Franklyn D. Holzman, “Soviet Military Spending: Assessing the Numbers Game,” \textit{International Security}, Vol. 7, No. 1, Spring 1982, pp. 76–101.}

The weight of the evidence suggests that the Soviet government reacted to Reagan’s powerful challenge by deciding not to try to match U.S. spending increases. It did, however, elect to continue with its existing defense effort, which in the early 1980s was still expanding by about 3–5% annually. Moreover, the USSR made no effort to offer the kind of strategic concessions that might have led Reagan to turn down the military burners. Perhaps the Soviets hoped that Washington would eventually lose heart, or that their own less flamboyant increases would maintain a satisfactory buffer against American gains.\footnote{The key point is that Soviet weapons production stayed roughly constant during this period, still turning out large numbers of equipment each year at rates that seemed to suggest a steady growth in defense spending.}

Whatever the case, the Soviet government placed itself in a potentially difficult position at home and abroad. Prior to Reagan’s sea change in U.S. policy, the USSR’s hugely expensive defense effort brought major domestic sacrifices but at least held out the allure of gaining eventual military supremacy over its superpower rival. With the United States now gathering its energies under a leader willing to pour large but affordable resources into defense, even this hope was now rapidly dissipating. In particular, the USSR’s mighty military machine, already far larger than needed for purely defense requirements, no longer seemed capable of becoming powerful enough to achieve the Kremlin’s expansionist foreign goals. In the space of only a few short years, this machine threatened to become a weighty albatross around the USSR’s neck, one kept there by internal imperatives rather than any coherent sense of national priorities.

THE REAGAN MILITARY STRATEGY

That the U.S. defense buildup might pull the rug out from under the USSR’s assertive international policy and even communist rule was only dimly perceived in Washington as of 1982. Some conservative theoreticians argued that the Soviets were perilously overinvesting in defense, and the United States
should step up the arms race in order to push them into economic collapse. Their arguments, however, were largely dismissed as right-wing palaver. The prevailing consensus held that communist rule was established in Moscow and that the USSR would continue with a vigorous military effort far into the future.

The principal hope, consequently, was that the Reagan buildup would simply brace the West’s faltering deterrent. To this end, administration officials were heavily preoccupied with shaping the Pentagon’s specific priorities. The defense plan that they crafted aimed at enhancing the U.S. military posture in areas deemed both important and vulnerable. Interestingly, strengthening NATO’s defenses in Europe was not the central focus of the administration’s conventional defense plans. Nonetheless, NATO was to benefit in important ways.

When the Reagan administration took office in 1981, it voiced the judgment that U.S. forces needed to be strengthened across the board. To some outside observers, this stance suggested a single-minded preoccupation with funding levels rather than strategy. Indeed, critics asserted that the Reagan administration had no coherent defense strategy beyond a buildup for its own sake. Reinforcing this claim came accusations that the administration had neglected to conduct a serious strategy review in the manner of NSSM-3 and PRM-10. Furthermore, critics alleged, Weinberger’s style of delegating authority to the ICS and services guaranteed business as usual, with no attention to new strategy initiatives.

Stung by these criticisms, Weinberger went to lengths to spell out the administration’s military strategy in his FY83 posture statement, which was released in early 1982. His central argument was that the Reagan administration in fact had paid a great deal of attention to strategy. He acknowledged that funding priorities compelled a heavy emphasis on enhancing readiness and sustainability for all the forces, thereby limiting the extent to which new arms and equipment could be purchased. He also claimed, however, that the Reagan defense budget contained significant strategy innovations that would pull U.S. defense policy in new and different directions. To an important degree, the facts bore him out and in controversial ways that suggested major departures would be made from the Carter administration’s strategy.20

Weinberger particularly laid stress on the administration’s review of U.S. nuclear strategy and force needs, which he claimed was more comprehensive than any since the mid-1950s. This review resulted in a set of important programmatic decisions taken by Reagan himself in the fall of 1981. As a result of these decisions, Weinberger asserted, the Reagan administration’s highest priority would be the “long overdue” modernization of U.S. strategic forces. Weinberger reported Reagan decisions to enhance the command and control system, to buy 100 B-1 bombers, to buy more ALCMs for the B-52s, and to procure the new D-5 SLBM missile for the Trident submarines. Reagan also decided to cancel Carter’s multiple shelter basing mode for the M-X missile. The

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20 See Weinberger’s FY83 posture statement for his defense of the Reagan administration’s strategy deliberation; his memoirs make the same points.
M-X program itself was scaled back from 200 to 100 missiles, with an effort to be initiated for finding a different basing mode. The effect then was to shift emphasis in the U.S. triad philosophy. The Carter administration had focused on strengthening the ICBM force through the M-X/MPS system, while restraining the bomber and SLBM legs. The Reagan approach was to de-emphasize the ICBMs and to place higher stock in the bombers and submarines.

Along with these programmatic measures came Reagan’s new, modified nuclear strategy, which, Weinberger said, did not seek superiority over the USSR. Rather, it was designed to prevent the USSR from gaining superiority and to ensure an enduring margin of safety for U.S. security. Weinberger debunked the idea that U.S. nuclear forces should be designed to mirror-image the Soviet posture or otherwise maintain a facade of symmetry in static bean-counts of bombers and missiles. What he endorsed, instead, was a posture that could absorb a first strike and retaliate in ways that achieved U.S. objectives.

In a display of continuity with PD-59 and Carter’s countervailing strategy, Weinberger called attention to the continuing importance of nuclear deterrence. Where he departed from PD-59 was in his treatment of U.S. war-fighting objectives. PD-59 had called for flexible targeting capabilities in order to provide sufficient escalatory options and to discourage any appearance of Soviet advantage in this area. Weinberger went beyond this modest concept to call for a nuclear posture that could “impose termination” of a major nuclear war on terms “favorable to the United States and its allies.” In particular, he said, the United States needed the capacity to deter further escalation once the nuclear threshold had been crossed and to negate Soviet nuclear blackmail. Precisely what this concept meant was left unclear, but it suggested that nuclear warfare conceivably could entail several exchanges. To this end, Weinberger’s strategy clearly called for a substantial expansion of U.S. targeting options, including significant counterforce and countermilitary capabilities.21

In the conventional strategy that he laid down, Weinberger departed even more from Carter and earlier administrations. Weinberger explicitly cast aside the “1 1/2 war” strategy and decried its singular focus on the NATO contingency. The old approach, he asserted, mistakenly assumed that a Western posture capable of defending Central Europe could meet all other contingencies. He argued that the United States now needed to be prepared for a simultaneous global attack that might be launched by the Soviets or their proxies in several regions at once. In particular, he cited the Soviet threat to the Persian Gulf, thus implying that the Soviets and their allies might choose to start wars in Europe, the Gulf, and northeastern Asia all at the same time.

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To meet this threat, Weinberger rejected the idea of mechanistic force planning that sought to erect passively a defensive shield wherever Soviet aggression might occur. The United States, he said, should defend in critical regions, but it also should plan to seize the initiative through "horizontal escalation," to include counteroffensives in areas where the Soviets might be vulnerable. The overall goal was to exert pressure on the USSR in ways that would deter an attack and provide the means to defeat it should war occur. Moreover, Weinberger said, the United States should no longer plan exclusively for short wars. His new strategy called for a capacity to fight more prolonged conflicts that might engage U.S. mobilization and industrial prowess.\(^{22}\)

Weinberger’s global strategy smacked of maritime concepts and clearly laid the basis for an enlarged U.S. conventional force posture. Weinberger called for a strengthening of the ground and air forces, but not surprisingly, he also said that the administration’s most significant expansion would center on the Navy. In particular, he said, the Reagan strategy would focus on strengthening the Navy’s capacity for offensive missions. This declaration pointed toward a need for more carriers, major surface combatants, and amphibious capabilities. In this area, Carter’s strategy thus was to be turned on its head. Whereas Carter had sought to restrain the Navy in favor of a continental strategy, the Reagan administration intended to provide the Navy more ships and allow it to pursue its natural predilections.\(^{23}\)

The Reagan strategy meant that NATO and Central Europe would no longer completely own center stage in U.S. military planning. Nevertheless, NATO was not about to be abandoned. Both privately and publicly, Weinberger acknowledged the importance of Western Europe to U.S. interests and the concentration of massive Warsaw Pact military power in the Central Region. He also voiced support for NATO’s military strategy of flexible response and forward defense. Noting that Warsaw Pact forces had grown considerably stronger in recent years and better aligned with their offensive strategy, he assessed that the quality of NATO’s deterrent had weakened. Arguing that stronger efforts were needed to strengthen NATO’s defenses, he made clear his willingness to use his leadership position to encourage the Pentagon and the alliance to move in that direction.

Weinberger’s leadership on NATO policy, however, was destined to be less assertive than some of his predecessors’. McNamara, Schlesinger, and Brown were well qualified strategists and technical analysts who took a public stand on NATO conventional defense issues. Weinberger, by contrast, was a quite different secretary. A lawyer by training, he was knowledgeable about NATO and interested in its problems, but he made no pretense about being an expert. Moreover, he chose to invest his time and energy on other matters, particularly

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\(^{22}\)See Weinberger’s FY83 posture statement and his \textit{Annual Report to Congress} for FY83.

direct service to Reagan and vocal lobbying of the Congress on behalf of the defense buildup. The same applied, in his early years, to his senior OSD advisers, who preferred to try other fish than NATO conventional defense issues. The result was a generally benign attitude toward NATO in Weinberger’s office and a lack of assertive leadership on NATO policy.

Especially in 1981, this stance translated into an emphasis on continuity, but no major innovations for NATO. Declaring that the Reagan administration had secured allied consent for steady force enhancements, Weinberger’s FY83 posture statement said that the United States would continue meeting its military commitments in Europe and improve its overall capabilities. These enhancements were to come in terms of stronger naval forces, but they also were to be manifested in better-equipped U.S. ground and air forces for continental defense. Additionally, Weinberger stressed NATO’s need to do a better job of learning how to mobilize under conditions of ambiguous warning. What he seemed to be suggesting was that although the Reagan buildup would focus heavily on global threats and maritime doctrines, the NATO programs initiated by Carter were sound and therefore would continue to be implemented.

What applied to Central Europe also applied to other regions. Weinberger underscored the growing importance of defending the Persian Gulf, and he emphasized the continued need to protect South Korea and Japan. He thus reaffirmed America’s continental defense missions and acknowledged the continued importance of coalition planning, especially by NATO. In these ways, his strategy reflected continuity. Although his critics were to claim otherwise, Weinberger’s strategy fell far short of a wholesale swing toward an offshore maritime doctrine or any reversion to neo-isolationism.

**REAGAN’S DEFENSE PROGRAMS**

The degree to which the new Reagan strategy promised to move U.S. defense policy in new directions was heavily dependent on the specific ways in which Pentagon funds were to be allocated. Here, a pattern of continuity and change suggested itself. As Table 17.2 shows, the FY83 budget shifted funds in the Navy’s direction, but not radically so. The Navy claimed only a 2% larger share of the DoD budget, a difference of only $5 billion compared to what would have been available had the old service breakdown prevailed. Nor did out-year projections suggest anything different. To the extent that a naval expansion was under way, about two-thirds of it was to be funded from overall budget growth, and only the final one-third from changed Pentagon priorities.24

As Table 17.3 suggests, Weinberger’s emphasis on nuclear modernization translated into a sizable but not huge shift of funds into the strategic nuclear program account. Compared to Carter’s projection for FY83, the strategic forces received only an additional $2.5 billion because of Reagan’s spending in-

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24 The shift of $5 billion toward the Navy did play a big role in allowing an accelerated Navy procurement effort at the cost of slower procurement for the other services. The point here is that the Reagan reallocation was not so large as to bring about a wholesale change in the overall force posture.
Table 17.2

Trends in DoD Budgetary Allocations Among the Military Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Carter FY81 Budget</th>
<th>Reagan FY83 Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoD-wide</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17.3

Trends Among DoD Program Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Carter FY81 Budget</th>
<th>Reagan FY83 Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic nuclear forces</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional forces</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDT&amp;E</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support programs</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

crease. Weinberger's decision to increase this program to 9.1% of the budget, however, added another $4.4 billion. As a result, what otherwise would have been a $16.5 billion budget now became a $23.4 billion one—a hefty 42% increase. Nonetheless, the conventional forces also now claimed a larger share of the budgetary pie (55.4% vs. 51.4%). The chief losers were DoD support programs, e.g., central supply and maintenance, intelligence and communications, training and medical. This pattern suggested that the Weinberger strategy was focused on enhancing combat force strength rather than support units. As Weinberger acknowledged, the conventional forces still continued to command the lion's share of DoD spending, a fact that reflected the administration's true military priorities.25

Finally, the Weinberger budget reflected a decisive shift toward procurement, whose share increased by fully 10% in FY83 and during most of the out-years (see Table 17.4). Compared to Carter's FY83 projection, the Reagan budget bolstered procurement funding from $49 billion to $89 billion, a whopping 80% increase. Only 20% of this increase came from budgetary growth; the remainder resulted from making procurement a much higher priority. This dramatic shift was made possible because, in the early years of a budgetary expansion undertaken without a large growth in manpower, expenditures for personnel, operations, and maintenance tended to stay fairly constant. As a result, most of the added funds, which would increase each year, could be devoted to procurement. In later years, force expansion promised to increase these other costs, thereby bringing procurement down. In the interim, how-

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25 For an elaboration, see Weinberger's discussion in the FY83 posture statement.
Table 17.4
Budgetary Trends Among Functional Categories (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Carter FY81 Budget</th>
<th>Reagan FY83 Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procurement</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations and maintenance</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and development</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ever, the Pentagon would receive a procurement bonanza, allowing it to purchase a sizable number of new weapons.\textsuperscript{26}

Taking advantage of this upsurge in procurement funds, Weinberger’s five-year program established plans for a major modernization of the conventional forces. The Army was to be held constant at 16 active and eight National Guard divisions, but was to receive an infusion of new tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, attack helicopters, and other new weapons. The total buy of major new equipment was about 25% larger than what Carter’s last budget had planned. (In later years, Weinberger was to approve a plan to enlarge the Army to 18 active and 10 Guard divisions). The Air Force also was to benefit. Its posture was to be enlarged from 24 active and 12 reserve wings to 26 active and 14 reserve wings. Total inventory was to grow 4200 to 4800 aircraft, with a small reduction in average age. Also the Air Force was authorized to buy more modern munitions, thereby further enhancing its combat power.

Weinberger announced no new programs for NATO, but he did broadly endorse the LTDP’s goals. In particular, he carried forward Carter initiatives to enhance U.S. rapid reinforcement capabilities, including POMCUS, Host Nation Support, Air Force minimum essential facilities, and prepositioning of Marine equipment in northern Norway. Weinberger also pointed out that because most of the Army and Air Force posture was oriented to Central Europe, NATO’s defenses were destined to benefit significantly from the modernization programs that he funded.

Under Weinberger’s program, U.S. and allied defenses in other theaters were also slated to profit. In particular, the Weinberger strategy aimed to breathe greater life into the Pentagon’s already vigorous programs for the Persian Gulf. Weinberger announced that the Carter-created RDJTF (Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force) would now be chartered as a separate task force to report directly to the JCS and would focus on southwestern Asia. He further said that the RDJTF would soon be upgraded to a new Unified Command (later named Central Command, or “CENTCOM”) that would handle plans for southwestern Asia. Weinberger also revealed that the RDJTF had been assigned a potent force of six

\textsuperscript{26}Because the total DOD budget was growing so much, all three services were able to fund important procurement programs under Weinberger. The allocation of a greater percentage to procurement, of course, did not mean that absolute expenditures for other accounts was declining; they too were rising, but not nearly as fast.
Army and Marine divisions, about eight tactical air wings, two squadrons of B-52 bombers for conventional missions, and three carrier battle groups. Under RDJTF/CENTCOM direction, these forces were to undergo extensive training and exercises in the years ahead.

Weinberger unveiled additional measures to enhance U.S. strategic mobility forces, with special focus on southwestern Asia. In particular, his FY83–FY87 program provided funds for purchasing 50 C-5 and 50 KC-10 heavy cargo aircraft—a major addition to the existing inventory of 70 C-5s and 234 C-141s. Weinberger also carried forward Carter programs to buy (1) MPS ships for prepositioning one division of Marine Corps and (2) SL-7 fast sealift ships for carrying an Army heavy division from the United States to the Persian Gulf. Revealing a major DoD effort to acquire access to en-route staging bases and facilities in southwestern Asia itself, he announced an accord with Britain to establish U.S. supplies and facilities on Diego Garcia, an island in the Indian Ocean. Also announced were agreements with Portugal, Egypt, Oman, Kenya, and Somalia to provide facilities for U.S. forces.

The centerpiece of Weinberger's maritime program was commitment to the Navy's long-cherished goal of a "600-ship navy." To achieve this goal, Weinberger approved a five-year shipbuilding program providing funds for construction of 133 new vessels. The most glamorous items were two new nuclear aircraft carriers, CVN-72 and CVN-73, which would enable the Navy to retain 14–15 deployable carriers through the early 1990s. Weinberger also authorized reactivation of four battleships that were to be equipped with cruise missiles, and the building of 17 attack submarines, 18 cruisers, 7 destroyers, 12 frigates, 25 mine countermeasure ships, 10 amphibious ships, and support ships of various kinds. This shipbuilding program exceeded Carter's by about 20% and clearly pointed the Navy toward a stronger power projection capability. With the Navy's 1981 posture standing at 514 ships, Weinberger forecast a steady expansion to a level of 610 ships by the early 1990s.

Like his defense spending plans, Reagan's new military strategy and force posture provoked a storm of controversy in Washington. In the minds of its critics, the Reagan administration changed its coloration almost overnight. Previously the administration had been charged with not having a strategy. Now it found itself besieged with accusations that its strategy was the wrong one, and wrong in ways that called into question the funding upsurge.

Critics especially attacked Reagan's nuclear strategy. Their argument was that Reagan endorsed destabilizing war-fighting concepts and overemphasized expensive modernization programs. Questions particularly were raised about the degree to which Reagan, by neglecting the survivability of the ICBM force, seemed to be switching away from the triad philosophy toward a two-legged dyad. Reagan was willing to procure the M-X missile, a hard-target killer, but was not yet able to offer a coherent plan for making this missile survivable. Weinberger's FY83 budget promised a serious review of basing options, and this review ultimately endorsed basing the M-X in superhardened silos in a "dense-pack" mode. The idea here was that the M-X silos would be placed closely together, thus allowing them to survive by causing incoming Soviet warheads to
inflict fratricide on each other. When the dense-pack idea proved questionable on technical grounds, however, Congress killed it.\textsuperscript{27}

This action forced the administration temporarily to plan on placing the M-X in vulnerable Minuteman silos pending a study of mobile basing options. Critics charged that until mobile basing became available, the United States would be in a precarious position. Their argument was that the presence of U.S. hard-target killers in vulnerable silos would provide the Soviets an incentive to launch a preemptive attack. Knowing this, the United States allegedly would find itself in a "use or lose" position, i.e., faced with an incentive to launch its ICBMs upon warning. The effect, critics argued, would be a less stable nuclear balance. Their recommendation was either to cancel the M-X entirely and rely on the D-5, which enjoyed widespread support, or deploy a mobile missile. Favoring the latter option, their preferred candidate was a small single-warhead missile that would pose no threat to Soviet ICBM silos. The Reagan administration responded with the idea of studying both a small mobile missile and the concept of placing the M-X on a mobile platform. As the Reagan era unfolded, the debate over these two ideas rose in intensity to the point of threatening paralysis.

Meanwhile, critics also launched equally vocal broadsides against the Reagan bomber program. By authorizing the B-1, Reagan now was planning to deploy a force of three different bombers: the B-52 with ALCMs, the B-1, and the B-2 stealth bomber. While acknowledging that this force would be potent, critics charged that it was far too costly and overinsured. In particular, accusations centered around the need for both the B-1 and the B-2. Counterproposals called for either continuing with the Carter program, which did not fund the B-1, or if the B-1 was to be purchased, sharply scaling back the B-2. The Reagan administration responded by arguing that all three bombers were needed to penetrate Soviet air defenses and to provide insurance against the possible loss of the ICBM leg. Critics shot back by scoffing at Soviet defenses and by arguing that the development of mobile ICBM basing would reduce the need for bomber insurance. To White House dismay, the debate steadily deteriorated into a three-ring circus, thus calling into question the Reagan administration's leadership.

In the midst of this mounting nuclear debate, critics also harshly attacked Reagan's conventional strategy. Apart from disgruntlement with allied failures in burden-sharing, complaints about Europe and the Persian Gulf did not figure prominently in the charges leveled at the White House. Instead critics faulted the administration's preoccupation with a global Soviet threat and its naval plans. In particular, critics questioned Weinberger's assertion that the Soviets could launch attacks in several different theaters at once. To the extent this

ambitious Soviet strategy was infeasible, they argued, the United States could focus selectively on one or two regions and thereby make do with a smaller defense posture. 28

As for Reagan’s maritime strategy, critics charged that the administration was pandering to the Navy. They also took issue with the idea of horizontal escalation and naval offensives against the USSR. Some critics argued that horizontal escalation might easily produce a dangerous vertical (i.e., nuclear) escalation. 29 Arguing to the contrary, others asserted that U.S. naval attacks on the USSR or its maritime assets would have only a minor nuisance effect that would not deter a Soviet move against Central Europe or the Persian Gulf. In the process, they judged, the U.S. Navy would suffer heavy losses trying to go up against the USSR’s strong coastal defenses. These two assertions were incompatible in their conclusions about the impact of offensive U.S. naval operations on Soviet behavior. They found common ground, however, in their negative conclusions about relying on a maritime strategy to offset continental vulnerabilities.

Taken together, these accusations about Reagan’s nuclear and conventional plans implied a deep-seated criticism of the administration’s defense policy. They suggested that Reagan’s policy, notwithstanding its bold vision and ideological vigor, lacked intellectual coherence and a sense of priorities. Reagan had issued a clarion call to match Soviet defense spending in ways that clearly would gain Moscow’s attention and enhance U.S. prestige around the world. In the minds of his critics, however, his military strategy was not fully addressing the areas where U.S. defenses were most vulnerable to Soviet aggression: the ICBM force, Central Europe, and the Persian Gulf. Instead, critics asserted, Reagan’s strategy was too preoccupied with bolstering the U.S. posture in areas of secondary importance: strategic bombers, naval assets, and a worldwide response. This dubious sense of priorities, critics charged, raised questions about whether Reagan’s buildup was focused on the right problems.

Weinberger argued that his defense programs were better balanced than critics were suggesting (see Table 17.5). In a little-noticed posture statement, Weinberger pointed out that, whereas 44% of DoD investments were being devoted to nuclear and maritime missions, nearly 35% were being spent on continental missions. Perhaps this allocation was skewed toward the former categories, but taking into account the allies’ concentration on the latter missions, it was not far unbalanced. Nor did it radically depart from past American patterns. Moreover, Weinberger said, Reagan’s defense program did promise to upgrade the West’s defenses in important ways, including in regions where, critics admitted, the Soviets posed a genuine threat.


Table 17.5

DoD Investments by Mission Category:
FY83–FY87
(%)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Warfare</th>
<th>18.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sea Warfare</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Warfare</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Warfare</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other***</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Warfare categories include forces and associated C3I systems.  
***"Other" includes management, support, science and technology, DoD-wide C3I, and associated measures.

The soundness of Reagan’s military priorities thus was a matter of technical debate, but to administration critics, the controversy went beyond programmatic balance. To them, the more fundamental issue was one of overall requirements and cost-effectiveness. Most critics were willing to grant that the Soviets needed to be better deterred, but they also asked whether this goal was being achieved and whether it required a lavishly funded program of fully $1.5 trillion. They addressed three pointed questions to the White House: Did the Reagan strategy and force buildup promise to enhance deterrence to a satisfactory degree? If not, could deterrence be more effectively accomplished with a better-focused strategy? If so, would a sound strategy permit deterrence to be attained at a lower funding level?

Carter’s buildup had also aspired to achieve deterrence, but at almost $200 billion less cost over the five-year period. With a national fiscal crisis looming on the horizon, the extra defense spending being proposed by Reagan was far from a trivial amount. To Reagan’s critics, the bottom line was this: Was the nation getting its money’s worth from Reagan’s bigger budget, and could it get by with less? With Weinberger leading the way, the Reagan administration responded by pronouncing its defense program as effective, mandatory for national security, and well-planned. White House critics, however, were not mollified and refused to be silenced.

The debate over the Reagan defense budget thus had acquired a strong strategy dimension that promised to play a central role in determining how much of the planned buildup would, in fact, be funded. This debate, moreover, was not defined entirely in terms of a dogfight between the White House and Capitol Hill. Within the Pentagon, a fair amount of dissension also existed. Although the new strategy enjoyed the broad support of the uniformed services, it had been influenced by Weinberger and other Reagan-appointed civilian newcomers. Since more funds were to be available, Pentagon career civilians and military officials broadly endorsed the goals of nuclear modernization and naval expansion. Whether they (the Navy aside) were prepared to go as far as Wein-
berger in these directions, however, was a somewhat different matter. This
hesitancy promised to become more serious if Reagan's spending plans were
reduced at some future juncture, thereby compelling hard choices about pri-
orities. Also, some of Weinberger’s doctrinal concepts were new and still half-
baked, horizontal escalation among them, and this deficiency led to further in-
ternal questioning.30

Both on Capitol Hill and within its own house, the Reagan administration
thus faced a tough challenge ahead. Much would depend on Reagan’s political
standing. Much would also depend on the bureaucratic skill, intellectual talent,
and staying power of Reagan’s national security cabinet, their senior advisers,
and other appointees. Within the Pentagon, Weinberger was firmly in control
and served by aides of his own choosing. Ironically, however, his management
philosophy of decentralized reliance on service initiatives threatened to inhibit
his ability to translate his policies into real-life programs.

Like previous administrations, the Reagan team found itself confronted with
the reality of pluralist American politics, which—to its chagrin—did not end at
election time. Nonetheless, a central strategic fact stood out. Even though Rea-
gan’s defense buildup was under attack in the United States, it had been suffi-
ciently launched to transform the terms of military competition with the Soviet
Union. The critical issue now was not whether the United States was going to
spend more on defense, but whether its enhanced spending would be trans-
lated into real force improvements in areas that counted, including Europe.

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30 The horizontal escalation concept was to become a matter of growing study and controversy
as time passed, eventually leading to increasing efforts to integrate naval doctrine with coalition
plans for air and ground operations.
By early 1982, the Reagan administration had completed the process of formulating its national security policy, and had embarked upon the task of implementation. Although the administration faced a difficult struggle in its efforts to retain domestic support for its new departures, it also was confronted with an uphill battle in Europe over NATO's future. Strengthening NATO's defenses there by no means was the sole focus of Reagan's policy, but it was an important goal. To this end, the Reagan administration placed special priority on carrying out the Pershing II/GLCM program that NATO had agreed upon in December 1979. It also wanted to do whatever was possible to upgrade NATO's conventional defenses, and it was prepared to expend considerable political capital to achieve both objectives. Whether the administration could attain both goals, or even one of them, was unclear.

With the Soviet Union conducting a virulent propaganda campaign against these efforts, the allies remained to be persuaded, and serious doubts existed about whether they would support Reagan's agenda for NATO. At issue here was the kind of security arrangements that would be needed for the 1980s and beyond. Was NATO to be galvanized under U.S. leadership to erect a stronger deterrent and a more vigilant stance, or was Western Europe to pursue a less responsive and more neutralist course? To an important degree, force modernization would determine the outcome by shaping not only NATO's future defense posture but also the pattern of alliance relationships and security policies to prevail during the Reagan era. During the years 1982–1985, the transatlantic dialogue was preoccupied with this weighty issue. The process began in a turbulent atmosphere of stress and confrontation, but ended on a happy note, with the United States having attained many of its security goals and the West Europeans in NATO's fold. In the process, the Reagan administration learned a great deal about alliance politics and, profiting from the experience, showed its mettle.

CONFRONTATION IN THE ALLIANCE

The difficulties that Reagan encountered in his efforts to induce the allies to follow his lead on defense matters owed to the fact that his administration got off to a troubled start in Europe. As 1981 unfolded, Reagan's policy became clear, and many allied governments reacted with growing consternation. Rea-
gan's behavior during his first year in office had reinforced their initial impression that the new president seemed too ideological, too anti-Soviet, and too unresponsive to their views. His strident rhetoric and sweeping gestures often suggested an American who failed to understand Europe's complex politics.  

Reagan's defense policy, with its nuclear and maritime strains, contributed to further allied apprehensions. Misinterpreted in Western Europe even more than in the United States, it had destabilizing and aggressive overtones, and came across as somewhat unilateralist and even isolationist. In essence, Reagan's strategy suggested a President with his nuclear finger on the trigger, an out-of-control Navy too eager to attack, and a nation willing to defend the seas but not the European continent. This impression led some allies to question whether Reagan was a true Atlanticist or instead a radical American conservative who harbored disdainful, even destructive, attitudes toward NATO. Additionally, Reagan's conservative economic policies provoked distaste in many allied quarters, and matters were not helped when the U.S. economy began plunging into recession in 1981, threatening to take Western Europe along with it. Although Britain's Margaret Thatcher remained firmly in Reagan's camp, many others grew concerned that the alliance was not under good leadership.

For its part, the Reagan administration was far from pleased with the uncooperative West Europeans. Thatcher aside, the allies seemed insufficiently concerned about the Soviet menace to suit White House tastes. Indeed, important factions within some countries, including West Germany, seemed genuinely neutralist, i.e., willing to adopt a noncommittal stance between the two superpowers. Although allied governments disavowed neutralism and endorsed NATO, many seemed unsupportive of a defense buildup and standoffish to the idea of conservative economic reforms. On a more fundamental level, some allies appeared eager to carp at Reagan's initiatives but were uninterested in coming up with creative ideas of their own. For many, their prescription seemed to be business as usual, an attitude that offended an administration committed to dramatic change. Reagan himself retained his public composure, but Haig, Weinberger, and other senior officials were less tactful in their private encounters with the allies.

What crystallized anger on both sides of the Atlantic was the crisis that broke out over the natural gas pipeline agreement in early 1982. During his tenure, President Carter had approved the idea of constructing a pipeline that would bring natural gas from Siberia to Western Europe. This project, involving Western sale of pumping stations and other technology to the USSR, was finally formalized by West Germany and the Soviet Union in late 1981. Although it would aid the USSR's struggling economy, it also promised to increase Western Europe's access to a critical resource and to bring handsome profits to many allied

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and U.S. firms. Even though Carter himself had begun tightening the screws on the Soviets after the Afghanistan invasion, allied governments evidently felt that the Reagan administration would remain obliging about the pipeline.2

In the aftermath of the Polish government's imposition of martial law in late 1981, however, Reagan decided to punish the Soviets by striking out against this deal. The stage was set in early January 1982, when NATO's foreign ministers condemned the USSR for its conduct in Poland. That same week, the White House withdrew its support for the gas pipeline deal and informed American firms that they would not be allowed to export pipeline equipment to the USSR. This step did not formally bar continued allied involvement; indeed, foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies were allowed to continue participating. White House preference for cancellation of the entire deal, however, was evident.

Chafing under Reagan's pressure tactics and disturbed about his controversial views, the allies reacted with an outraged defiance not seen in recent years. The German government was upset, and France voiced its displeasure by promptly signing a 25-year contract to purchase large quantities of Soviet natural gas beginning in 1984. Then in mid-February, the EC Commission, representing not only Bonn and Paris but also other West European governments, formally rejected the American demand to scuttle the agreement. With the allies flaunting U.S. desires for an embargo, tensions quickly mounted on both sides of the Atlantic and evolved into a bitter action-reaction cycle as 1982 unfolded.

Sensing a challenge to its leadership and anti-Soviet policies, the White House in June extended its ban of pipeline exports to include foreign subsidiaries and licenses of U.S. companies. This step directly impinged on Western Europe's freedom, an act that further inflamed allied outrage. In August, Secretary of State George Shultz, who had replaced Haig two months before, again expressed U.S. refusal to ease pipeline sanctions until martial law was relaxed in Poland. Leading the allies' response, Paris fired back by ordering French companies to honor all pipeline contracts and otherwise defy the U.S. embargo. In September, the United States upped the ante by further extending its sanctions to include a ban on all U.S.-licensed equipment being sold to the USSR by West European affiliates of U.S. companies. By early October, the United States had begun imposing sanctions on West German firms that were breaking the embargo, and other allied companies seemed destined for similar treatment.

The confrontation finally came to an end in November, at the same time that the Polish government started to relax martial law. At that juncture, Reagan lifted the sanctions as part of a U.S.-West European agreement to tighten up on the sale of sophisticated technology to the USSR. The entire incident, however, had driven a wedge into the alliance and made for a difficult year throughout 1982. Moreover, it reflected larger misunderstandings that would not go away even though the pipeline was back on track. The underlying cause was a growing rift over the fundamentals of strategic policy, one that threatened to un-

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2) ISS, Strategic Survey, 1982, provides a good appraisal of the gas pipeline controversy in Europe.
hinge the Reagan administration’s efforts to lead NATO into an era of greater defense preparedness.

THE POLITICS OF EUROMISSILES

In this atmosphere of mounting frictions over alliance strategic policy, the Reagan administration embarked upon its controversial campaign to guide NATO into nuclear modernization. In this arena, the stresses were far from his own doing, for Reagan inherited an already turbulent situation. Political temperatures had started heating up as far back as late 1979, when NATO first endorsed the dual-track decision that included deployment of Pershing II/ GLCMs. The Soviet government responded by employing a combination of carrots and sticks aimed at derailing the deployment decision. In October 1979, Brezhnev announced the withdrawal of 20,000 troops and 1,000 tanks from East Germany, but he also threatened unspecified military enhancement measures if NATO went ahead with the missiles. In the following weeks, Foreign Minister Gromyko and Defense Minister Ustinov issued similar warnings. The implication was that the USSR would be cooperative if NATO exercised restraint, but would react firmly if NATO did not.³

This Soviet stance contributed to mounting angst in many West European nations over the new missiles and the impending nuclearization of NATO. Allied governments maintained their support of Pershing II/GLCM, but in many nations domestic opposition rose to the surface and grew in intensity. December 9, 1979, saw an occurrence that previewed the next four years: some 60,000 protesters demonstrated against the missiles in Brussels. Opposition was present in other countries as well—including Britain, France, the Netherlands, and across Scandinavia—but it was especially active in West Germany. There, Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr had wrested the SPD’s left wing away from Schmidt and were trying to lead the party toward neutralist policies that fastened on the “Euromissiles” as a bête noire.

By early 1980, SPD theoreticians were rewriting recent NATO history. Whereas West Germany had sought the missiles and played a major role in NATO’s deployment decision, the United States was now characterized as the chief villain. Allegedly, Washington was attempting to foist the missiles down West Germany’s throat in an effort to inflame Cold War passions and restore America’s waning influence in Europe. The Euromissiles thus became a symbol of a far more important underlying issue: the future of NATO, the transatlantic partnership, and management of the East-West balance.

Although Schmidt himself was trying to restore coupling, key members of his own party were pursuing a quite different course. Claiming that moderation was on their side, they denied charges of neutralism, saying instead that they were pursuing common security in Europe. Sensing that the Cold War was

³Here, War by Other Means, provides an insightful appraisal of NATO’s Euromissile debate during the Reagan era, especially how it affected West Germany’s politics. See also Leon V. Sigal, Nuclear Forces in Europe: Enduring Dilemmas, Present Prospects, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1984. The IISS Strategic Surveys for 1981-1983 offer good insights on the debate.
heating up, however, their clear goal was for Western Europe to distance itself from the United States and to continue seeking accommodation with the Soviet Union. Beyond this, they had begun arguing that rejecting missile deployment was the best way for West Germany to squirm free from American control and recover its allegedly lost sovereignty. To many observers, this argument suggested a hidden agenda to detach West Germany from the alliance and establish a more traditional role as an independent Central European power. Although SPD members denied this charge, the impression was growing within the alliance that, for Schmidt’s government, a supportive stance on nuclear modernization was becoming a test of the FRG’s fealty to NATO.

With the SPD’s left wing leading the way, the West German government found itself convulsed in a growing debate over the Euromissiles, and this debate soon appeared in other allied parliaments. In this environment, NATO embarked on a tentative dialogue with the Soviet Union as 1980 unfolded. The central issue was whether the USSR would take up the West’s offer to negotiate before the missiles were deployed in 1983. The Kremlin, disgruntled with Washington’s backing away from the SALT II Treaty, initially demurred. In July, nonetheless, Brezhnev met with Schmidt in Moscow and proclaimed his willingness to negotiate on mutual reductions. He attached, however, an important precondition: that the negotiations would include not only the new missiles but also already-existing NATO “forward based systems.” Potentially to be thrown into the hopper were not only NATO nuclear-equipped aircraft, but also British and French strategic systems.

NATO rejected this demand, and for reasons that went far beyond American attitudes. In particular, London and Paris were adamant about not including their strategic forces in negotiations. Also, alliance military authorities were reluctant to enter into a complex negotiation that might strip away NATO’s theater nuclear forces while leaving the USSR with conventional superiority and still-ample nuclear options of its own. NATO believed that the central focus of negotiations should be the imbalance created by the Soviet SS-20s and their companion systems, which gave the USSR a ground-based missile capability that NATO did not possess. At issue was whether Moscow would negotiate this threat downward in exchange for limits on Pershing II/GLCM. NATO did not want to confuse matters by discussing other delivery systems that were needed for reasons going beyond the USSR’s medium-range systems.

The year 1980 came to a close on an uncertain note. In October, West Germany conducted a bitter federal election that pitted Schmidt’s SPD against the CDU/CSU under the leadership of conservative Franz Josef-Strauss. Schmidt won handily, with the SPD claiming 42.5% of the vote, and returned to power at the head of a renewed SPD/FDP coalition. Precisely what this meant for the Euromissiles was unclear but far from entirely positive. The SPD’s victory owed to Schmidt’s popularity, and he remained committed to deployment, as did Foreign Minister Genscher, the FDP’s head. Moreover, public opinion in West Germany seemed to be swinging in a conservative direction. Nevertheless, the SPD’s left wing remained unsilenced, and the Euromissiles continued to be an emotional issue in German public and parliamentary debate. The same pattern
held elsewhere in Western Europe; indeed, Margaret Thatcher now found her conservative government coming under strong liberal attack over the missiles.

Meanwhile, prospects for East-West negotiations were not making much headway. Between October and November, the United States and the USSR held preliminary talks in Geneva, but departed in disagreement. The Soviet government was now calling for British and French systems to be included in any negotiations, whereas Washington still insisted that only U.S. and Soviet missiles be covered. The breakdown of the Geneva dialogue, coupled with SALT's rapidly declining fortunes at this time, suggested little reason for hope that formal negotiations would begin anytime soon, much less that an actual accord was within reach.

Ronald Reagan arrived on the scene in early 1981 amidst this turbulence, and his presence did little to calm NATO's troubled political waters. Matters got worse when he promptly tore up the SALT II Treaty in a manner suggesting an even tougher U.S. stance on Euromissile talks. During the following weeks, the new administration reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to deploy the Pershing/GLCMs on schedule, with no softening of NATO's negotiatory stance. Brezhnev then entered the debate by offering a moratorium on any new deployments of medium-range missiles in Europe as long as negotiations were in progress. Both Washington and Bonn rejected this offer, but in West Germany, the SPD's left wing expressed acceptance as well as other concessions, thereby subjecting the beleaguered Schmidt to a new round of debate in the Bundestag. In May, Schmidt threatened to resign if the SPD repudiated the dual-track decision, and he subsequently won Bundestag endorsement by a close margin. With West German support now officially secure, NATO moved to reconfirm deployment, which was done at the NATO defense ministerials in October.4

As NATO moved ever closer to this decision, widespread anti-missile demonstrations again broke out across Western Europe. In June, 100,000 marched in Hamburg, and in September, 35,000 demonstrated in West Berlin. In October, 250,000 protested in Bonn. In November, 400,000 demonstrated in Amsterdam and another 100,000 marched in Madrid. Similar demonstrations were held in London, Paris, and Brussels. These outbreaks displayed the extent to which nuclear neuralgia was sweeping the continent. Moreover, anti-nuclear rumblings were beginning to be heard from the United States, where Reagan's stance also touched sensitive nerves. Faced with this opposition, NATO's governments could not be expected to hold the line for long. As a practical matter, negotiations were now needed to maintain domestic and parliamentary support for deployment, regardless of whether an accord actually was reached.

NATO's governments reacted by trying to breathe greater life into the negotiating side of the dual-track policy, and their efforts proved successful. In March, NATO's Special Consultative Group met in Brussels, where the United

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States confirmed its willingness to resume arms control talks with the USSR. The meeting included formal discussions of prospects for agreement on theater nuclear systems. At the NATO foreign ministers' meeting the following May, the United States announced its willingness to open negotiations on limiting nuclear weapons in Europe, with talks to begin by late 1981. In June, Brezhnev signaled back by calling for acceleration in East-West arms control talks. The following month, Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov renewed the USSR's offer to reduce nuclear missiles in Europe if NATO would cancel the Pershing II/GLCM deployments. He expressed no softening in the USSR's negotiating position, with its demand for concessions unacceptable to NATO, but the West reacted positively to the idea of starting talks soon. In late September, Haig and Gromyko met in New York to lay the groundwork for talks (called INF negotiations) on nuclear weapons in Europe that would begin on November 30 in Geneva.

Speculation centered on the negotiating position the United States and its allies would adopt in the coming talks. Reagan laid uncertainty to rest in a speech on November 18, where he announced both the INF negotiations and the onset of START talks within a few months. In this speech, Reagan presented his plan for a "zero option" in the INF talks. The plan, which carried Reagan's logic of deep cuts to the extreme, boldly called for the United States and the USSR to dismantle all the missiles under question. That is, the Soviets were to scrap their 250 SS-20 launchers and 325 SS-4/5s, plus an additional 65 SS-20s under construction, in exchange for complete cancellation of the Pershing II/GLCM program. British and French forces, and other NATO systems, were to be completely excluded.

Two days later, NATO issued a statement welcoming Reagan's address. The zero option went down well among the allies because it offered Western Europe an ideal solution: freedom from a painful nuclear modernization in exchange for a complete elimination of Soviet theater missiles. In particular, Thatcher and Mitterand endorsed the plan, but so did Schmidt. The reason was that the zero option not only reflected Reagan's preference for deep cuts, but also played upon West German politics by endorsing SPD wishes for denuclearization. Indeed, when the full story came out, it became apparent that Schmidt had been one of the zero option's main architects. The SPD leftists had expressed a desire to make the Euromissiles "superfluous" to Western Europe's security needs. Schmidt had given them their wish, but on terms that offered to sweep away the Soviet missile threat as well.

The Soviet government immediately voiced displeasure with the zero option. Declaring that an approximate nuclear balance already existed when British and French forces were taken into account, the Kremlin dismissed the U.S. position as propaganda. The INF talks commenced shortly thereafter in a manner suggesting an unnegotiable standoff. The United States presented the zero option, and Soviet negotiators tabled a quite different proposal of their own. The Soviet plan called for mutual ceilings of 300 medium-range missiles and nuclear-equipped aircraft. It included British and French strategic systems and called for precluding U.S. missiles from Europe entirely as well as for re-
ductions in U.S. aircraft. The meeting ended with the sides rejecting each other's proposal, but planning to continue the talks. In late December, Brezhnev called the zero option one-sided and branded the United States as insincere, but also called for the Geneva dialogue to continue. On this uncertain note, 1981 came to an end.

Early 1982 was to see more of the same turbulent European security politics. With the INF talks stalled, the anti-nuclear domestic uproar in Western countries continued. Reagan himself unintentionally contributed to the problem when, in late 1981, he had responded to a question about NATO's strategy by implying that crossing the nuclear threshold in Europe might not necessarily mean an intercontinental nuclear war. Although Reagan's answer highlighted the need to control escalation and was within MC 14/3's guidelines, West European critics seized upon it as proof of his intention to make Europe more vulnerable to nuclear war while excusing the United States of its obligations to NATO. This flamboyant charge suggested that the political atmosphere had thickened beyond the point of permitting a refined discussion of military strategy.

With the West European public now more alarmed than ever, 450,000 protesters took part in peace marches in West Germany during April. Two months later, widespread demonstrations were held that included 300,000 protesters in Rome, 115,000 in London, and 15,000 in Paris. Moreover, the anti-nuclear virus by now had spread to the United States. In April, the "Ground Zero" movement was launched, designed to alert the American public to the dangers of nuclear war. In June, a massive demonstration of 800,000 protesters was held in New York to show support for the idea of a nuclear freeze. The effect was to place greater pressure on U.S. and allied governments for rapid progress in the INF negotiations.

As the early months of 1982 unfolded, the key issue was whether the West would back off from the zero option by seeking a compromise with the Soviet Union. To Western planners, however, the Soviet proposal was unacceptable. It would have barred U.S. missiles from Western Europe's soil while leaving the Soviets with a sizable missile force, thereby undercutting the original coupling rationale. It also would have placed limits on British and French nuclear forces, forces regarded by those governments as necessary to deter the Soviet strategic threat. Finally, its limits on NATO nuclear-capable aircraft, quite apart from affecting NATO nuclear strategy, would have inhibited the United States from dispatching many air reinforcements that were needed for a conventional war.

By contrast, Western planners regarded the zero option as both fair to the Soviets and protective of NATO's military strategy. Under it, the Soviets would be required to eliminate nearly 650 missile launchers, but in exchange NATO would halt the plan to deploy 572 threatening missiles of its own. Moreover, NATO would still be left with several hundred nuclear-capable aircraft to provide coupling on West European soil, the British and French deterrent postures would remain intact. U.S. SSBN submarines would still be assigned to NATO, and NATO's air reinforcement plans would be unaffected. The idea that the USSR would be left inadequately defended was dismissed as absurd. The rea-
son was that the Soviets would still have a vast tactical nuclear arsenal with their forces in Eastern Europe, several hundred medium bombers in the USSR, and over 2,000 strategic nuclear delivery systems that could be used against Western Europe.

The Soviets claimed to see things differently, however. By now they were loudly proclaiming the fairness of their own position and denouncing the U.S. proposal as self-serving. Their stance continued to be that an approximate nuclear balance already existed in Europe and that the Pershing II/GLCMs would both upset the balance and pose a grave threat to the USSR. Their tendency to broadcast these messages openly suggested a clear desire to bypass the negotiating forum and appeal directly to Western public opinion. It further suggested that if an agreement was to be reached anytime soon, the West would have to moderate its demands and come closer to the Soviet position.

Many critics called on Reagan to bend, but he stubbornly refused. In response, Brezhnev unveiled a new démarche in mid-March that to many suggested a softening attitude in Moscow. He proposed a joint moratorium on nuclear deployments in which the Soviet Union would stop deploying SS-20s in the European USSR and also dismantle some of its older missiles. NATO INF missiles thus were to be banned entirely. Current forces were to be frozen in place, then reduced to 600 missiles and aircraft by 1985 and to 300 systems by 1990. Accompanying this “freeze” proposal came warnings that if Washington continued with its missile program, the Soviet Union would take counteractions to expose U.S. territory to greater nuclear danger. Brezhnev’s offer, however, did not endorse the zero option or even move the Soviet negotiating position on nuclear force cutbacks closer to the U.S. stance. As a result, Reagan rebuffed it by saying it did not go far enough, and both Schmidt and Genscher stood by him.5

A more serious sign of a breakthrough came in June, when U.S. Ambassador Paul Nitze and Soviet negotiator Juri Kvitinsky took their celebrated “walk in the woods.” In an effort to break the deadlock, the two men came up with a joint proposal for their governments to consider that called for mutual compromise. They suggested that the United States and the USSR should each have 75 “LRINF” missile launchers (“LRINF” was the new term for the systems at question). Accompanying this limit would be a further ceiling of 225 LRINF missile launchers and nuclear-capable aircraft combined. The USSR would be allowed to deploy another 90 missile launchers in the eastern USSR. The USSR would deploy only ballistic missiles (i.e., SS-20s), and the United States, only cruise missiles (GLCM). Each Soviet ballistic missile would carry no more than three warheads, and each U.S. cruise missile would have one warhead apiece.

When this proposal arrived in Washington and Moscow, however, it was squelched in both capitals. Despite Nitze’s endorsement, the idea was attacked in Washington because it violated the concept of parity. It left the Soviet Union with more total warheads; these warheads, moreover, would be placed atop

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ballistic missiles, which were deemed superior to cruise missiles because of their greater speed. In effect, NATO was left implicitly relying on British and French forces to make up the difference. Perhaps more important, the deal fell far short of the zero option, and Reagan remained committed to this approach. In Moscow, meanwhile, Kvitsinsky encountered similar resistance, but for quite different reasons. Moscow continued to demand full compensation for British and French forces. Moreover, the Kremlin continued to insist on no U.S. missile deployments, no constraints on Soviet missiles in the eastern USSR, and greater reductions in NATO’s dual-capable aircraft. The Kremlin’s tough stance alone was enough to kill the deal, but Reagan’s unbending attitude made the gap between the two sides all the more uncloseable.

Further contributing to the uncertain atmosphere surrounding the INF talks were events in the START negotiations, which opened on June 30. The Soviets had grown accustomed to negotiating about strategic forces in marginalist terms, but U.S. diplomats showed up carrying a Reagan proposal for deep cuts. At the time, the United States deployed 1572 strategic missiles, and the USSR, 2367 missiles; this balance gave the USSR a slight lead in total warheads of 8375 to 7900. The United States, of course, continued to deploy a larger strategic bomber force than the USSR, which produced an American lead in overall warheads. Reagan’s proposal boldly called for the two sides to reduce their ICBM/SLBM forces to 850 missiles and 5000 warheads apiece. ICBM warheads, moreover, were to make up only one-half of this total.

The Reagan proposal thus called not only for deep cuts on both sides, but also required the USSR to give up well over one-half of its highly valued ICBMs. The Soviets responded with a proposal to reduce to 1800 missiles, an offer that otherwise would have seemed generous but looked miserly compared to Reagan’s position. To bridge the gap, Reagan clearly would have to adjust his numbers upward, but the Soviets also would be required to offer larger cuts, including from their ICBM force. Whether the Soviets were prepared to respond was uncertain, but one thing was clear: American pressures for large ICBM drawdowns made the Soviet Union all the more hesitant about negotiating away its entire SS-20 force.

With ambitious American demands now on the table in both START and INF talks, the two missile negotiations went into stasis for the next several months. By the following fall, the Warsaw Pact was issuing statements accusing the West of stalling the talks. When Brezhnev died in early November, he was replaced by KGB director Yuri Andropov, who began signaling greater flexibility in the INF talks but still refused to embrace the zero option. Meanwhile, NATO’s defense ministers were responding with pledges to deploy the missiles in 1983 if the talks continued to make no progress.

Stalemate negotiations, however, by no means meant inactivity elsewhere, which became apparent when a dramatic change occurred in Bonn. There, Helmut Schmidt unexpectedly fell from power, and almost overnight the SPD-led coalition was replaced by a more conservative CDU/FDP government. This important development solidified West Germany’s approach not only for a tough negotiating stance but also for actual deployments. Schmidt’s sudden
downfall came about in mid-September, when Foreign Minister Genscher abruptly resigned from the government and took the FDP Party along with him. Genscher had not always pleased Washington, but he distrusted Soviet communism, wanted West Germany to remain a good NATO ally, and was disturbed by the SPD's leftward march. As 1982 unfolded, he had become convinced that Schmidt no longer could persuade the SPD to continue marching in a centrist direction, and therefore Schmidt would have to be replaced.6

Genscher's dramatic decision reflected a desire to preserve continuity in the FRG's foreign policy and relations with the United States. By removing the FDP from partnership with the SPD, his aim was to deprive the Schmidt government of its majority in the Bundestag, thereby compelling Schmidt to resign. Genscher proposed to forge an alliance with the conservative CDU Party, thereby creating an entirely new coalition with enough Bundestag votes to take power and adopt a policy suited to Genscher's tastes. Because his FDP Party held enough votes to swing the parliamentary balance in either direction, Genscher succeeded in both endeavors.

His withdrawal from Schmidt's government ended 13 years of SPD/FDP rule and ushered in a CDU/FDP coalition that was slated to serve until federal elections were held the following year. On October 1, the Bundestag elected CDU politician Helmut Kohl as chancellor. Genscher, still heading the all-important FDP, remained as foreign minister, and CDU conservative Manfred Woerner was appointed Minister of Defense. With Genscher and Woerner approving, Kohl immediately began calling for stronger ties to NATO, better German-American relations, and a firm stance in favor of the dual-track policy.

Kohl's elevation to power ushered in a brutal federal election campaign that was to decide the FRG's foreign policy orientation for the coming years. The Euromissiles, and what they symbolized, were the crucial issue. Finally freed from the centrist Schmidt, the SPD argued for a leftward turn toward a more neutralist and nationalist Germany. The conservative CDU/FDP coalition offered a different path involving close partnership with NATO and the United States. The Soviet Union openly favored an SPD victory and conducted an intense propaganda campaign aimed at currying favor among liberal Germans. The United States, Britain, and France tried to remain officially nonpartisan, but their warm treatment of Kohl clearly showed that they hoped for a CDU/FDP return to power.

German voters thus were given a clear choice. On March 6, 1983, they responded by rewarding the CDU/FDP coalition with a victory. The CDU/CSU won 45.8% of the votes; the FDP, 6.9%; and the SPD, 38.2%. The remaining votes were divided among the new radical-left Green Party and other splinter groups; the SPD lost 4% of the vote compared to its performance in 1980. Kohl and Genscher thus remained in power, this time with greater national support for leading West Germany down a centrist-right path into NATO's waiting arms.

Kohl's election enabled NATO to continue pursuing its dual-track policy, with the first issue to be the INF negotiations. During the German election

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6Herf presents an insightful account of Schmidt's fall and Kohl's rise in War by Other Means.
campaign, Andropov had tabled a new proposal which offered to reduce Soviet missiles in the European USSR to 162, the number of French and British missiles, if NATO would abandon its Pershing/GLCM deployment. The Andropov offer was intended to influence the German election, but it also required a Western response. On March 29, three weeks after Kohl’s victory, Reagan broke new ground by proposing an “interim agreement” that called for smaller U.S. missile deployments if the Soviet Union would reduce to an equal number without considering British and French systems. Reagan’s offer still called for achievement of the zero option, but now in a second stage of negotiations. Two days later, NATO officially blessed Reagan’s stance.

The Soviet government rejected this interim agreement. On May 3, Soviet negotiators in Geneva reiterated Andropov’s numbers, and announced the USSR’s willingness to count not only launchers but also warheads in calculating the balance, a noteworthy concession. They continued to rule out any U.S. deployments, however, and remained insistent that the USSR would reduce only to the level of British and French forces. The United States and NATO promptly rejected this position. With the idea of an interim agreement shelved, the INF negotiations once again were stalemated, thereby leaving the door open for NATO to begin actual deployments.

NATO’s drive to deployment began in late May, when the Pentagon announced that Soviet SS-20 deployments had risen to 350 SS-20 launchers. Only a few months before, the number had stood at 250 launchers, and the upward trend since then hardly suggested a nation interested in the idea of restraint. Moreover, it made the zero option an even less feasible proposition and highlighted NATO’s need to begin taking tangible steps to rectify the deteriorating nuclear balance in Europe.

On May 29, the seven Western industrial powers met at Williamsburg for their annual economic summit, and there signaled growing resolve about the missile situation. Affecting the political atmosphere at Williamsburg was an increasingly bright economic picture. The previous two years had seen mounting troubles in transatlantic economic relations, propelled by fractious policy debates and deepening recession in both the United States and Western Europe. By early 1983, however, the policies of the alliance partners had begun to converge, and the U.S. economy was again booming, thereby creating rising demand for imports that helped stimulate West European recovery. Against this background of growing allied contentment with Reagan’s economic leadership, Williamsburg’s attendees took the unprecedented step of issuing a security policy declaration.

This statement castigated the USSR for seeking military superiority and eventual global domination. Addressing the INF negotiations, it endorsed the West’s stance of keeping French and British forces out of any treaty and called for achievement of the zero option. Significantly, it also declared that an INF treaty should not permit the USSR to transfer its SS-20 missiles to the eastern USSR, where they would pose a threat to friendly Asian nations. The Williamsburg Declaration was important not only for the support it gave Reagan and Kohl on NATO’s impending missile deployment, but also because it brought
Japan into the Western coalition. Although the Japanese did not openly say so, their signature to the Williamsburg statement was clear evidence that the need to counter the SS-20 threat enjoyed support in important quarters other than NATO.

The Williamsburg Summit was followed by a NATO defense ministers’ communiqué on June 1 reiterating NATO’s dual-track policy. Two weeks later, yet another tumultuous debate took place in the FRG’s Bundestag, where Kohl again found himself confronted with stiff leftist opposition to deployment. The recent increase in SS-20 levels, however, contributed to some tempering of the debate. Egon Bahr, for example, now distributed his attacks equally between the United States and the Soviet Union. Even so, the SPD still did not support the NATO position for either the zero option or deployment, and it was joined by the Green Party, which put forth arguments that the Pershing II missiles posed the threat of a decapitating attack on Moscow. Countering that the Pershings could not even reach Moscow and could cover only 10% of the USSR’s command centers, Defense Minister Woerner dismissed this argument. Brushing aside the SPD/Green stance on the many other issues surrounding the INF negotiations and Euromissiles, he strongly endorsed the dual-track decision. In the end, Kohl carried the day. On June 15, the Bundestag, voting along party lines, passed a CDU/FDP resolution endorsing the Kohl position.

From that point, tensions mounted rapidly across Europe as the time for deployment neared. In July, Kohl journeyed to Moscow, where he received a cold reception. Two weeks later, Ustinov publicly warned that the USSR would take countermeasures if U.S. missiles were deployed to Europe. These measures were to include putting more tactical nuclear missiles in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and deploying more SSBN submarines near the U.S. coastline. As the fall approached, the USSR stepped up its stern warnings, and its brutal shooting down of a Korean jet airliner off its Pacific coastline in early September further underscored the Kremlin’s menacing stand.

Moreover, anti-nuclear pressures were building within the alliance itself. For example, on October 22, fully one million people took part in demonstrations in various West European cities. Meeting on October 27 at Montebello, NATO’s defense ministers acted to defuse some of the tension. There, they announced a plan to further reduce NATO’s tactical nuclear stockpile in Europe by another 1400 warheads. This step was to bring the total reductions since 1979 to 2400 warheads, or about one-third of NATO’s posture. As the ministers also announced, however, these reductions were to coincide with the arrival of the Pershing II and GLCMs, slated to begin in the following weeks.7

NATO began deployment on November 14, when the first cruise missiles were delivered to their bases in Britain. The next country to receive missiles was to be West Germany, followed by Italy, and then Belgium and the Netherlands. On November 19, the SPD voted overwhelmingly to condemn deployment on German soil, but after another tough debate, the Bundestag voted in favor on November 22. The next day, Pershing II missiles began to arrive in the

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7After the Montebello decision, some 4500 warheads were still left in Europe.
FRG. Protesting harshly, the Soviet government promptly walked out of the INF talks and declined to schedule the next sessions of START and MBFR. To many, Moscow’s shrill denunciations of NATO, the United States, and West Germany suggested that all forms of East-West cooperation had come to an end.

At an earlier juncture, the prospect of returning to Cold War tensions might have given NATO pause, but the Soviets by now had worn out the West’s patience. By announcing its deployment schedule four years in advance, the alliance had given the USSR ample openings to negotiate a settlement. Moscow, not taking NATO seriously, had failed to take advantage of the opportunity. With Reagan at the helm, the time had long since passed when Moscow’s negotiating ploys and theatrical gestures could dissuade NATO from carrying out its commitments.8

The alliance, however, bent over backwards to point out that it was deploying the missiles reluctantly and that the door to negotiations was not closed. Meeting on December 9, NATO’s foreign ministers proclaimed that the deployments were intended to prevent the USSR from gaining superiority over the alliance, not to give NATO superiority over the USSR. They further reiterated that NATO’s ultimate goal was a situation in which neither the United States nor the Soviet Union had LRINF missiles. They stressed that the missile deployments could be halted or reversed by concrete results at the negotiating table, and they urged the Soviet Union to reopen the Geneva talks at an early juncture.

Although NATO had taken the crucial first step toward deployment, its internal struggles over nuclear modernization were far from over. The deployment program was scheduled to unfold in a steady way and to be completed only by late 1988, thereby providing opportunity for further debate and decision-making. In particular, the task remained of convincing several West European parliaments to carry out the basing plans that had been forged within NATO’s councils. West Germany was insistent that it not be the only nation to host the missiles. Consequently, there was a critical need for Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Britain to allow onto their soil all the missiles allocated to them. Whether the parliaments of these nations would do so, however, was still uncertain. Particularly at issue were Belgium and the Netherlands, nations where social democratic parties held powerful parliamentary positions.

NATO’s INF debate was to drag on well into 1985, but ultimately came to a happy ending. Bowing to appeals from the United States and NATO, the Dutch government in mid-1984 agreed to accept 48 cruise missiles in 1988 if Soviet SS-20 deployments continued. The Dutch parliament supported the government’s plan by a 79–71 margin. In March of 1985, the Belgian government followed suit, and in November, the Dutch made a second key deployment decision. Even then, anti-nuclear passions did not completely die down. Greece continued to distance itself from the INF program, and the Danish parliament peevishly balked at providing Denmark’s share of infrastructure payments for

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the missiles. In 1986, the SPD voted to remove the INF missiles from Germany, and a British Labour Party Conference endorsed a similar removal from its nation. These protests, however, mattered little. The INF deployment continued on schedule, steadily distributing Pershing II/GLCM missiles among the five host nations.

Meanwhile, the much-feared collapse of East-West relations failed to materialize. In early February 1984, Andropov died and was replaced by Konstantin Chernenko, a Communist Party apparatchik who initially continued to relegate arms control negotiations and U.S.-Soviet diplomacy to the deep freeze. Even so, Soviet negotiators showed up at the CSCE-sponsored conference of confidence and security-building measures (CSBM) in early 1984, and the MBFR negotiations resumed in March. Additionally, the Soviet Union proposed NATO-Warsaw Pact negotiations on banning chemical weapons in Europe. Little progress was made, but the two sides at least were continuing to talk.

The INF and START negotiations remained in abeyance for the next several months as the United States and the Soviet Union continued to exchange angry polemics. By late fall, however, a thaw began to occur. Under pressure at home and abroad to reopen the arms control dialogue, Reagan expressed his desire to see U.S.-Soviet relations put back on track, and the Soviet government voiced agreement. Evidently the Kremlin had concluded that, with standoffishness getting nowhere, negotiations provided the best avenue for controlling U.S. and NATO nuclear modernization.

Additionally, Reagan gave the Soviets another powerful incentive to cooperate. In March 1983, amidst the INF turmoil, he surprised the world by unveiling the "SDI" (Strategic Defense Initiative), which envisioned U.S. deployment of a massive ballistic missile defense system. This stunning departure challenged the theory of mutual deterrence, called into question the ABM Treaty, and posed a serious future threat to the ability of Soviet nuclear missiles to strike the United States. With the Pentagon announcing an ambitious program for SDI research, by late 1984 it had become evident that Reagan was serious. To a deeply alarmed Soviet government, a renewal of arms control negotiations provided the only vehicle for grappling with this startling new development.  

Following the exchange of high-level signals, events moved quickly. In late November, the two nations announced their agreement to resume nuclear arms control talks and to begin discussions on controlling weapons in space. In early January, Secretary of State Shultz and Foreign Minister Gromyko met in Geneva to discuss the agenda for early resumption of negotiations. Then on March 12, U.S. and Soviet negotiators met in Geneva to begin integrated discussions on strategic, theater, and space systems. Observers commented that the two sides seemed as far apart as ever, and held out little hope for progress. What they did not factor into the equation, however, was that on the day before, Chernenko had died. Almost immediately the Kremlin announced that his successor would

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9 Although Reagan later was to suggest that SDI technology might be transferred to the USSR, the Soviet government clearly saw the démarche as a long-term threat to its nuclear deterrent posture. Contributing to this worry was the fact that the Soviet posture was concentrated heavily in ICBM missiles, which were more vulnerable to SDI than SLBMs or bombers.
be Mikhail Gorbachev, a little-known Politburo member who proved to have ideas of his own.

APPRASIAL OF THE INF DEBATE

Gorbachev's sweeping reforms were still several years away, but even in the mid-1980s, the battle over nuclear modernization clearly added up to a serious setback for the Soviet Union and a major political victory for NATO. Although the struggle focused on military issues in its early stages, it had mutated into a test of political willpower with far larger implications. To its chagrin, the USSR found that it could not bully, cajole, or manipulate the alliance into submission. When put to the test, its vaunted military buildup seemingly had brought little diplomatic leverage, and had served only to galvanize the West into action. From now on, the USSR would have to take NATO far more seriously. Because any further Soviet quest for military supremacy in Europe might now be expected to trigger an equivalent alliance counterreaction, a watershed had occurred in European security affairs. The INF battle turned out to be the USSR's last great challenge to NATO, and the Soviet Union walked away the loser in ways that illuminated its declining prestige in Europe.

For NATO, the INF debate had compelled the alliance to confront its deepest insecurities and most troublesome doubts about its continued relevance. NATO responded by revealing an impressive capacity to think clearly and act decisively, thereby laying to rest questions about its strength of character and raison d'être. NATO showed that even in an age of ambiguity, a coalition of democracies could still muster the political will to forge and then execute a difficult decision to defend its vital interests. What it had achieved in this case, it might be able to attain in other policy arenas. Confident now of its ability to stand up to the USSR, it emerged from the INF battle with its moral authority, self-esteem, and prestige enhanced.

Equally important, the decision to deploy the Pershing II/GLCMs had positive practical effects. Most obviously, it bolstered NATO's nuclear defenses, but at a more fundamental level, it reshaped the alliance's internal politics. In particular, a new Germany had emerged. Prior to the INF battle, the FRG was being lured by a leftwing SPD faction in the direction of neutralism, nationalism, and a negative stance toward the United States and NATO. The INF debate showed that West Germany's population did not share this view; by the time the struggle was over, leadership of the FRG had been transferred into the competent hands of a more conservative pro-NATO government. Out of this change, in turn, came a stronger U.S.-German partnership capable of guiding the alliance on the basis of a common security vision for the future.

The INF debate helped bring to the surface and wash away neutralist sentiments in other West European nations as well. In the process, it especially helped cement American relations with Britain and France. Because of their similarities of outlook, Washington's relations with London may have required no cementing, but the same could not be said for U.S.-French relations. Often in the past, France had been at pains to foul Washington's agenda in Europe,
but in this case, the French government acted in a powerfully helpful manner. To be sure, the INF debate did not end all transatlantic debates over strategic policy, but it certainly narrowed their scope. Furthermore, it created a greater sense of mutual confidence and common identity; this was an important change because of the doubts that initially surrounded Reagan’s accession to power. The result of these positive developments was a more unified NATO alliance with its security goals and priorities more firmly intact. Indeed, in important ways NATO had been reborn.

NATO’s successful campaign for nuclear modernization was far from a purely American enterprise, but the Reagan administration fully deserved the substantial credit that came its way in the aftermath. In particular, the administration revealed that it was made up of far more than ideological hot air, rollicking gestures, and inattention to detail. As the INF struggle unfolded, it set rhetoric aside, rolled up its sleeves, and got down to work. As a result, the administration grew in stature. By the end, it had shown a professional capacity to lead the alliance in coalition planning, decisionmaking, and policy execution. Most important of all, Reagan had imprinted his conservative principles on the alliance and had shown that they could work.

At times, the Reagan administration’s skillful manipulation of modernization policy and negotiations was nothing short of superb. The administration began by making a decisive commitment to achieve modernization in the face of major opposition from within the alliance as well as the USSR. It then used the threat of modernization to bring the Soviets into a negotiating forum that was needed to maintain internal NATO support for missile deployment. As the negotiations gathered steam, the administration insisted on a zero option that put the onus of hard choice on the USSR’s back. When the Soviets refused to capitulate to the West’s demanding terms, the administration then employed the stalled negotiations as an argument to justify proceeding ahead with deployment. With deployment under way, it then used NATO’s missile buildup as a vehicle for compelling the Soviets to return to the negotiating table in a far weaker bargaining position than before. As the Soviets doubtless were ruefully aware, Reagan’s political choreography matched the Bolshoi Ballet at its best.

To be sure, the Reagan administration had not exhausted its capacity to pursue the unexpected in troublesome ways that unnerved other nations, adversary and allied. Indeed, Reagan himself demonstrated this tendency at a sensitive time during the INF battle, March 1983. This came during a month in which the administration was selling the idea of an interim INF agreement to the Soviets while also preparing the allies for prompt missile deployment if the USSR refused. With his administration juggling two diplomatic balls at once, Reagan intervened to make the task all the harder. Speaking to evangelical Christians on March 8, he unveiled his term “evil empire” as a characterization of the Soviet Union, a gesture that discouraged Soviet reasonableness in the INF talks. Two weeks later, he magnified his bad timing by announcing his SDI initiative, a step that also seemed unlikely to induce the Soviets to give up all their SS-20 missiles without taking time to think matters over. Moreover, SDI caught the allies by surprise and compelled them, at a singularly inopportune moment,
to start thinking about yet another new departure over which they had misgivings. The effect was to stir the INF broth more vigorously and in different directions than the situation warranted.

In retrospect, an underlying issue here is whether the Reagan administration was pursuing a too-ambitious diplomatic strategy vis-à-vis the USSR and Western Europe. The White House had fastened onto a central fact in the Euromissile debate: that the Kremlin was determined to keep American missiles out while preserving their own SS-20 missiles that had become a symbol of Soviet military supremacy. Accordingly, the White House refused to accept any final settlement that validated this symbolism or otherwise failed to produce the appearance of a stable balance. From its perspective, an “either-or” situation—the zero option or a substantial Pershing II/GLCM deployment—therefore made sense. Simultaneously, however, the administration was pursuing a far more comprehensive alteration of the strategic balance that created a broader framework for judging the Euromissile debate. Reagan’s pursuit of deep ICBM cutbacks in the START negotiations and his endorsement of the SDI initiative indicated a new system of mutual deterrence anchored on different nuclear force structures for both sides. The White House contended that the new force balance would be more stable than the old balance, but its arguments were not yet developed or accepted by either the West Europeans or the Soviet Union. This state of affairs complicated Reagan’s efforts to achieve a successful outcome in Europe.¹⁰

The allies themselves were left wondering what START and SDI meant for their own missile requirements. Because of their intense commitment to achieve either enhanced nuclear coupling or the zero option, nonetheless, they remained supportive of Reagan’s hard-nosed pursuit of the dual-track policy. The allies’ stance stemmed from an assessment of local West European interests, but the Soviets necessarily were compelled to view matters from a larger global perspective. Whether in 1983 they would have bought an interim agreement leading to the zero option, had Reagan not pushed so hard on START and SDI, is a matter of conjecture. Nevertheless, Reagan’s vigorous pursuit of all three initiatives probably overloaded the circuits in Moscow in ways that made acceptance of an INF settlement more difficult.

Whatever the case, the INF battle ended successfully for the West in the sense that although the zero option failed to be achieved by 1984, nuclear modernization was finally under way. Moreover, the USSR’s return to the bargaining table in early 1985 suggested not only a desire to continue negotiating on INF forces but also a willingness to entertain Reagan’s larger strategic concepts. As a result, the West European allies were prone to judging the Reagan administration’s performance as sound, indeed perhaps better than previous administrations’ performances. Above all, the Reagan administration was given high

grades for knowing its priorities, relentlessly pursuing them, and mobilizing the NATO alliance to follow suit. In the process, it showed awareness of Western Europe’s enduring strategic interests and sensitivity to allied policy concerns. As a result, the administration laid to rest many of the critical questions that had been raised about its basic instincts, cooperative spirit, and competence. In doing so, it was awarded the mantle of NATO leadership amidst agreement that it had earned the title.