

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

NATO



Why **NATO** Endures

Wallace J. Thies

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Why NATO Endures

Why NATO Endures develops two themes as it examines military alliances and their role in international relations. The first is that the Atlantic Alliance, also known as NATO, has become something very different from virtually all pre-1939 alliances and many contemporary alliances. The members of early alliances frequently feared their allies as much if not more than their enemies, viewing them as temporary accomplices and future rivals. In contrast, NATO members are almost all democracies that encourage each other to grow stronger. The book's second theme is that NATO, as an alliance of democracies, has developed hidden strengths that have allowed it to endure for roughly sixty years, unlike most other alliances, which often broke apart within a few years. Democracies can and do disagree with one another, but they do not fear one another. They also need the approval of other democracies as they conduct their foreign policies. These traits constitute built-in, self-healing tendencies, which is why NATO endures.

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Why NATO Endures

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Catholic University of America

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PREFACE

My goal in this book is to look at some old and familiar problems in a new and different way, beginning with the curious relationship that has developed within the Atlantic Alliance, commonly known as NATO, since its creation in 1949.¹

By almost any measure, NATO has been an overwhelming success, yet analyses of what it does and why it persists have been preoccupied with crisis and impending collapse. Relations between the United States and its European allies have had their ups and downs, but one constant in the history of NATO is the propensity of participants and observers alike to proclaim it “in crisis” and even on the brink of collapse.

Claims that NATO is once again in crisis have been made so often and by so many different writers that the contention might seem little more than a harmless cliché. On the contrary, I argue in Chapter 1 that this fascination with crisis and conflict has proven to be an intellectual dead end. The frequency with which these so-called NATO crises have occurred and the speed with which they have disappeared from public view has meant that observers have often resorted to inflated language to persuade their readers that *this time* NATO’s troubles are real. Students of NATO have been quick to label disputes within it a “profound crisis,” a “deepening crisis,” a “general crisis,” and the like. Terms such as these, however, have been bandied about in a remarkably casual fashion. None of those who have used these terms have bothered to define them in a way that would permit a disinterested observer to know when NATO was in crisis and when it was not.

More important, claims that NATO is again in crisis have served as a barrier rather than a pathway to new knowledge about it. NATO crises have often been described as the product of unusually sharp disagreements among the members, but this begs the question of whether these episodes have enough in common to constitute a class of situations so that one can learn a lot about many or all of them by studying intensively one or a few. Precisely because so many claims of an allegedly fatal crisis have proven to be false alarms, observers have often gone

¹ NATO is an acronym for North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The Atlantic Alliance was created in 1949, but NATO-the-organization was not formed until 1951.

to great lengths to suggest ways in which the latest crisis differs from and thus can plausibly be considered more dangerous than all the rest. This preoccupation with discovering ways in which each new crisis differs from previous ones has all but guaranteed that knowledge about NATO and its internal workings does not and, indeed, cannot cumulate.

To remedy this situation, I develop two themes in this book: *why NATO is different* and *why NATO endures*. Concerning the first of these, in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, I argue that NATO has proven to be a very different kind of military arrangement than the alliances that formed, dissolved, and re-formed between the creation of the modern state system in the mid-seventeenth century and the emergence of a bipolar international order after the Second World War. Political scientists are trained to think in generic terms; we strive to create concepts that have a common core so that phenomena that have a lot in common can be grouped together and studied as a class. As a research strategy this often works wonderfully, as exemplified by the literatures on international crises, international regimes, praetorian and civic polities, comparative legislatures, electoral realignments, and so on. But when it comes to “alliances,” NATO members behave so differently than the members of the alliances formed by the great powers prior to the Second World War that to lump them all together under a single heading conceals as much or more than it reveals. Pre-1939 alliances were made up of states that were simultaneously rivals for hegemony both within Europe and outside it; hence, they plotted and schemed against one another and frequently abandoned one another in search of a better deal elsewhere.² The democracies that formed the Atlantic Alliance, in contrast, were not rivals for hegemony, nor did they fear one another. An alliance of democracies *should* be more enduring than an alliance that includes nondemocracies because democracies view one another as natural partners rather than latent rivals.³

My second theme, *why NATO endures*, is the subject of Chapters 5, 6, and 7. I argue in those chapters that NATO, an alliance made up almost entirely of liberal democratic states, contains hidden strengths that have allowed it to overcome – not just once but again and again – the kind of internal disagreements that destroyed virtually all prior and many contemporary alliances. Democracies have a great capacity for self-renewal. Regular elections mean that new leaders with new ideas are always appearing on the scene. Once in office, elected leaders are expected to amass a record of accomplishments that they can and do cite when running for reelection. This means *solving* problems, not letting them fester; it also means *improving* their state’s relations with other members of the community of liberal democratic states. Here too, regular elections provide a powerful motivation for compromise and reconciliation. Democracies can and do disagree with one another’s policies, but disputes are rarely pushed to the breaking point if for no

² The Anglo-American alliance during the Second World War is an obvious exception to this statement.

³ Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

other reason than the prospect of leadership change nurtures hopes that agreement, although out of reach now, *can* be achieved in the future. Last but certainly not least, no responsible leader wants to be tagged as the bungler who wrecked NATO – or even as the hapless bystander who did too little or acted too late and thereby allowed NATO to collapse.

By way of conclusion, Chapter 8 reviews the new knowledge gained from pursuing these two themes – why NATO is different and why NATO endures.

An author who undertakes a project of this size and scope inevitably incurs debts to numerous organizations and individuals. I owe a great deal to my students in Politics 575, International Politics of the Atlantic Alliance, who listened patiently as I described many of the ideas that subsequently found their way into this book. A recent sabbatical leave from my position at the Catholic University of America (CUA) allowed me to do much of the research and writing for this book. CUA also provided generous travel grants that allowed me to attend meetings of the American Political Science Association, the Northeast Political Science Association, and the Midwest Political Science Association, where I participated in panels that dealt with alliances in general and/or NATO in particular.

I have also benefited greatly from the advice offered by the editors and referees of several scholarly journals. Paul Gilchrist, at the time principal editor at the Institute of International Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, greatly improved my first attempt to tackle the NATO-in-crisis issue, during which time I explored ideas and developed arguments that I draw on in Chapter 5 of this book.⁴ Claude Welch and Edith Hoshino, at the time the editor and managing editor of *Armed Forces and Society*, helped greatly with a subsequent article about NATO and its many crises – a subject to which I return in Chapter 1 of this book.⁵ Andrea Ellner, editor of *European Security*, helped greatly with the draft of an article that I sent to her, a revised version of which is included here as Chapter 1.⁶

Turning to the first of the two themes explored in this book – why NATO is different – Bruce Russett and Randolph Siverson, at the time the editors of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and *International Interactions*, respectively, provided sound advice and welcome encouragement as I explored the differences between the Atlantic Alliance and pre-1939 alliances and developed ideas that subsequently found their way into Chapters 2, 4, and 8 of this book.⁷ Philip Tetlock and George Breslauer, of the University of California, Berkeley, invited me to write a chapter for their edited volume on *Learning in U.S. and Soviet*

⁴ Wallace Thies, *The Atlantic Alliance, Nuclear Weapons and European Attitudes: Re-Examining the Conventional Wisdom* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, 1983).

⁵ Wallace Thies, “Crises and the Study of Alliance Politics,” *Armed Forces and Society* 15 (Spring 1989): 349–369.

⁶ Wallace Thies, “Was the U.S. Invasion of Iraq NATO’s Worst Crisis Ever? How Would We Know? Why Should We Care?” *European Security* 16 (March 2007): 29–50.

⁷ Wallace Thies, “Alliances and Collective Goods: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 31 (June 1987): 298–332; Wallace Thies, “Randomness, Contagion and Heterogeneity in the Formation of Interstate Alliances – A Reconsideration,” *International Interactions* 16 (1991): 335–354.

Foreign Policy, in which I developed ideas that I draw on in Chapters 3 and 4 of this book.⁸ Frank Uhlig, Jr., and Pelham Boyer, respectively the editor and managing editor of *Naval War College Review*, provided advice, encouragement, and (after several drafts) an opportunity to publish an article on a different, less successful alliance commonly known as ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, United States).⁹ Col. Lee Hockman (USA), editor of *Military Review*, gave me an opportunity to explore the differences between the Atlantic Alliance and its rival, the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO). These latter two articles develop ideas that subsequently found their way into Chapter 4 of this book.¹⁰

Regarding the book's second theme – why NATO endures – Col. Lloyd Matthews (USA, ret.), who was then the editor of *Parameters*, provided advice and encouragement for several articles that developed ideas that subsequently found their way into Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of this book.¹¹ I am grateful to Keith Payne and Leonard Weinberg, respectively the editors of *Comparative Strategy* and *Democracy and Security*, for their advice and encouragement regarding articles that explored the case of NATO and post–Cold War Yugoslavia, which helped greatly when writing the Bosnia case in Chapter 7, along with an important contemporary issue – NATO expansion.¹²

I have also benefited from conversations with colleagues and students here at Catholic University, principally Jim O'Leary, Maryann Cusimano Love, Patrick Bratton, Dorle Hellmuth, Sara Hower, and Ray Millen. Needless to say, responsibility for the final product is mine alone.

⁸ Wallace Thies, "Learning in U.S. Policy toward Europe," in *Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy* ed. George Breslauer and Philip Tetlock (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990), pp. 158–207.

⁹ Wallace Thies and James D. Harris, "An Alliance Unravels: The United States and ANZUS," *Naval War College Review* 46 (Summer 1993): 98–126.

¹⁰ Wallace Thies and Monica Podbielski, "What Makes an Alliance Strong? NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization in Retrospect," *Military Review* 77 (July–August 1997): 130–135.

¹¹ Wallace Thies, "What Future for the Atlantic Alliance," *Parameters* 16 (Summer 1986): 26–35; Wallace Thies, "On NATO Strategy: Escalation and the Nuclear Allergy," *Parameters* 18 (September 1988): 18–33; Wallace Thies, "The 'Demise' of NATO: A Post-Mortem," *Parameters* 20 (June 1990): 17–30.

¹² Wallace Thies, "Compellence Failure or Coercive Success? The Case of NATO and Yugoslavia," *Comparative Strategy* 22 (July–September 2003): 243–268; Wallace Thies, Dorle Hellmuth, and Ray Millen, "Does NATO Enlargement Spread Democracy? Evidence from Three Cases," *Democracy and Security* 2 (#2, 2006): 210–230.

The Curious Relationship

A curious relationship has developed within the Atlantic Alliance, also known as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), since its inception in 1949. NATO is widely regarded as the most successful alliance ever, and statesmen on both sides of the Atlantic have lavished praise upon it.¹ They also complain incessantly about its shortcomings, most of which they blame on their counterparts across the sea. These complaints have not gone unnoticed by observers in the press and academia, who have been quick to pronounce the Alliance “in crisis,” or even on the brink of collapse. Looking back over the history of the Alliance, there seems to have been scarcely a year when it was *not* widely said to be in crisis, or at least in disarray.²

Is it really the case that NATO is perpetually on the brink of collapse? Claims that NATO is in crisis have been frequent in no small part because the idea of a crisis is a useful one for insiders and outsiders alike. For insiders, warning of an actual or impending crisis is the rhetorical equivalent of a shot across the bow – a way of serving notice that trouble is brewing and something should be done about it forthwith. For outsiders, a crisis in the Alliance is the rhetorical equivalent of an alarm bell – a way of dramatizing a problem that might otherwise be dismissed as unworthy of space on a prestigious op-ed page or in a scholarly journal. Outsiders of all sorts have been quick to pronounce the Alliance in crisis, often at the urging of officials eager to publicize their concerns and ensure that they are taken seriously in other NATO capitals. Perhaps the most visible

¹ The “greatest defensive alliance the world has ever known,” in the words of Paul-Henri Spaak, former Belgian prime minister and NATO Secretary General, “Hold Fast,” *Foreign Affairs* 41 (July 1963): 611.

² Others have made this point too – for example, Lawrence Kaplan, “NATO: The Second Generation,” in *NATO after Thirty Years* ed. Lawrence Kaplan and William Clawson (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1981), pp. 14, 29; William Park, *Defending the West: A History of NATO* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1986), p. vii; Paul Cornish, *Partnership in Crisis: The US, Europe and the Fall and Rise of NATO* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997), p. 2; Dieter Mahncke, Wyn Rees, and Wayne Thompson, *Redefining Transatlantic Security Relations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 105.

manifestation of this fixation on NATO crises is the enormous literature that has been written about them – a literature devoted to convincing its readers that these crises are real and that something should be done about them.³

In retrospect, claims that the Alliance is in crisis have been made so often that they may seem to be little more than a harmless cliché. This book takes a darker view of what has become the dominant mode for assessing the health and future prospects of perhaps the most influential international institution ever created. Political shorthand of this kind obscures more than it reveals; it also serves as an impediment rather than an aid to clear thinking about alliances in general and the Atlantic Alliance in particular.

In the rest of this chapter, I do not attempt to cover the scholarly literature on NATO in its entirety. Since the end of the Cold War, there have been many fine works using new theoretical tools to explain how the Atlantic Alliance operates and why it endures.⁴ My critique applies only to that portion of the NATO literature that falls within what I call, in the next section, the *alliance crisis syndrome*. This is a very large literature in its own right, and it poses important conceptual and theoretical challenges that, if left unresolved, will continue to impede progress toward a better understanding of how and why alliances form and come apart.

THE ALLIANCE CRISIS SYNDROME

The history of the Atlantic Alliance, as Stanley Hoffmann once wrote, is a history of crises. But what exactly does it mean to say that an alliance is in crisis?⁵

At the time they occurred, disputes like those over Suez during the 1950s, the French withdrawal from NATO's integrated military commands during the 1960s, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of the 1970s, or American opposition to a natural gas pipeline linking the Soviet Union to western Europe during the early 1980s seemed to contain within themselves the potential for

³ For overviews of the NATO-in-crisis literature, see Wallace Thies, "Crises and the Study of Alliance Politics," *Armed Forces and Society* 15 (Spring 1989): 349–369; Elizabeth Pond, *Beyond the Wall: Germany's Road to Reunification* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1993), pp. 276–278; Wallace Thies, "The 'Demise' of NATO: A Post-Mortem," *Parameters* 20 (June 1990): 17–30; Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), pp. 151–155.

⁴ For example, John Duffield, "International Regimes and Alliance Behavior: Explaining NATO Conventional Force Levels," *International Organization* 46 (Autumn 1992): 819–855; John Duffield, "NATO's Functions after the Cold War," *Political Science Quarterly* 109 (#5, 1994–1995): 763–787; Robert McCalla, "NATO's Persistence after the Cold War," *International Organization* 50 (Summer 1996): 445–475; Celeste Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO after the Cold War," *International Organization* 54 (Autumn 2000): 705–735.

⁵ Stanley Hoffmann, "NATO and Nuclear Weapons: Reasons and Unreason," *Foreign Affairs* 60 (Winter 1981/1982): 327. Martin Hillenbrand makes much the same point, "NATO and Western Security in an Era of Transition," *International Security* 2 (Fall 1977): 5.

severe and even unbearable strains on the Alliance. Viewed with the wisdom that hindsight provides, these episodes appear as transient phenomena, dominating the headlines for a few months until supplanted by the next intra-NATO row.

Because NATO crises have occurred so often and passed so quickly, observers straining to win and hold their audience's attention have frequently resorted to a particular way of writing about the Alliance and its ills. It is an approach found so often within the literature on NATO that it can usefully be labeled the "Alliance crisis syndrome" – namely, *exaggerated claims* based on *unexamined premises* and backed by *superficial comparisons* drawn from the history of the Alliance.

Exaggerated Claims

Instead of mere crises within the Alliance, observers have instead claimed that *their* subject is a "profound crisis,"⁶ a "deepening crisis,"⁷ a "fundamental crisis,"⁸ a "general crisis,"⁹ a "qualitatively different crisis,"¹⁰ an "unprecedented" crisis,¹¹ and even a "real crisis."¹² Two additional claims are often made to add substance and specificity to the overall alarmist outlook: (1) this crisis is the worst ever and, (2) the Alliance is in danger of falling apart or has even ceased to function (although the obituary has yet to be written).

The first of these loomed large in commentaries on the 2003 dispute over whether and when to go to war against Iraq. Henry Kissinger wrote in February 2003 that "The road to Iraqi disarmament has produced the gravest crisis in the Atlantic Alliance since its creation five decades ago."¹³ As seen by Elizabeth Pond, "relations in the transatlantic community . . . were in greater crisis in 2003 than ever before."¹⁴ Philip Gordon concurred: "The debate about

⁶ Klaus Knorr, "The Strained Alliance," in *NATO and American Security* ed. Klaus Knorr (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 3. Walter Hahn uses the same term in "Does NATO Have a Future?" *International Security Review* 5 (Summer 1980): 151.

⁷ Roger Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," in *NATO and American Security* ed. Klaus Knorr, p. 11.

⁸ Philip Windsor, *Germany and the Western Alliance: Lessons from the 1980s Crises* (International Institute of Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper #180, 1981), p. 1.

⁹ David Guess, "What the West Should Know about German Neutralism," *Commentary* 75 (January 1983): 30. Walter Laqueur uses the term "general NATO crisis," *Europe since Hitler* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 427.

¹⁰ Josef Joffe, "European-American Relations: The Enduring Crisis," *Foreign Affairs* 59 (Spring 1981): 838.

¹¹ Robert W. Tucker, "The Atlantic Alliance and Its Critics," *Commentary* 73 (May 1982): 63–64. See also Henry Kissinger, "A Plan to Reshape NATO," *Time*, March 5, 1984, p. 20.

¹² Laqueur, *Europe since Hitler*, p. 132. See also Hillenbrand, "NATO and Western Security in an Era of Transition," p. 20.

¹³ Henry Kissinger, "Role Reversal and Alliance Realities," *Washington Post*, February 10, 2003, p. A21.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Pond, *Friendly Fire: The Near-Death of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2004), p. ix. For a similar judgment, see Andrew Moravcsik, "Striking a New Transatlantic Bargain," *Foreign Affairs* 82 (July–August 2003): 74.

whether or not to invade Iraq has provoked one of the worst transatlantic crises . . . of the entire post-World War II period.”¹⁵ How do we know this crisis was the worst ever? “The cross-Atlantic vitriol,” Zbigniew Brzezinski explained, “is unprecedented in its ugliness, with NATO’s unity in real jeopardy.”¹⁶ Ronald Asmus agreed, calling the “current rift . . . unprecedented in its scope, intensity, and, at times, pettiness.”¹⁷

Concerning the latter claim, the 2003 crisis over Iraq produced numerous funereal judgments. Elizabeth Pond cited “the cumulative brawls that led to the near-death of the transatlantic alliance in 2002–2003.”¹⁸ Charles Krauthammer was more acerbic: “The grotesque performance of France, Germany and Belgium in blocking aid to Turkey marks the end of NATO’s useful life. Like the United Nations, it will simply wither of its own irrelevance.”¹⁹ “The damage inflicted on Washington’s ties to Europe by the Bush administration’s policy [toward Iraq],” Christopher Layne wrote, “is likely to prove real, lasting and, at the end of the day, irreparable.”²⁰

In 2003, the claim that the Atlantic Alliance was facing its greatest crisis ever was made so often and by so many expert observers that it might seem self-evident that something was terribly wrong, except for three problems. First, almost from the time the Alliance was formed, observers have been discovering ominous trends, problems that grow increasingly acute, and contradictions that deepen with each passing year. Predictions that the Alliance is doomed have been commonplace since the mid 1960s.²¹ These claims are almost never backed by the kind of evidence that would allow a disinterested observer to verify whether the alleged changes are actually occurring in the predicted direction. Instead, judgments about the Alliance’s health and future prospects are typically based on little more than impressions formed by

¹⁵ Philip Gordon, “The Crisis in the Alliance,” *Iraq Memo* (The Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, Memo No. 11, February 24, 2003), p. 1. Andrew Moravcsik, “Striking a New Transatlantic Bargain,” *Foreign Affairs* 82 (July/August 2003): 74, refers to “the most severe transatlantic tensions in a generation.”

¹⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Why Unity Is Essential,” *Washington Post*, February 19, 2003, p. A29.

¹⁷ Ronald Asmus, “Rebuilding the Atlantic Alliance,” *Foreign Affairs* 82 (September/October 2003): 20.

¹⁸ Pond, *Friendly Fire*, p. ix.

¹⁹ Charles Krauthammer, “A Costly Charade at the U.N.,” *Washington Post*, February 28, 2003, p. A23.

²⁰ Christopher Layne, “America As a European Hegemon,” *The National Interest* #72 (Summer 2004): 17. See also *Renewing the Atlantic Partnership*, Report of an Independent Task Force Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, Henry Kissinger and Lawrence Summers, Co-Chairs, 2004, p. 1.

²¹ For example, Ronald Steel, *The End of Alliance: America and the Future of Europe* (New York: Viking, 1964); Robert Kleiman, *Atlantic Crisis: American Diplomacy Confronts a Resurgent Europe* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964); Earl Ravenal, *NATO’s Unremarked Demise* (University of California, Berkeley, Institute of International Studies: Policy Papers in International Affairs, #10, 1979); Irving Kristol, “Does NATO Exist?” *Washington Quarterly* 2 (Autumn 1979): 45–53.

observers watching and listening as the latest transatlantic quarrel unfolds.²² Journalists accord great weight to complaints made by anonymous officials from defense and foreign ministries. Observers from the academic world write books and articles that analyze the underlying issues and prescribe needed changes. The sheer volume of material published on the Alliance's ills becomes an index of its troubles. The potential for self-fulfilling prophecies is very great.

Second, the widespread reliance on impressionistic evidence has rendered the NATO-in-crisis literature inherently subjective and imprecise. The "transatlantic clash over Iraq," Philip Gordon wrote in 2004, provided "a sense of what a transatlantic divorce might look like and how it might become possible."²³ Looking at the same events, Thomas Mowle concluded that even though "the Iraqi crisis made clear that the United States and its allies in Europe are increasingly at odds," the relationship "is not in a crisis, yet."²⁴ Nor is this a new problem. To some, the 1956 Suez Crisis was NATO's gravest to date²⁵; to Klaus Knorr, Suez was one of the "many but minor pulls" that even a solid alliance will inevitably encounter.²⁶ Ronald Steel proclaimed "the end of [the] alliance" in 1964, but for Kurt Birrenbach "the first symptoms of estrangement" between America and Europe wouldn't appear until 1973.²⁷ The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Josef Joffe wrote, "left a legacy of confusion, distrust and resentment which, in retrospect, turns the many disputes of the past into minor family squabbles."²⁸ In Stanley Hoffmann's view, the divisions over Afghanistan were *less* than in the case of, say, the 1973 Yom Kippur War.²⁹ Writing about NATO in the 1990s, Binnendijk and Kugler saw it as "filled with optimism and hopeful visions of a bright future for itself."³⁰ As recalled by Richard

²² For a rare bit of candor in this regard, see Keith Dunn and Stephen Flanagan, "NATO at Forty: An Overview," in *NATO's Fifth Decade* ed. Keith Dunn and Stephen Flanagan (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1990), p. 5.

²³ Philip Gordon, "The Transatlantic Alliance and the International System," in *Conflict and Cooperation in Transatlantic Relations* ed. Daniel Hamilton (Washington, DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2004), p. 75. For a similar view, see Pond, *Friendly Fire*, p. 72.

²⁴ Thomas Mowle, *Allies at Odds?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 1, 164. See also Michael Brenner and Guillaume Parmentier, *Reconcilable Differences: U.S.-French Relations in the New Era* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2002), p. 3.

²⁵ Robert Strausz-Hupé, James Dougherty, and William Kintner, *Building the Atlantic World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 42; Edmond Taylor, "This Long NATO Crisis," *The Reporter* 24 (April 21, 1966): 17.

²⁶ Knorr, "The Strained Alliance," p. 3.

²⁷ Steel, *The End of Alliance*; Kurt Birrenbach, "The United States and Western Europe: Partners or Rivals?" *Orbis* 17 (Summer 1973): 405.

²⁸ Josef Joffe, "European-American Relations: The Enduring Crisis," *Foreign Affairs* 59 (Spring 1981): 835.

²⁹ Stanley Hoffmann, "The Western Alliance: Drift or Harmony?" *International Security* 6 (Fall 1981): 106.

³⁰ Hans Binnendijk and Richard Kugler, "Dual-Track Transformation for the Atlantic Alliance," *Defense Horizons* #35 (November 2003): 2.

Holbrooke, “By the spring of 1995 it had become commonplace to say that Washington’s relations with our European allies were worse than at any time since the 1956 Suez crisis.”³¹

Third, the inability of observers to back up their assessments with something more than impressionistic claims about vitriol and petty behavior has often led them to fall back on repetition or even hype as the basis for their judgments. Henry Kissinger owns the distinction of pronouncing the Atlantic Alliance in serious trouble in all six decades of its existence.^{32–36} Charles Krauthammer’s February 2003 claim that the pre–Iraq War dispute over aid to Turkey “marks the end of NATO’s useful life”³⁷ would likely be more persuasive had he not three months earlier proclaimed that “NATO as a military alliance is dead. It took ill with the fall of the Berlin Wall and then died in Afghanistan.”³⁸ The latter claim too was problematic because seven months before that the same Charles Krauthammer wrote, “NATO died in Afghanistan . . . NATO, as a military alliance, is dead.”³⁹

³¹ Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, rev. ed. (New York: Modern Library, 1999), p. 361. See also Rob de Wijk, who dates an “all-time low” in the transatlantic relationship to November 1994, *NATO on the Brink of the New Millennium* (London: Brassey’s, 1997), p. 111, quoted in David Yost, *NATO Transformed* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p. 195.

³² Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), pp. 201–206; Henry Kissinger, “The Search for Stability,” *Foreign Affairs* 37 (July 1959): 550–551.

³³ Henry Kissinger, *The Troubled Partnership* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965); Kissinger, “Central Issues of American Foreign Policy,” in *Agenda for the Nation* ed. Kermit Gordon (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1968), pp. 594, 596.

³⁴ As Secretary of State, Kissinger proclaimed that 1973 would be the “year of Europe,” the year when the Alliance’s troubles were finally seriously addressed.

³⁵ Henry Kissinger, “Something Is Deeply Wrong in the Atlantic Alliance,” *Washington Post*, December 21, 1981, p. A21; Henry Kissinger, “A Plan to Reshape NATO,” *Time*, March 5, 1984, pp. 20–24. See also Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, “To Withdraw Missiles We Must Add Conditions,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 26, 1987, Part V, p. 1, which predicted “the most profound crisis” in NATO history if a zero-zero agreement was reached on intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe.

³⁶ Henry Kissinger, “The End of NATO?” *Washington Post*, July 24, 1990, p. A23. See also Henry Kissinger, “Expand NATO Now,” *Washington Post*, December 19, 1994, p. A27, which claimed that “The level of bitter recriminations over Bosnia within the Atlantic Alliance is unparalleled since the Suez crisis of nearly four decades ago.” David Denoon was the first to make this point about Kissinger’s propensity for pronouncing the Alliance in crisis, in his essay “The Context,” in *Constraints on Strategy* ed. David Denoon (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1986), p. 9 (note 62).

³⁷ Krauthammer, “A Costly Charade at the UN.”

³⁸ Charles Krauthammer, “The Bold Road to NATO Expansion,” *Washington Post*, November 22, 2002, p. A41.

³⁹ Charles Krauthammer, “Re-Imagining NATO,” *Washington Post*, May 24, 2002, p. A35. See also Jeffrey Gedmin, “The Alliance is Doomed,” *Washington Post*, May 20, 2002, p. A21. Five years later, the same Charles Krauthammer was scoffing at claims that the Atlantic Alliance was in disarray (“Alliances in Ruins?” *Washington Post*, November 16, 2007, p. A33).

Unexamined Premises

The resort to inflated language by observers straining to make their voices heard has meant that important analytical issues are often overlooked or submerged in a torrent of alarmist claims. Discussions of the state of the Alliance typically begin with the claim that it is again in crisis, followed by a review of causes, consequences, and proposed solutions. None of the many writers who have contributed to the NATO-in-crisis literature have defined their terms in a way that would permit a disinterested observer to know when the Alliance is in crisis and when it is not.⁴⁰ Nor do they conceptualize these episodes in a way that would make it possible to reconcile conflicting claims about the relative severity of various crises or even about when they begin and end. Instead, judgments about whether the Alliance is in crisis and how bad the situation has become are typically based on indicators like harsh language, petty behavior, or the number of points at issue among the members.

Consider in this regard the evidence used to support the claim that the 2003 crisis over Iraq was one of the worst ever, if not *the* worst ever. Philip Gordon cited “the tone of the transatlantic debate,” which “has degraded to levels not seen in recent memory.”⁴¹ A Council on Foreign Relations study group agreed: “For a time, rhetoric replaced diplomacy as the primary instrument for taking positions, making criticisms, and shaping conclusions.”⁴² Elizabeth Pond used three indicators: “the broad spectrum of mutually reinforcing disputes, the accompanying vitriol, and . . . the divergence in self-identification on the two sides of the Atlantic.” In her view, the sheer number of issues at stake exacerbated by “bad temper” and an “unusually high incidence of personal pique” were what made the 2003 pre-Iraq War crisis NATO’s worst ever.⁴³

There are, however, at least four problems with this approach. First, claims that NATO is facing an unusually large number of troublesome issues and/or an unusually high level of vitriol are common in the history of the Alliance. As early as 1957, a distinguished study group was formed to mull over whether

⁴⁰ The exception that proves the rule is Francis Beer, who defines a NATO crisis as a “situation in which a significant segment of relevant political actors perceives that fundamental values of the system – or even its future existence – are seriously threatened” (*Integration and Disintegration in NATO* [Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969], p. 281). I know of no study of crisis in the Alliance that even cites, much less builds upon, Beer’s work in this regard. Richard Neustadt defines a crisis between allies in terms of four elements – muddled perceptions, stifled communications, disappointed expectations, and paranoid reactions – but his work deals only with bilateral relationships rather than the Alliance as a whole (*Alliance Politics* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1970], pp. 56, 71–72). Citations to Neustadt are likewise conspicuously absent from the NATO-in-crisis literature.

⁴¹ Gordon, “The Crisis in the Alliance,” p. 1.

⁴² *Renewing the Atlantic Partnership*, p. 1.

⁴³ Pond, *Friendly Fire*, pp. x–xii.

the Alliance had a future.⁴⁴ “Scarcely a month passes,” an American observer wrote toward the end of the Cold War, “without a book, article, or speech proclaiming a new or imminent ‘crisis’ in NATO.”⁴⁵ Nasty language is an old problem rather than a new one. During the 1956 Suez crisis, British Conservatives accused the United States of “betrayal” and wondered openly if the Alliance had come to an end.⁴⁶ During the Bosnia peace negotiations at Dayton in 1995, the British representative “exploded at the American ‘bastards,’ and a French diplomat had this to say about [Richard] Holbrooke: ‘He flatters, he lies, he humiliates; he is a sort of brutal and schizophrenic Mazarin.’”⁴⁷ NATO members are *always* sniping at one another. When they do it in public it’s called a crisis; when they do it in private it’s called diplomacy.

Second, students of NATO take for granted that the more points at issue, the worse the Alliance’s condition must be. The problem here is that counting the number of issues involved is not a reliable indicator of whether the Alliance is doing well or poorly. The Alliance’s so-called crises do more than strain relations among its members. They also mobilize the Alliance’s admirers and defenders, of whom there are many. Crises offer opportunities to ambitious politicians – to mediate, to ingratiate themselves to one side or the other, to score points at the expense of political rivals, or even reconcile with those from whom they (or their predecessors) have been estranged.⁴⁸ An issue that proves divisive in one context can be a catalyst for change in another. In 1956, British Labor blamed the Tory government, not the United States, for the Suez calamity. As recounted by Aneurin Bevan, “the line taken by President Eisenhower drew him closer to Labor and further away from his political counterparts in Britain. Indeed, informed circles of Labor actually grew more friendly to the United States in the second half of 1956, for Labor’s Suez policy more closely resembled that of the White House than of our own Conservative Government.”⁴⁹ Not to be outdone, Harold Macmillan, Anthony Eden’s successor as prime minister, set out to restore the special relationship with the

⁴⁴ *NATO: A Critical Appraisal*, A Report Prepared by Gardner Patterson and Edgar Furniss, Jr., On the Basis of an International Conference Held at Princeton University, June 19–29, 1957 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Conference on NATO, 1957). Their lead sentence: “The year 1957 finds the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in doubt” (p. 1).

⁴⁵ John Reed, Jr., *Germany and NATO* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1987), p. 104. See also Cornish, *Partnership in Crisis*, p. 114.

⁴⁶ Denis Healey, “Britain and NATO,” in *NATO and American Security* ed. Klaus Knorr, p. 221.

⁴⁷ Sebastian Mallaby, “A Campaign for the Allies Too,” *Washington Post*, March 22, 1994, p. A21. See also Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 318.

⁴⁸ See, for example, DeNeen Brown, “Canada’s Prime Minister Seeks to Mend Fences,” *Washington Post*, December 23, 2003, p. A12; and Keith Richburg, “French Defense Minister, Visiting U.S., Hopes to Improve Ties,” *Washington Post*, January 16, 2004, p. A12.

⁴⁹ Aneurin Bevan, “Britain and America at Loggerheads,” *Foreign Affairs* 36 (October 1957): 65.

United States. He was so successful that he and his American counterparts, who were also eager to put Suez behind them, unwittingly set the stage for another “most serious crisis” – namely the French veto in 1963 of Britain’s application to join the Common Market.⁵⁰

Third, the NATO-in-crisis literature suggests that disputes within the Alliance grow more debilitating over time, in the sense that each new crisis is promptly labeled the worst ever. But if new crises impose greater strains than all previous ones, why hasn’t the Alliance collapsed? One can’t help but wonder how an institution perpetually on life support could endure for more than a half-century, much less win the Cold War, and nearly double in size in recent years.

Fourth, the NATO-in-crisis literature suggests that there is a threshold that separates crises from noncrisis situations. After listing the many and varied strains on the Alliance as of 2003, a Council on Foreign Relations study group, wrote that “The war in Iraq brought these strains to the point of crisis.”⁵¹ Presumably once the crisis threshold is crossed, behavior changes, political processes change, and so too do political outcomes, otherwise what would be the point of labeling a dispute a crisis? But what kinds of changes occur during a crisis (vitriol and pettiness aside)? The NATO-in-crisis literature has little to say on this point. Conversely, vitriol and pettiness are unreliable indicators of how well the Alliance is performing. Knowing that “any credible threat of a bombing campaign would depend on the United States, . . . U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke was dominating the diplomacy of the Kosovo crisis. His brusqueness left the Europeans in general, and the British in particular, aggrieved.”⁵² Yet the war for Kosovo is today generally regarded as a NATO triumph rather than a debilitating crisis.⁵³

Superficial Comparisons

Writers who claim that NATO is facing its greatest crisis ever almost always include a disclaimer indicating awareness that there have been many such

⁵⁰ Spaak, “Hold Fast,” p. 619; Strausz-Hupé, Kintner, and Dougherty, *Building the Atlantic World*, p. 326; Stanley Hoffmann, “Discord in Community,” in *The Atlantic Community* ed. Francis O. Wilcox and H. Field Havilland, Jr. (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 4; William T. R. Fox and Annette Baker Fox, *NATO and the Range of American Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 16.

⁵¹ *Renewing the Atlantic Partnership*, p. 1. For a similar approach, see Herman Kahn and William Pfaff, “Our Alternatives in Europe,” *Foreign Affairs* 44 (July 1966): 587.

⁵² Martin Walker, “Europe: Superstate or Superpower?” *World Policy Journal* 17 (Winter 2000/2001): 11.

⁵³ Ronald Asmus describes the 1990s as a “renaissance” for NATO (“Rebuilding the Atlantic Alliance,” p. 20); while Andrew Moravcsik cites a “trend . . . toward transatlantic harmony” during the two decades prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq (“Striking a New Transatlantic Bargain,” p. 78).

crises before. But they also insist that *their* crisis is different – indeed, very different, and thus more stressful – than all previous ones. “In the past,” Elizabeth Pond wrote regarding the 2003 Iraq War crisis, “however heated the confrontations, transatlantic quarrels tended to be over single issues, or at most two or three questions at a time, not over a whole range of topics that obstructed conciliation on any one of them and maximized ill-will.”⁵⁴ “The alliance,” Philip Gordon noted, also regarding the Iraq War crisis, “has weathered many serious crises before – but without the common purpose of the Cold War to hold the allies together, this time the damage could prove far more lasting.”⁵⁵ What made Iraq such a difficult problem for the Alliance? “It was,” a Council on Foreign Relations study group wrote, “the first major crisis within the Alliance to take place in the absence of an agreed-upon danger.”⁵⁶

There are, however, at least three reasons for being skeptical about claims of this sort. First, the historical comparisons employed are often so superficial as to be almost useless for judgments regarding the severity of the Alliance’s troubles and its future prospects. The authors who write about NATO’s worst-crisis-ever take it as self-evident that the Alliance is again in crisis. For them references to history are a way of (1) avoiding the “cry-wolf” problem, by indicating awareness that the alarm bell has rung many times before, and (2) transitioning to the main point – namely, that *this* crisis is different and thus worse than all the rest.

Second, there is the problem of conflicting claims. In 2001, Antony Blinken wrote that America and Europe were converging rather than splitting apart, and that the very idea of a crisis between them “is largely a myth manufactured by elites – politicians, intellectuals, and the media – whose views clash with those of the people they purport to represent.”⁵⁷ Six months later, Jessica Tuchman Matthews wrote that “Today’s differences amount to much more than the quarrels among friends that have characterized the relationship for decades.”⁵⁸ Whose view was more correct? How would we know?

Third, consider an earlier period in which claims that NATO was facing its worst crisis ever were also widespread – namely, the 1980s. The first

⁵⁴ Pond, *Friendly Fire*, p. X. Twenty years earlier, distinguished scholars were making essentially the same argument regarding the number and complexity of the issues straining the Alliance. See, for example, Karl Kaiser et al., *Western Security: What Has Changed? What Should Be Done?* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1981), pp. 8–10, 20–21; Robert Tucker, “The Atlantic Alliance and Its Critics,” *Commentary* 73 (May 1982): 63–64.

⁵⁵ Gordon, “The Crisis in the Alliance,” p. 1.

⁵⁶ *Renewing the Atlantic Partnership*, p. 9.

⁵⁷ Antony Blinken, “The False Crisis Over the Atlantic,” *Foreign Affairs* 80 (May/June 2001): 35–48 (the quoted excerpt is from p. 47).

⁵⁸ Jessica Tuchman Matthews, “Estranged Partners,” *Foreign Policy* 127 (November/December 2001): 48.

such claims in this regard came in 1980, when several observers judged relations between the United States and its European allies to be worse than at any point since the Second World War, owing to disagreements over how to respond to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.⁵⁹ The all-time-low argument was made again toward the end of 1980, this time as a result of the clash between the incoming Reagan administration's commitment to large increases in defense spending and a harder line toward the Soviet Union and the Europeans' preference for arms control and détente.⁶⁰ By the winter of 1981–1982, a third version was in circulation, which attributed the Alliance's worst crisis ever to the intra-NATO argument over whether to deploy Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles in Western Europe.⁶¹ By the summer of 1982, a fourth version was in circulation, which claimed that relations among the NATO allies were at an all-time low due to the dispute over a Soviet pipeline intended to deliver natural gas to Western Europe.⁶² By the end of 1983, both the Atlantic Alliance and the European Community (forerunner of today's European Union) were supposedly in their worst state ever, the former due to a possible trade war over agricultural and other products and the latter due to the inability of its members to agree on

- ⁵⁹ Philip Windsor calls the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan “the most severe crisis in [NATO’s] history” “Germany and the Western Alliance,” *The Adelphi Papers* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, #170, 1981), p. 2. See also Bradley Graham, “NATO: Changing Alliance,” *Washington Post*, May 12, 1980, p. A1; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “Tribulations of the Alliance,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 22, 1980, p. 20; Michael Getler, “Crises Put New Strains on Alliance,” *Washington Post*, May 24, 1980, p. A1; Stanley Hoffmann, “The Crisis in the West,” *New York Review of Books* 27 (July 17, 1980): 41–48; Joffe, “European-American Relations.”
- ⁶⁰ Richard Burt, “Baker Assails View of West Europeans,” and Leonard Silk, “Discord Stirs With Allies,” both in *New York Times*, November 14, 1980, pp. A7, D2; “Push Comes to Shove,” *The Economist*, January 3, 1981, p. 7; Bradley Graham, “U.S. Calls on Allies to Boost Defense Outlay,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 22, 1981, p. 1; Flora Lewis, “A Mature Alliance,” *New York Times*, February 23, 1981, p. A19; “Did You Say Allies?” *The Economist*, June 6, 1981, pp. 11–13.
- ⁶¹ Hoffmann, “NATO and Nuclear Weapons,” p. 327; James Goldsborough, “The Roots of Western Disunity,” *New York Times Magazine*, May 9, 1982, pp. 48–49, 60; John Newhouse, “Arms and Allies,” *The New Yorker*, February 28, 1983, p. 64; Stephen Haseler, “The Euromissile Crisis,” *Commentary* 75 (May 1983): 28.
- ⁶² Flora Lewis, “France Defies Ban by U.S. on Supplies for Soviet Pipeline,” *New York Times*, July 23, 1982, p. A6; Hedrick Smith, “Pipeline Dispute: Reagan Aims to Punish Soviet,” *New York Times*, July 24, 1982, p. 5; “Sanctions Whipsaw Alliance,” *Business Week*, August 9, 1982, p. 20; Josef Joffe, “West’s ‘Linkage’ Policy Merely Unchains Soviet Power,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 1, 1983, p. 22. For a retrospective judgment that the pipeline issue produced a “crisis” in the Alliance, see Beverly Crawford and Stefanie Lenway, “Decision Modes and International Regime Change: Western Collaboration on East-West Trade,” *World Politics* 37 (April 1985): 380. See also Jonathan Stern, “Specters and Pipe Dreams,” *Foreign Policy* 48 (Fall 1982): 21–36; and Josef Joffe, “Europe and America: the Politics of Resentment (Cont’d),” in *Foreign Affairs: America and the World 1982* ed. William P. Bundy (New York: Pergamon, 1983), pp. 570–576.

a revised schedule of contributions in support of the Community's programs.⁶³

The manner in which the focus of attention shifted within the span of a few years from Afghanistan to defense spending to nuclear weapons to the Siberian pipeline to trade disputes as the basis for claims that the Alliance was facing its greatest crisis ever is suggestive of the dangers inherent in relying on highly glossed comparisons between today's disagreement and previous ones. Prior to the 1980s, the Alliance seemed to confront a new crisis almost annually. By the start of the 1980s, it seemed as if every year the Alliance was facing its worst crisis ever. If we take these claims seriously, relations between the United States and its European allies fell to their lowest point since the Second World War in 1980,⁶⁴ 1981,⁶⁵ 1982,⁶⁶ 1983,⁶⁷ and 1987.⁶⁸ Predictions that the Alliance was on the verge of collapse or that it had already ceased to exist in all but name

⁶³ The former was not a NATO issue but did involve NATO members on both sides of the Atlantic, which raised the question of whether military cooperation could continue in the midst of a trade war. See, for example, Clyde Farnsworth, "A Brisk Trade in Transoceanic Accusations," *New York Times*, December 25, 1983, Sec. 4, p. 3; Clyde Farnsworth, "E.E.C. Nears Retaliation Over Steel," *New York Times*, January 11, 1984, p. 23. See also Michel Fribourg, "An Agriculture 'War' Would Be Disastrous," *New York Times*, June 7, 1983, p. 27; and Nicholas Butler, "The Ploughshares War Between America and Europe," *Foreign Affairs* 62 (Fall 1983): 105–122. On the European Economic Community's problems, see Flora Lewis, "Economics Is Security," *New York Times*, June 3, 1983, p. 27; Paul Lewis, "Common Market Chiefs in Crucial Parley Today," *New York Times*, December 4, 1983, p. 3; Paul Lewis, "Common Market Ends Summit Talks in Total Deadlock," *New York Times*, December 7, 1983, p. 1; Paul Lewis, "Common Market: Gravest Crisis Yet," *New York Times*, December 8, 1983, p. 33; Paul Lewis, "'Crisis' in Common Market Could Ruin It, French Warn," *New York Times*, January 19, 1984, p. 1.

⁶⁴ See Graham, "NATO: Changing Alliance," p. A1; Schlesinger, "Tribulations of the Alliance," p. 20; Getler, "Crises Put New Strains on Alliance," p. A1.

⁶⁵ Flora Lewis, "Alarm Bells in the West," in *Foreign Affairs: America and the World, 1981* ed. William P. Bundy (New York: Pergamon, 1982), p. 551; "Push Comes to Shove," *The Economist*, January 3, 1981, p. 7; "Did You Say Allies?" *The Economist*, June 6, 1981, p. 11.

⁶⁶ See Lewis, "France Defies Ban by U.S. on Supplies for Soviet Pipeline," p. A6; Smith, "Pipeline Dispute: Reagan Aims to Punish Soviet," p. 5 and "Sanctions Whipsaw Alliance," p. 20. See also Benjamin Cohen, "An Explosion in the Kitchen? Economic Relations with Other Advanced Industrial States," in *Eagle Defiant* ed. Kenneth Oye, Robert Lieber, and Donald Rothchild (Boston: Little Brown, 1983), pp. 119–20, 125.

⁶⁷ Harald Malmgren, quoted in Clyde Farnsworth, "A Brisk Trade in Transoceanic Accusations." See also Robert Osgood, "The Atlantic Alliance, Then and Now: Functions, Performance, and Future," in *The Atlantic Alliance: Perspectives from the Successor Generation* ed. Alan Platt (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corp., 1983), pp. 9–10.

⁶⁸ Christopher Layne, "Atlanticism without NATO," *Foreign Policy* #67 (Summer 1987): 22–45; Michael Howard, "A European Perspective on the Reagan Years," in *Foreign Affairs: America and the World 1987/1988* ed. William Hyland (New York: Pergamon, 1988), p. 479.

found their way into print in 1981,⁶⁹ 1982,⁷⁰ 1983,⁷¹ 1986,⁷² 1987,⁷³ 1988,⁷⁴ 1989,⁷⁵ and 1990.⁷⁶ Were the disputes of the 1980s really more serious than all previous periods of strain within the Alliance? Or did observers exaggerate the severity of these challenges?⁷⁷ More important, were the all-time lows registered during the 1980s lower or higher than the all-time lows caused by the disputes over Bosnia in the 1990s and Iraq in 2002–2003? How would we know? Erik Jones inadvertently illustrates what might be called the *law of diminishing consequences* – namely, a widespread tendency to remember the

- ⁶⁹ Theodore Draper, “The Western Misalliance,” *Washington Quarterly* 4 (Winter 1981): 51, 63; Seymour Weiss, quoted in Leslie Gelb, “NATO Is Facing a Paralysis of Will, Experts Contend,” *New York Times*, July 12, 1981, p. 6; Irving Kristol, “NATO at a Dead End,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 15, 1981, p. 20; Melvin Lasky, “Tremors on West Germany’s Political Seismograph,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 21, 1981, p. 23; Ronald Steel, “A Neutral Europe?” *The New Republic*, November 11, 1981, p. 22; Wayne Biddle, “Neutron Bomb: An Explosive Issue,” *New York Times Magazine*, November 15, 1981, p. 56.
- ⁷⁰ Tucker, “The Atlantic Alliance and Its Critics,” p. 72; Joffe, “Europe and America,” pp. 569, 589–590.
- ⁷¹ William Pfaff, “Reflections: The Waiting Nations,” *The New Yorker*, January 3, 1983, p. 58; Pierre Lellouche, Dan Smith, discussion comments in *The Atlantic Alliance: Perspectives from the Successor Generation* ed. Alan Platt, pp. 40, 89.
- ⁷² Michael Elliott, “Europe’s No-Nuke Left Could Mean the End of NATO,” *Washington Post*, September 7, 1986, p. C1; Karen DeYoung, “Labor’s Gains Imperil British Role in NATO,” *Washington Post*, September 29, 1986, pp. A1, A22; Karen DeYoung, “Labor’s Kinnock Leaves for U.S. to Bolster Image, Explain Policy,” *Washington Post*, November 30, 1986, p. A30; Stephen Rosenfeld, “Alliance Free-loaders,” *Washington Post*, December 5, 1986, p. A27.
- ⁷³ Christopher Layne, “Atlanticism without NATO,” *Foreign Policy* 67 (Summer 1987): 22–45; Francois Heisbourg, “Can the Atlantic Alliance Last Out the Century?” *International Affairs* 63 (Summer 1987): 413–423. See also Nixon and Kissinger, “To Withdraw Missiles We Must Add Conditions”; Jeanne Kirkpatrick, “An Arms Deal We Should Refuse,” *Washington Post*, May 3, 1987, p. B7; Jim Hoagland, “The NATO Crisis Is Reagan’s Doing,” *Washington Post*, May 9, 1987, p. A23.
- ⁷⁴ Alan Ned Sabrosky, “Alliances in U.S. Foreign Policy,” and Earl Ravenal, “Extended Deterrence and Alliance Cohesion,” both in *Alliances in U.S. Foreign Policy* ed. Alan Ned Sabrosky (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 11, 23; William Safire, “The European Pillar,” *New York Times*, April 7, 1988, p. A27; Barry Blechman, “Strengthen the Alliance,” *Washington Post*, May 1, 1988, p. C7; James Adams, “Memo to NATO: Shape Up Before America Ships Out,” *Washington Post*, May 15, 1988, p. B1.
- ⁷⁵ W. R. Smyser, “Present at the Destruction?” *Washington Post*, February 13, 1989, p. A23; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Germany’s Slippery Slope,” *Washington Post*, February 17, 1989, p. A27; Robert McCartney, “West German Action, U.S. Inaction Trouble North Atlantic Alliance,” *Washington Post*, May 8, 1989, pp. A17, A20.
- ⁷⁶ Ronald Steel, “Europe after the Superpowers,” in *Sea-Changes: American Foreign Policy in a World Transformed* ed. Nicholas Rizopoulos (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1990), p. 16.
- ⁷⁷ Complaints about inflated language were registered during the 1960s by Laurance Martin, “Europe and the Future of the Grand Alliance,” in *Foreign Policy in the Sixties* ed. Roger Hilsman and Robert Good (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1965), p. 18; during the 1970s by Miles Kahler, “The United States and Western Europe,” in *Eagle Defiant* ed. Oye et al., p. 273; and during the 1980s by Wichard Woike, “A Crisis in U.S.-West European Relations?” *NATO Review* 29 (October 1981): 14, but they obviously were not heeded.

past as more tranquil than it seemed at the time – when he wrote in 2004 that “Daddy’s NATO was boring, dependable, trustworthy. Transatlantic relations today are anything but.”⁷⁸ Yet if “Daddy’s NATO” is one generation earlier than Jones’s assessment, that would take us back to the 1980s, when claims of NATO’s impending demise echoed from op-ed pages to scholarly journals and back again.

In summary, what we have here is a vast literature filled with claims that NATO is in disarray, is about to fall apart, or even has ceased to exist in all but name. These claims are based on evidence that is largely impressionistic; the claims themselves are inherently subjective and imprecise; and the makers of these claims rely heavily on shrillness and even hype to get their point across. A plunge into this literature reveals so many “growing divergences” and “widening gulfs” that perhaps the most amazing thing about NATO is that it still exists. Predictions that the Alliance is doomed have been common since the mid 1960s, and since the early 1980s the Alliance no longer seems to face mere crises; instead, each new crisis is promptly dubbed the worst ever. There is, however, no way to reconcile conflicting claims about which crisis really is the worst; indeed, there is no accepted method for judging when crises begin and end. The next section asks how did this happen and what might be done about it.

A CRISIS IN THE ALLIANCE: CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

Progress toward cumulative knowledge about alliances in general and the Atlantic Alliance in particular is unlikely if widely used concepts like that of a NATO crisis remain vague and imprecise. The concept of an *international crisis* has proven very useful because it directs attention to the distinctive behaviors, processes, and outcomes found in situations characterized by high threat, short decision time, and surprise⁷⁹; alternatively, situations in which events move at a faster than normal pace, the intensity of government interactions is heightened, and the danger of war seems greater than usual.⁸⁰ Because international crises constitute a class of events that has been “rigorously defined so that any competent individual can reliably determine whether or not a particular occurrence constitutes a crisis,” it is possible to learn something about most such crises by studying intensively one or a few.⁸¹ For the concept of a NATO crisis to serve a similar purpose, it too must be rigorously

⁷⁸ Erik Jones, “Introduction,” *International Affairs* 80 (#4, 2004): 587.

⁷⁹ Charles Hermann, “Threat, Time, and Surprise: A Simulation of International Crisis,” in *International Crises: Insights from Behavioral Research* ed. Charles Herrmann (New York: Free Press, 1972); Glenn Paige, *The Korean Decision* (New York: Free Press, 1968); Charles Herrmann, *Crises and Foreign Policy: A Simulation Analysis* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969).

⁸⁰ Oran Young, *The Politics of Force: Bargaining During International Crises* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 6–15.

⁸¹ Hermann, “Threat, Time, and Surprise,” pp. 187, 207. Specific examples include Ole Holsti, “The 1914 Case,” *American Political Science Review* 59 (June 1965): 365–378; and Paige, *The Korean Decision*.

defined so that any competent individual can determine whether an episode qualifies as a crisis or not. "If everything is crisis or, more exactly, if many different kinds of situations are labeled crises, then the factor becomes a constant, variations of which do not exist and therefore cannot be related to variations in other aspects of the social process."⁸² Provided agreement can be reached on what sets NATO crises apart from mere stresses and strains within the Alliance,⁸³ it should then be possible to rank NATO crises according to severity and to investigate whether and to what extent these crises result in behaviors, processes, and outcomes not found during noncrisis periods.

This is not, however, the path taken by the NATO-in-crisis literature. The zeal with which observers have sought to rush into print regarding the latest intra-NATO dispute has meant that these sorts of conceptual issues have gone largely unexplored, indeed unmentioned. In retrospect, there are at least four reasons why the concept of a crisis in the Alliance has proven an analytical dead end.

First, there is no agreement on what it means to say that NATO is in crisis (again). How do we know the Alliance is in crisis? The journalist Meg Greenfield was perhaps closest to the truth when she answered, "It says so in the papers."⁸⁴ Everyone *knows* the Alliance is in crisis, just like everyone *knows* the latest one is the worst ever. But if these so-called NATO crises are so severe, why do they fade so quickly as new issues arise between the United States and its European allies? More important, if these crises are so stressful, why does NATO still exist? How did it win the Cold War?

Second, precisely because so many previous claims that the Alliance is in its worst shape ever have proven to be false alarms, observers have tried hard to explain how *their* crisis differs from and thus is more dangerous than previous ones.⁸⁵ Showing how the latest crisis differs from earlier ones is an integral part of the NATO-in-crisis literature because it is only by discovering allegedly new and unprecedented challenges that observers claiming that this time the fatal

⁸² James A. Robinson, "Crisis Decision-Making," in *Political Science Annual*, vol. 2, 1969-1970 ed. James A. Robinson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), p. 112.

⁸³ For example, Marion Dönhoff discusses various "irritations" in the U.S.-West German relationship but without ever using the term "crisis" ("Bonn and Washington: The Strained Relationship," *Foreign Affairs* 57 [Summer 1979]: 1052-1064).

⁸⁴ Meg Greenfield, "The European Blues," *Washington Post*, May 14, 1980, p. A23. See also Wallace Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), p. 283.

⁸⁵ For example, Walter Hahn, "Does NATO Have a Future?" *International Security Review* 5 (Summer 1980): 151-154; Joffe, "European-American Relations," pp. 835-838; Pierre Lelouche, "Europe and Her Defense," *Foreign Affairs* 59 (Spring 1981): 818-819; Draper, "The Western Misalliance," p. 14; Andre Fontaine, "Transatlantic Doubts and Dreams, in *Foreign Affairs: America and the World 1980* ed. William P. Bundy (New York: Pergamon, 1981), p. 578; William Hyland, "The Atlantic Crisis," *Daedalus* 110 (Winter 1981): 41; Kaiser et al., *Western Security*, pp. 7-9; Tucker, "The Atlantic Alliance and Its Critics," pp. 63-64; Joffe, "Europe and America," 568-569; Heisbourg, "Can the Atlantic Alliance Last Out the Century?" p. 413.

crisis is at hand can hope to set themselves apart from their mistaken predecessors. Indeed, the greater the number of previous false alarms, the harder the authors of this literature must work to sustain the claim that *their* crisis really is different. This insistence that each new crisis is *sui generis*, in turn, goes a long way toward explaining why there has been no progress toward conceptualizing NATO crises so that they constitute a class of situations analogous to international crises and thus no progress toward cumulative knowledge about the Alliance and its crises. What else should we expect as long as students of the Alliance insist that what they are observing is new and different and thus not comparable to what happened in the past? And if every crisis *is* new and different from all the rest, observers are free to read into it as much or as little significance as they see fit.⁸⁶

Third, the failure to take concept clarification and development seriously has meant that there is no consensus on how to make meaningful comparisons between NATO crises that occur in different time periods. It would be very useful to be able to rank NATO crises according to their relative severity, because the more the severe the crisis, presumably the more pronounced the effects on behavior, processes, and outcomes. The NATO-in-crisis literature, however, essentially dodges this issue by claiming over and over that the latest crisis is both unprecedented and the worst ever, which (if taken literally) would mean the 2003 crisis over Iraq was worse than the 1990s argument over Bosnia, which was worse than the 1982 argument over the Soviet natural gas pipeline, which was worse than the 1980 argument over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which was worse than the French withdrawal from NATO's integrated military commands in 1966, which was worse than the 1956 disagreement over Suez. Yet even a brief foray into the history of the Alliance is likely to leave one skeptical of claims that the latest crisis (whichever it happens to be) is worse than all previous ones. In 2003, to cite one example, the French and the Germans argued that the use of force against Iraq should be delayed, not ruled out entirely. In 1956, in contrast, the United States humiliated its British and French allies by forcing them to halt a military operation already in progress and close to achieving its objectives.

Fourth, consider what happens if we broaden our outlook to include non-NATO cases. The broader literature on alliances (political science and diplomatic history) suggests that many of the alliances that formed and then dissolved as part of the rivalry among the great powers prior to 1945 *should* have been in crisis at some point in their often-brief existence (likewise post-1945

⁸⁶ Note in this regard the divergent views of the participants in a conference at the RAND Corporation in February 1983: Pierre Lellouche, Josef Joffe, and Dan Smith argued that the Alliance was then in its worst state ever; Robert Osgood and Gregory Treverton agreed that the Alliance was in crisis but questioned whether the current crisis was more severe than previous ones; while Richard Haass and James Leach doubted whether there was a crisis at all, as opposed to routine differences among its members. Their arguments in this regard can be found in Platt (ed.), *The Atlantic Alliance*.

alliances such as SEATO, CENTO, ANZUS, and the Sino-Soviet alliance). Yet what is striking about the treatment of non-NATO cases is the almost-complete absence of references to crisis in connection with these other alliances.⁸⁷ NATO, in contrast, is repeatedly pronounced in crisis or even on the brink of collapse even though there is no evidence that any member has ever seriously contemplated leaving the Alliance⁸⁸ or that the parties have lost the ability to cooperate, even at times when observers claim to be detecting unprecedented levels of pettiness and vitriol. In 2003 and 2004, to cite one example, while NATO members were disputing the merits of war against Iraq, NATO peacekeeping forces were deployed in Bosnia and Kosovo, a NATO-led stabilization force was deployed in Afghanistan, French forces joined a United States–led multinational force intended to restore order in Haiti, and the United States and France jointly pressured Syria to withdraw from Lebanon.

In summary, there are several problems that must be solved if the concept of a NATO crisis is to become something more than what it has proved to be thus far. First, we need some method of reliably distinguishing crises from noncrisis situations, which is essential if we are to relate changes in situational context – from noncrisis to crisis and then back again – to changes in political behavior, political processes, and political outcomes. Second, we need to know what actually happens during these so-called crises – specifically, how is it that NATO can survive so many seemingly perilous situations and not just survive but grow in both size and responsibilities. Third, we need to account for the apparent paradox produced by adding non-NATO cases to our consideration of the NATO-in-crisis literature. Specifically, NATO – “the most successful multilateral alliance in modern history”⁸⁹ – is perpetually said to be in crisis and even on the brink of collapse, while alliances other than NATO are almost never said to be in crisis, despite their propensity for sudden collapse, usually after a brief and turbulent existence. None of these tasks will be easy, but the broader literature on alliances offers some hints as to how we might proceed.

⁸⁷ Exceptions include Kahn and Pfaff, “Our Alternatives in Europe,” p. 597, which describes the “Soviet bloc” as “in crisis” during the mid 1950s; Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* rev. ed. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999), p. 86, who refer to a “crisis” in Soviet–Cuban relations in March 1962; and Daniel Sneider, “The U.S.-Korea Tie: Myth and Reality,” *Washington Post*, September 12, 2006, p. A23, who cites “an alliance in crisis” due to South Korea’s pursuit of nuclear weapons in the 1970s. See also the references in note 90 in this chapter.

⁸⁸ In 1966, France withdrew from the NATO integrated military commands, but it did not renounce its obligations under the Treaty of Washington, thereby remaining a member of the Atlantic Alliance in good standing.

⁸⁹ Robert Keohane, “Alliances, Threats, and the Uses of Neo-Realism,” *International Security* 13 (Summer 1988): 169. See also Glenn Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” *World Politics* 36 (July 1984): 494–495.

A CRISIS IN THE ALLIANCE: CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Consider first the problem of distinguishing crises from noncrisis situations. International crises are often described as turning points in the form of visibly heightened tensions that lead either to war or a diplomatic solution to a festering international problem. A crisis within an alliance can likewise be thought of as a turning point – specifically, a stage in the life cycle of an alliance during which cooperation becomes noticeably more difficult either because the members’ interests are diverging and/or because one or more members is contemplating leaving the alliance, thereby heightening tensions within it.⁹⁰ An alliance can thus be said to be in crisis when one or more of its members are indifferent between (1) leaving the alliance and (2) making the exertions needed to repair whatever rifts have developed within it. Once the crisis threshold has been crossed, relations among the members should change noticeably: one or more members will contemplate leaving, while the other member(s) will likely fear betrayal or even attack by the former.⁹¹ Once the crisis threshold is crossed, allies can either work to repair their relationship or they can replace it with something else – neutrality, new allies, even switching sides – in which case crisis becomes a prelude to disintegration.

Consider next the goal of relating changes in situational context – from noncrisis to crisis and then back again – to changes in behavior, processes, and outcomes. A crisis, James Christoph has suggested, offers an opportunity to view a political system under greater-than-usual stresses and strains.⁹² What actually happens when NATO is supposedly in crisis? Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the NATO-in-crisis literature is how little it has to say on this question other than that officials in various NATO capitals become angry with each other, criticize one another, maybe even insult each other, and so on. But this is a thoroughly unsatisfactory answer for at least three reasons. First, there are strong theoretical grounds for believing that tensions and strains among NATO members

⁹⁰ For example, Elizabeth Gates’s reference to a “crisis” in the Anglo-French alliance following French Premier Reynaud’s request of June 15, 1940, for British consent to a French inquiry into armistice terms with Germany, *End of the Affair: The Collapse of the Anglo-French Alliance, 1939–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 219. See also Mark Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 211, who identifies a “crisis” in the U.S.–Soviet alliance during World War II as a result of the Red Army’s halt at the Vistula in August 1944 and Soviet refusal to aid the Polish Home Army’s uprising against the Germans.

⁹¹ During the Seven Years’ War, for example, the Russians abandoned their Austrian allies and concluded a separate peace with Prussia in May 1762. In June, the Russians concluded an offensive alliance with Prussia, and in August Russian troops helped the Prussians defeat the Austrians at Reichenbach. This case is discussed more fully in [Chapter 2](#).

⁹² James Christoph, “The Suez Case,” in *Cases in Comparative Politics* ed. James Christoph (Boston: Little Brown, 1965), p. 90.

are normal rather than exceptional. Two important literatures – (1) realism (both the classical and structural variants)⁹³ and (2) collective goods theory⁹⁴ – highlight different independent variables, but they both suggest that conflict within NATO is to be expected. And there certainly is a lot of evidence to support their claims in this regard. Presidents and prime ministers have come and gone, governments of the center-left have supplanted those of the center-right and vice versa, but for more than half a century now NATO members have been more or less continually at odds on how the costs and risks of looking after their common interests both within Europe and outside it should be apportioned among themselves. Since there is abundant evidence that just about every member believes it is doing more than its fair share while the others are not,⁹⁵ these intra-NATO disputes about who should do what and who should pay for what are a constant feature within the Alliance and thus insufficient to justify the term “crisis.”

Second, a long-term alliance of liberal democracies should have strong self-healing tendencies. Even Robert Kagan, one of the more strident proponents of the claim that NATO is doomed,⁹⁶ concedes that the urge to reconcile will always be strong because democracies find it difficult to “operate effectively over time without the moral support and approval of the [rest of the] democratic world.”⁹⁷ Precisely because NATO is the most successful alliance ever created, it has become “a symbol of unity used by every ally with demands to make on one another.”⁹⁸

⁹³ Two prominent classical realists would be Robert Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Alastair Buchan, *NATO in the 1960s: The Implications of Interdependence*, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1963). For structural realism, see John Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War,” *International Security* 15 (Summer 1990): 5–56; Kenneth Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War,” *International Security* 25 (Summer 2000): 5–41, esp. pp. 18–26; Stephen Walt, “The Ties That Fray: Why Europe and America Are Drifting Apart,” *The National Interest* 54 (Winter 1998/1999): 3–11.

⁹⁴ Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, “An Economic Theory of Alliances,” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 48 (August 1966): 266–279; Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, “Collective Goods, Comparative Advantage, and Alliance Efficiency,” in *Issues in Defense Economics* ed. Roland McKean (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 25–48. For overviews of this literature, see Todd Sandler, “The Economic Theory of Alliances: A Survey,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37 (September 1993): 446–483; John Conybeare, James Murdoch, and Todd Sandler, “Alternative Collective-Goods Models of Military Alliances: Theory and Empirics,” *Economic Inquiry* 32 (October 1994): 525–542; Keith Hartley and Todd Sandler, “NATO Burden-Sharing Past and Future,” *Journal of Peace Research* 36 (November 1999): 665–680.

⁹⁵ Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, Chapter 1. See also Wallace Thies, “Crises and Study of Alliance Politics,” *Armed Forces and Society* 15 (Spring 1989): 349–369.

⁹⁶ See, for example, Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

⁹⁷ Robert Kagan, “A Decent Regard,” *Washington Post*, March 2, 2004, p. A21. Thomas Risse-Kappen makes a similar point in *Cooperation among Democracies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 12–41.

⁹⁸ Laurence Martin, “Europe and the Future of the Grand Alliance,” in *Foreign Policy in the Sixties* ed. Roger Hilsman and Robert C. Good (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p. 18.

As long as there is a NATO, its members can use appeals to Alliance solidarity to gain leverage in their dealings with one another – leverage that would be lost forever if they acted the way the NATO-in-crisis literature suggests they want to or will act.

Third, a long-term alliance of liberal democracies will likely develop multiple lines of cleavage and agreement running through it. Just because a few members disagree on one or even several issues, it doesn't mean that all members disagree about everything or even about a lot of things.⁹⁹ Hence members who disagree at present are unlikely to push those disagreements too far because they don't want to jeopardize (1) their relations with the members that are not much involved in the latest intra-NATO spat, and (2) the uncontroversial parts of their relationship with those with whom they do disagree. The NATO-in-crisis literature by and large overlooks these self-healing tendencies because it focuses almost entirely on how NATO crises *begin*. But these self-healing tendencies are important (1) because they help us understand how and why NATO survives despite the repeated claims that collapse is imminent, and (2) they suggest that the healing process will already have begun even as the gloom-and-doom brigade is proclaiming that the end is near (again). If we are to understand why NATO has shown such "remarkable resilience and adaptability,"¹⁰⁰ we need to know not only how and why these so-called crises begin but also what happens as they blossom, wane, and then fade away.

GETTING OUT OF A BLIND ALLEY

A scholarly concept like "crisis" is valuable only to the extent that it contributes to cumulative knowledge about an important subject, like alliances in general and NATO in particular. It can do so in three ways: (1) by identifying a class of situations that have enough in common that they can be reliably distinguished from situations outside the class, (2) by facilitating comparisons among items that fall within the class, for example, the relative severity or intensity of NATO crises, and (3) by contributing to the development of empirically verifiable hypotheses that relate variations in situational context (crisis vs. noncrisis – the independent variable) to variations in political behavior, political processes, and political outcomes (the dependent variables). On all three counts, the NATO-in-crisis literature is sadly deficient.

Concerning the first of these, the NATO-in-crisis literature tells us next to nothing about what actually happens when NATO is said to be in crisis, other

⁹⁹ Charles Kupchan, "NATO and the Persian Gulf: Examining Intra-Alliance Behavior," *International Organization* 42 (Spring 1988): 317–346, makes the point that a lot of cooperation was taking place within the Alliance even as commentators were proclaiming it to be falling apart. See also Mahncke et al., *Redefining Transatlantic Security Relations*, pp. 175–180, who describe the extensive cooperation against terrorism that was taking place during 2002 and 2003 even as NATO members were disputing the merits of war against Iraq.

¹⁰⁰ Mahncke et al., *Redefining Transatlantic Security Relations*, p. 52.

than that members grow exasperated with each other, their representatives behave badly in public, and so on. Second, the NATO-in-crisis literature has little to say about why NATO is the longest lasting and by far the most successful multilateral alliance since the emergence of the modern state system; indeed, the NATO-in-crisis literature strongly suggests that NATO's accomplishments should *not* have occurred and that the Alliance should have collapsed years ago. Third, by focusing on how the latest crisis is both new and different – and thus a plausible candidate for the label “worst ever” – the NATO-in-crisis literature has severely limited the prospects for cumulative knowledge about the Alliance.

In short, the NATO-in-crisis literature highlights essentially transient phenomena – bad language, petty behavior – while neglecting interesting possibilities such as self-healing tendencies that allow the Alliance to overcome disagreements among its members, and not just once but again and again. Despite decades of claims that the Atlantic Alliance stands on the brink of collapse, we know little more about what this brink looks like, and what it means for political behavior and political outcomes, than we did when warnings that the Alliance was in crisis first began to circulate in the 1950s. Indeed, observers writing about NATO in the twenty-first century continue to use the same tired clichés and strained metaphors as generations of their predecessors. It is this absence of cumulative knowledge that is the NATO-in-crisis literature's defining characteristic.

If we are to get out of this conceptual blind alley, there are three lines of inquiry that should be pursued. First, *has any member of the Atlantic Alliance ever crossed the crisis threshold*, in the sense of becoming indifferent between staying in and getting out? There are three reasons for believing that the answer to this question is “no.” First, during the Cold War, as structural realist writers have repeatedly pointed out, rivalry with the Soviet Union was a powerful force for cohesion within NATO.¹⁰¹ Realignment of the sort that was common during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was effectively precluded by the combination of bipolarity and the East–West ideological split. Only the United States could offset Soviet power in Europe, and the Soviet Union was an unsuitable partner for reasons that require no elaboration. Second, since the end of the Cold War, institutionalist writers such as John Duffield, Robert McCalla, and Celeste Wallander have offered reasons why the Alliance not only endures but thrives, in the sense of taking on new members and new missions.¹⁰² Third, in no small part because of reasons one and two, there are few obvious cases of members

¹⁰¹ For example, Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future”: Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War.” See also Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics.”

¹⁰² See the references in note 4 in this chapter. See also James Goldgeier, *Not Whether But When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1999); Rachel Epstein, “NATO Enlargement and the Spread of Democracy: Evidence and Expectations,” *Security Studies* 14 (January–March 2005): 59–98.

even approaching the crisis threshold, aside from Great Britain in 1956 (Suez), West Germany in 1957–1958 (the *Kampf dem Atomtod*¹⁰³), and maybe Greece in 1974 (Turkey invades Cyprus).¹⁰⁴

Even if the answer to the crisis threshold question is indeed “no,” there is still the apparent paradox identified earlier – namely, alliances other than NATO are almost never said to be in crisis despite their propensity to collapse, while NATO is often said to be in crisis, despite expanding and even thriving. Upon closer examination, this disparity in the treatment of NATO and other alliances proves to be not very surprising. The alliances found in pre-1939, multipolar Europe were generally formed for a single reason – to steal a province or two from a rival, to gain added strength in anticipation of a looming conflict, to gain some say over another state’s policies in order to prevent it from causing trouble.¹⁰⁵ The near-equality in power among the leading states of multipolar Europe and the absence of divisive ideological issues meant that prospective allies were often plentiful rather than few. States with several potential allies to choose from (plus the option of neutrality) and only a few interests in common are likely to be quick to contemplate alternatives to current alliance arrangements. Alliances that rest on a narrow base of shared interests are likely to shatter when those interests are called into question by a better opportunity elsewhere. Put differently, a few shared interests are unlikely to induce political leaders to do the work needed to repair an alliance (or even agonize over whether to do so) once the prospect of something better appears on their political horizon. Pre-1939 alliances rarely lasted long enough to experience a “crisis” stage in their existence; their members simply abandoned each other in favor of new arrangements with other partners.

The Atlantic Alliance, in contrast, was never intended to rest on just one or a few common interests. It was intended to be a permanent alliance among liberal democratic states that had so many interests in common that they preferred to act collectively rather than look out for themselves individually.¹⁰⁶ Hence even when NATO members disagree (and maybe disagree intensely) on one or a few issues, they are still likely to agree on many other issues, and because they agree on many things and not just a few, they are much less likely than pre-1939 allies to push disagreements to the point at which they become indifferent between exerting themselves to repair the rifts among them and looking for new arrangements elsewhere. Pre-1939, statesmen often tried to bait their allies into doing something that would provide a pretext for dissolving an unwanted alliance, or even provoke them into breaking the alliance themselves. NATO members, in contrast, have not tried to provoke each other into withdrawing from the obligations specified

¹⁰³ Struggle Against Atomic Death, discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁴ The German and British cases are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

¹⁰⁵ This point is developed more fully in Chapters 2 and 4.

¹⁰⁶ This point is developed more fully in Chapter 3. See also Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, Chapter 2.

by the North Atlantic Treaty; indeed, suggestions that NATO members should even try to do so are virtually nonexistent.¹⁰⁷

In effect, it is precisely because NATO members agree on so many things that they can afford to engage in prolonged tussles over one or a few points of disagreement. What has appeared to so many as a source of weakness is better understood as a source of strength. Pre-1939 allies generally did *not* engage in prolonged bickering over the terms of their partnership; they just abandoned each other in search of better arrangements elsewhere. NATO members bicker all the time, but they invariably find ways to reconcile too. Hence a second line of inquiry should be to look more carefully at what sets NATO apart from pre-1939 alliances and post-1945 alliances outside of Europe. What happened when the members of those alliances had to choose between pleasing an ally and confronting it? How did they respond, and why? These questions are the subject of Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Third, *why have* NATO members stuck with each other for so long despite so many irritations and mutual exasperation? Two complementary lines of research suggest themselves here. First, it was suggested earlier that NATO exhibits important self-healing tendencies – specifically, the greater the value that NATO members place on their relationships with other members who are *not* much involved in the current crisis (alternatively, the greater the value that they place on issues or forms of cooperation that are *not* part of the current dispute), the more willing they should be to make the exertions necessary to reconcile with those members with whom they are disputing something. The fact that the Alliance has survived so many allegedly fatal crises suggests that something more than luck is involved here. We need to know what that something is.

More important, we need to know whether and how situational factors affect that self-healing process. Rather than straining to prove that each new crisis is different from and thus more dangerous than all the rest, a better research strategy would be to pay special attention to the choices that NATO members face as crises come and go, the amount of decision-time available, and whether there are deadlines that compel them to act before they are ready. Does short decision time lead to hasty decision making and perhaps unwanted outcomes? Or have NATO members learned to stall for time, to push back deadlines in order to allow tempers to cool before choosing what to do? Such an approach would also allow us to explore the self-healing tendencies referred to earlier. When and how do those tendencies come into play? Are NATO members able to insulate disputes in one area so that they do not affect ongoing cooperation in other areas? Are they protective of their links to members that are not directly involved in whatever dispute is brewing?

¹⁰⁷ The only example that I have come across is a suggestion by Kahn and Pfaff that the United States should try to provoke France into either leaving or publicly pledging fidelity to NATO (“Our Alternatives in Europe,” pp. 591–592).

To investigate these questions, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 focus on what actually happens during six cases of crisis within the Alliance, each of which was said at the time to be especially severe and even potentially fatal. Chapter 5 looks at the ability of NATO members to cooperate militarily despite allegedly divisive crises, in particular the crisis touched off by Soviet successes such as the *Sputnik* and the first successful test of an ICBM during the mid to late 1950s, and the crisis over sending new intermediate-range missiles to Europe during the 1980s.¹⁰⁸ Chapter 6 considers the ability of NATO members to respond to crises touched off by developments outside Europe: the 1956 Suez crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Chapter 7 looks at two crises sparked by nonmilitary issues: the Siberian natural gas pipeline at the start of the 1980s and the wars within the former Yugoslavia at the start of the 1990s.

Finally, a brief concluding chapter focuses on why NATO endures despite a half-century of crises.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Howard, writing at the end of the last century, identified two periods when “simmering tensions” within the Alliance “seemed to reach boiling point: 1958–1963 and again twenty years later, 1979–1984, “A Successful Unhappy Marriage,” *Foreign Affairs* 78 (May/June 1999): 168. Alastair Buchan too identified a “cycle of American-European argument” that opened in 1957–1958 and came to a close at the end of 1964, “The Changed Setting of the Atlantic Debate,” *Foreign Affairs*, 43 (July 1965): 574.

Rivalry and Community in Interstate Alliances Prior to the Second World War

The world changes every day, but one feature that appears throughout recorded history is the formation of alliances by states pursuing goals that they cannot achieve on their own. “Alliances are central to international relations: they are the primary foreign policy means by which states increase their security.”¹ As a tool of statecraft, alliances are so pervasive that “every state must have an alliance policy, even if its purpose is only to avoid alliances.”²

The sheer number and variety of alliances available for study, however, has proven something of an embarrassment of riches for scholars. Much of what is known about alliances is the product of case studies³ or historical accounts.⁴

¹ Dan Reiter, “Learning, Realism, and Alliances: The Weight of the Shadow of the Past,” *World Politics* 46 (July 1994): 490. An earlier version of this chapter’s two introductory paragraphs appears in Wallace Thies, “Randomness, Contagion and Heterogeneity in the Formation of Interstate Alliances,” *International Interactions* 16 (#4 1991): 335–336.

² Robert Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), 17.

³ For example, Robert Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Henry Kissinger, *The Troubled Partnership* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); Donald Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956–1961* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962); George Modelski (ed.), *SEATO: Six Studies* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1962); J. G. Starke, *The ANZUS Treaty Alliance* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1965). Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), discusses Middle East alliances during the Cold War. Stephen David, *Choosing Sides* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1991), examines comparative cases of realignment during the Cold War.

⁴ For example, Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957); Edward Vose Gulick, *Europe’s Classical Balance of Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1955); Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964); William L. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962); Arnold Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966); Eleanor Gates, *End of the Affair: The Collapse of the Anglo-French Alliance, 1939–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Richard Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

Numerous attempts have been made to synthesize the findings of these studies,⁵ but the results have been less than impressive. The large number of cases and the use of essentially impressionistic techniques for gathering evidence have meant that for every potential proposition derived from historical and/or case studies, usually one and often several exceptions can be found.⁶ Indeed, there is a kind of schizophrenic quality to the literature on alliances. NATO, for example, is often cited for its contribution to solving the Franco-German quarrel, for creating a zone of peace in Western Europe, and for extending eastward that zone of peace by accepting new members.⁷ Yet alliances are also often seen as hotbeds of conflict, joining together members with antagonistic interests who are as likely to fight each other as cooperate.⁸

Are these two perspectives mutually exclusive? Might they both be correct depending on which alliances are being studied during which time periods? This chapter and the two that follow make the case that alliances can and have functioned both as hotbeds of conflict and as security communities. [Chapters 2, 3, and 4](#) view alliances as instruments formed by states engaged in a struggle for

⁵ For example, George Liska, *Nations in Alliance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962); Herbert Dinerstein, "The Transformation of Alliances," *American Political Science Review* 59 (September 1965): 589–601; Ole Holsti, P. Terrence Hopmann, and John Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative Studies* (New York: John Wiley, 1973); Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and J. David Singer, "Alliances, Capabilities, and War: A Review and Synthesis," in *Political Science Annual*, Vol. 4 ed. Cornelius Cotter (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), 237–273; Robert Kann, "Alliances versus Ententes," *World Politics* 28 (July 1976): 611–621; Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Brian Lai and Dan Reiter, "Democracy, Political Similarity, and International Alliances, 1816–1992," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44 (April 2000): 203–227; Patricia Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

⁶ The difficulties involved in attempting to establish propositions about alliances are discussed more fully by George Modelski, "The Study of Alliances: A Review," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 7 (December 1963): 769–776; Brian Job, "Grins Without Cats: In Pursuit of Knowledge of Inter-nation Alliances," in *Cumulation in International Relations Research* ed. P. Terrence Hopmann, Dina Zinnes, and J. David Singer (University of Denver, Graduate School of International Studies: Monograph Series in World Affairs, vol. 18, 1981), pp. 39–63; Michael Don Ward, *Research Gaps in Alliance Dynamics* (University of Denver, Graduate School of International Studies: Monograph Series in World Affairs, vol. 19, 1981).

⁷ Suggested by Ronald Krebs, "Perverse Institutionalism: NATO and the Greco-Turkish Conflict," *International Organization* 53 (Spring 1999): 343; and by James Goldgeier, *Not Whether But When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1999).

⁸ Krebs, "Perverse Institutionalism," p. 344. Examples of this latter view include Paul Schroeder, "Alliances, 1815–1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management," in *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems* ed. Klaus Knorr (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1976), pp. 227–262; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); Douglas Gibler and John Vasquez, "Uncovering the Dangerous Alliances, 1495–1980," *International Studies Quarterly* 42 (December 1998): 785–807; Ido Oren, "The War Proneness of Alliances," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 34 (June 1990): 208–233; Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*.

power and empire for the sake of self-preservation and/or self-extension.⁹ Those chapters explore how the *use* of these instruments has varied as other conditions – specifically, the scope and pace of warfare, the distribution of power, and the presence or absence of divisive ideologies – have also varied.¹⁰ There are, of course, other reasons why states form alliances – for example, to legitimize a regime or to gain assistance needed to put down an insurrection. If we are to make progress toward a theory of alliances, however, it will be useful to set these additional purposes aside and concentrate instead on alliances as tools used by states to advance or defend their interests in an anarchic environment that encourages statesmen to husband the resources available to them so as not to be disadvantaged in the next and subsequent rounds of an ongoing struggle.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 focus on what Patricia Weitsman calls “the fundamental questions of alliance dynamics – formation, cohesion, and endurance.”¹¹ They do so by giving special attention to three questions: (1) What determines the urgency that statesmen attach to having allies for their state? (2) What determines the degree of cooperation that allies are able to achieve? (3) Why did most pre-1939 alliances prove relatively fragile, in the sense of collapsing within a few years or even a few months of their creation, while a few post-1945 alliances – most prominently, the Atlantic Alliance – have endured for decades?

ALLIANCES IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

Four factors shaped the alliance policies of the states of eighteenth-century Europe: the rivalry among them for power and empire both within Europe and outside it, the limited fighting effectiveness of the armies of that period, the near-equality in power among the great powers, and the absence of divisive ideological issues.

Concerning the first of these, it was taken for granted by the ruling families of eighteenth-century Europe that the purpose of politics was to enlarge their holdings, and in the absence of any moral or ethical constraints on the use of force to achieve dynastic ends, warfare was accepted as one of the means whereby the strong and the daring extended their domains at the expense of those who were weak and/or hesitant.¹² The states of eighteenth-century

⁹ Suggested by Ernst Haas and Allen Whiting, *Dynamics of International Relations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), pp. 160–163.

¹⁰ The advantages of combining structural variables such as the number of great powers and the distribution of capabilities among them, and security dilemma variables such as the relative strength of offense and defense, are discussed by Thomas Christensen, “Perceptions and Alliances in Europe, 1865–1940,” *International Organization* 51 (Winter 1997): 65–97.

¹¹ Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, p. 11.

¹² Penfield Roberts, *The Quest for Security, 1715–1740* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 3; Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, pp. 13–14; Robert Osgood and Robert Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), pp. 70–71.

Europe declared war on one another with near-reckless abandon, but their wars were on the whole conducted circumspectly, with an eye toward ensuring that the costs of the struggle did not become disproportionate to the gains available to be won. "World wars had proven ruinous, but little wars, gentlemanly wars, waged at the expense of neighbors too weak and too friendless to make conquests overcostly, were still thought of as necessary to provide young gentlemen with their chance to win glory and honor."¹³

The limited fighting effectiveness of eighteenth-century armies was due largely to the social structure of the states that fielded them, which determined the manner in which armies were recruited and supplied. Statesmen everywhere were concerned to increase agricultural and industrial production, yet in all the states of Europe the number of skilled workers was inadequate to meet the demands of expanding economies.¹⁴ The problem for statesmen was thus to maximize the size of the army without imposing on the productive elements of society. The solution that was generally adopted was to draw a sharp distinction between military and nonmilitary activities. Armies during the eighteenth century were relatively small professional forces composed of individuals from outside the productive classes: the officers from the nobility above, the common soldiers from the vagabonds, criminals, and beggars below. The Comte de Saint Germain, who became war minister in France in 1775, summarized the prevailing attitude:

It would undoubtedly be desirable if we could create an army of dependable and specially selected men of the best type. But in order to make an army we must not destroy the nation; it would be destruction to a nation if it were deprived of its best elements. As things are, the army must inevitably consist of the scum of the people and of all those for whom society has no use.¹⁵

The low caliber of recruits meant that turnover in the ranks was often high. In Prussia, soldiers enlisted for life but "old age, disease, and desertion made it necessary to replace about a fifth of the army every year."¹⁶ All of the states of eighteenth-century Europe relied on a mix of voluntary enlistment and conscription, but the number of native-born soldiers supplied by these methods was almost always inadequate to fill the ranks. As a result, the armies of all of the continental states except Russia contained numerous foreign mercenaries, sometimes entire regiments of them.¹⁷ Statesmen during the eighteenth century

¹³ Roberts, *The Quest for Security*, p. 3. See also Osgood and Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice*, 76.

¹⁴ Walter Dorn, *Competition for Empire, 1740-1763* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), 31. See also Hans Speier, "Militarism in the Eighteenth Century," *Social Research* 3 (1936): 315.

¹⁵ Quoted in Speier, "Militarism in the Eighteenth Century," 310-311. See also Sidney Fay, "The Beginnings of the Standing Army in Prussia," *American Historical Review* 22 (1917): 766.

¹⁶ Theodore Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, rev. ed. (New York: Collier, 1962) p. 54.

¹⁷ R. B. Mowatt, *The Age of Reason* (London: George G. Harrap, 1934), p. 51; Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 83, 89, 94.

were largely indifferent as to where their soldiers came from; foreigners who were already trained were accepted with alacrity. To use foreigners to do one's fighting was considered a technique of statecraft and a means by which a rival's economy could be weakened while one's own was strengthened. "Enlistment of foreigners was preferable because of the incidental increase of the population which it entailed. Despite the high ratio of deserters there were foreign mercenaries who married and settled down as economically valuable craftsmen."¹⁸

The means by which recruits were pressed into service reflected the low opinion of soldiers and military life that was held almost everywhere in eighteenth-century Europe. It was the "pinch of poverty . . . that drove the great mass of mercenary soldiers into enlistment," but many were also "kidnapped, forcibly dragged from taverns, swept up from the streets, or released from prisons."¹⁹ Only the most exacting discipline and constant drill, it was felt, could make soldiers out of recruits obtained in this manner.²⁰ The harsh conditions of army life, in turn, meant that desertion was a severe drain on all of the armies of that period.²¹ The recruiting methods used and the callous attitude of officers toward their troops meant that eighteenth-century armies were often caught in a vicious circle. The greater the proportion of mercenaries, the more brutal the discipline employed; but the harsher the conditions of service, the greater the loss through desertions. The more deserters there were, the greater the need for a continuing flow of foreigners to fill the ranks.²²

Fear of desertion fostered dependence on elaborate supply systems, which limited the ability of armies to seek out and destroy a foe. Armies had to be marched in formation to be held together, since to "allow troops to forage freely over the countryside for supplies would have encouraged wholesale desertions." To avoid this, and to spare civilian populations from being preyed upon, the states of this period constructed large magazines from which armies were supplied.

Before a campaign, great stores were collected at points near a frontier, and from there, armies in the field were supplied. Two or three days forward from the magazines, ovens were built, where the flour, brought by mule trains, was baked into loaves for issue to the troops. This practice limited the mobility of an army, fettered to a chain of magazines. No army could safely advance beyond five days' march from its supply base, or fifteen miles from a navigable river.²³

¹⁸ Speier, "Militarism in the Eighteenth Century," p. 316. See also Mowatt, *The Age of Reason*, p. 51; Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 97; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 53.

¹⁹ Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 83. See also John Wolf, *The Emergence of the Great Powers, 1685-1715* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), p. 9; Mowatt, *The Age of Reason*, pp. 65-66; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 55, 57.

²⁰ Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 56-57; Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 97-98.

²¹ Mowatt, *The Age of Reason*, p. 61; Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 96.

²² Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 83, 96, 98.

²³ Eric Robson, "The Armed Forces and the Art of War," in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 7, *The Old Regime, 1713-1763* ed. J. O. Lindsay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 168. See also Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 82; Speier, "Militarism in Eighteenth Century Europe," pp. 307-308.

The mobility of armies was also limited by the poor quality of roads and inland waterways as well as by the near-impossibility of fighting in winter. Campaigns were restricted to periods of good weather, since “swampy or frost-bound roads stopped the movement of guns and heavy supply transport; thus supplies could not be maintained.” With the onset of bad weather, armies retired to winter quarters until the next fighting season.²⁴

Strategy and tactics were dictated both by the social composition of armies and by the standard infantry weapons of the period, the flintlock musket and the bayonet. Swift and scattered movements were rarely possible for armies made up of many nationalities, which limited their ability to find an opposing force or pursue a beaten foe. Precautions against desertion had a paralyzing effect: forced marches, skirmishes in forests and villages, and night attacks were all to be avoided, since they offered the troops too many opportunities to disappear into the countryside.²⁵ The limited range and accuracy of the flintlock musket and the time-consuming sequence of steps involved in preparing to fire required armies to mass infantry along a line of several ranks to have a chance of inflicting serious damage on an opponent. The deployment of troops on the battlefield was a slow and complicated process that could take hours depending on the terrain. Rigid discipline and constant drill were required to permit an orderly conversion from column to line as the troops reached the battlefield.²⁶

The reliance on line tactics was the source of a dilemma that significantly influenced the conduct of eighteenth-century campaigns. The inaccuracy of the flintlock musket and the limited capability of the artillery meant that close combat offered the only means of decisively defeating an opponent, yet close combat could result in heavy casualties for the winner as well as the loser. The highly trained professional armies of the period represented an investment in time and money that could not easily be replaced if lost.²⁷ As a result, battles were often avoided and decisive victories were generally not sought, since even a victorious army might suffer staggering losses. “Wars were conducted as economically as possible; circumspection and defense prevailed over audacity and offense. Preservation of a force was the first objective, the results of its action secondary.” Limited mobility and an exaggerated concern for convention and precedent meant that armies were rarely able to deal annihilating blows. There was, instead, a “preference for operations against fortresses, magazines, supply lines, key positions – a learned warfare in which ingenuity in maneuvers was more prized than impetuosity in combat. War of position

²⁴ Robson, “The Armed Forces and the Art of War,” pp. 168–169.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 168–169. See also Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 98–99; Speier, “Militarism in Eighteenth Century Europe,” p. 317.

²⁶ Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 48–51; Robson, “The Armed Forces and the Art of War,” pp. 169–170.

²⁷ Robson, “The Armed Forces and the Art of War,” pp. 163, 169; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 51.

prevailed over war of movement, a strategy of small successive advantages over that of annihilation. Wars were long, but not intense.”²⁸

The near-equality in power among the leading states was the product of several factors, including the emergence of Russia and Prussia as great powers, the resolution of the struggle between king and Parliament in England, and “the break-up of the Spanish-Hapsburg power complex and the exhaustion of France” as a result of the War of the Spanish Succession.²⁹ All of the great powers followed the prevailing practice of exempting the productive classes from military service, which limited the resources that could be tapped for military purposes. Their armies were all organized according to the same model and armed with the same weapons.³⁰ Military technology was largely stagnant, which prevented any one state from obtaining a decisive advantage as a result of an innovative design.³¹ The standardization of warfare even extended to military concepts and ideas. “The eighteenth century can properly be called the neoclassical age of modern warfare because success in battle depended upon the sophisticated use of tools and rules known to everyone.”³²

There were, of course, differences in the resources available to the great powers and in the effort made by each, but their effect was largely to reinforce the near-quality among them. France was potentially the strongest power in Europe, but the wars of Louis XIV had left the monarchy bankrupt and the army in a state of decay.³³ Prussia was the smallest of the great powers in terms of population, but it compensated for its lack of resources by the strength of its officer corps and by an extraordinary level of effort. “By 1740 the Prussian army of 80,000 was the fourth in Europe, just behind the armies of France, Russia, and Austria . . . Where France kept one soldier for every 150 inhabitants, Prussia supported one for every 25.” The gains won by Frederick the Great made Prussia a state of about six million people, able to support an army of 162,000.³⁴

The absence of divisive ideological issues was reflected in the conduct of eighteenth-century wars. Those wars were mainly about the balance of power

²⁸ Robson, “The Armed Forces and the Art of War,” pp. 164, 166. See also Wolf, *The Emergence of the Great Powers*, p. 12; Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 80; Mowatt, *The Age of Reason*, pp. 50–51.

²⁹ F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 176. See also Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 86–100; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 44–46.

³⁰ Robson, “The Armed Forces and the Art of War,” p. 175.

³¹ Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 47; Osgood and Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice*, pp. 50–51.

³² Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 51. See also Robson, “The Armed Forces and the Art of War,” p. 171, 174; Osgood and Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice*, pp. 50–51.

³³ Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 86–87. See also Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, Chapter 3; Wolf, *The Emergence of the Great Powers*, pp. 52–53, 183–187; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 40; Robson, “The Armed Forces and the Art of War,” pp. 181–182.

³⁴ Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 46–47. See also Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 94.

and were fought between dynasties rather than peoples. The interests at stake were tangible and specific – the control of territory or a throne. The means employed were carefully circumscribed: “Though there were great wars, devastation and unnecessary bloodshed were kept in check by strict adherence to the rules, customs, and laws of war, the accepted code of the eighteenth century war game.”³⁵

The states of eighteenth-century Europe thus competed vigorously for allies, but the alliances that they formed were on the whole ineffective as instruments for coordinating the actions of their members. In part, this was due to blunders by individuals,³⁶ but of greater importance were certain obstacles to cooperation that acted as a kind of invisible hand to thwart the aspirations of statesmen seeking to advance the interests of their state by forming alliances with other states.³⁷

Because all of the great powers were rivals in the struggle to accumulate territory, their leaders were driven by the exigencies of the competition to seek out allies in the hope of enhancing their state’s ability to achieve its goals. The social structure of eighteenth-century societies and the underdeveloped state of military technology meant that alliances offered the only means of quickly expanding the power that one state could apply against another.³⁸ War was seen as a normal feature of international relations; hence, the states of eighteenth-century Europe vied to line up allies by means of a bidding contest centering on the spoils that were promised and the amount of aid requested.³⁹ Barriers to alliance formation were practically nonexistent. The absence of ideological issues meant that almost every state could be considered a potential ally, while the near-equality in power among the great powers meant that no one of them had a decisive advantage over the others. Opportunism and expediency were the principal determinants of who allied with whom. Statesmen, in effect, sold their countries to the highest bidder with relatively little concern for the long-term consequences of their actions.

³⁵ Robson, “The Armed Forces and the Art of War,” pp. 165–166. For a specific example, see Bemis’s description of the War of the Bavarian Succession (Austria versus Prussia: “a bloodless war of maneuvering and stalemate in Bohemia during the summer of 1778”) (*The Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, p. 73).

³⁶ See, for example, Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 326–327.

³⁷ Note in this regard the rueful comment by Frederick the Great in 1768: “great alliances have often a result contrary to the ones planned by their members” (quoted in Osgood and Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice*, p. 103). See also Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 326.

³⁸ Osgood and Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice*, pp. 71–72; Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy*, pp. 25–26.

³⁹ For example, the bidding contest between Austria and Spain for an alliance with Sardinia during the War of the Austrian Succession, described by Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 153–154. In similar fashion, “Prussia and Austria each made tempting offers to France of territorial compensation in the Austrian Netherlands, if [France] would take part on one side or the other in the Bavarian Secession War” (note that Austria was a bidder even though it was nominally allied with France under the terms of the alliance of 1756), Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, p. 72. France rejected both offers, preferring a war of revenge against Great Britain.

The competition for allies resulted in numerous alliances, both offensive and defensive, but in neither case could durable and effective cooperative relationships be sustained. There were few if any bonds of interest or affection that might promote continued cooperation once the objective that occasioned the formation of an alliance had either been won or irretrievably lost. “No ruler trusted another, not even a blood relative and a treaty ally.”⁴⁰ The states of eighteenth-century Europe often had enemies in common, but the presence of a common enemy was not the same as extensive common interests. The all-against-all nature of the struggle to accumulate territory meant that states were reluctant to defend the possessions of those with whom they were temporarily allied. To do so was to use resources to aid the cause of another that could be better spent on one’s own acquisitive goals. Treaties of alliance during the eighteenth century were generally drawn as narrowly as possible. “The ideal of eighteenth century diplomacy was to get as much support, or at least an assurance of nonhostility, from an ally as possible in return for the most limited and least binding commitment to him.”⁴¹ It was not unusual for statesmen to calculate how they could escape from their promises of support in the event their allies were attacked.⁴² “No government could rely on the fulfillment of a treaty, unless by calculating it to be in the interest of the obligated party.”⁴³

Offensive alliances formed to partition the territory of a state judged unable to defend its holdings were common during the eighteenth century, but the rivalry among the leading states meant that their members were often as fearful of the gains made by their allies as by their enemies. Indeed, alliance members could find their own position weakened rather than strengthened by the successes of their partners because the latter would then lose interest in supporting their allies. A state that achieved its territorial goals in the current round of the struggle had an interest in abandoning its allies as quickly as possible, so as not to aid a potential rival and/or alienate potential partners in the next round. To avoid this problem, eighteenth-century statesmen sought to manipulate their partners to permit gains for their own state while thwarting their allies’ efforts to win gains for themselves. Such manipulative behavior generally took one of four forms: refusing to provide needed support during wartime, pressuring an ally to sacrifice its interests for the sake of one’s own, deserting one’s allies by means of a separate peace, or defecting to a rival alliance.

Concerning the first of these, eighteenth-century alliances were not so much cooperative ventures among states with interests and goals in common as they were temporary agreements to pursue separate national interests concurrently. The reluctance of alliance members to subordinate their own interests to the

⁴⁰ Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, p. 13.

⁴¹ Osgood and Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice*, p. 74.

⁴² Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 304–305; M. S. Anderson, “European Diplomatic Relations, 1763–1790,” in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, v. 8, *The American and French Revolutions, 1763–1793* ed. A. Goodwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 270.

⁴³ Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, p. 13.

pursuit of common goals has not always been understood by writers who have, perhaps unwittingly, viewed eighteenth-century alliances through the prism of contemporary practices. M. S. Anderson, for example, suggests that Britain during the War of American Independence was facing “not a real alliance but rather four separate antagonists – France, Spain, the Dutch, and the Americans – whose interests were dissimilar and even conflicting.”⁴⁴ Dissimilar and even conflicting interests, however, were the *norm* for this period, not the exception. Dissimilar interests meant that it was not uncommon for statesmen to refuse their allies’ requests for help or even to sabotage their allies’ efforts by a timely suspension of military cooperation. During the Seven Years’ War, England and Prussia on one hand and France and Austria on the other looked at the struggle from very different angles. England’s enemy was France, with whom Frederick the Great of Prussia had tried (albeit unsuccessfully) to remain on friendly terms. What Frederick wanted from England was not a subsidy (although he eventually accepted one) but a British fleet to operate in the Baltic against Sweden and Russia, which were menacing East Prussia. The British had no interest in providing this kind of help; their navy could not risk the loss of supplies that came mainly from territories belonging to Frederick’s enemies.⁴⁵ France, on the other hand, had no interest in disturbing the new balance in Germany owing to the rise of Prussia and thus no interest in intervening vigorously in the struggle between Austria and Prussia. In the colonial war against the British, the French fought with energy and imagination; in Europe, the French were fighting for little more than the temporary occupation of Hanover. They thus fought “with such a conspicuous lack of enthusiasm and energy that they were soon regarded in Vienna as Austria’s worst enemies.”⁴⁶

A similar malaise beset the Austro-Russian alliance. The excellence of the Prussian army and the unenthusiastic performance of the French meant that Austrian hopes of regaining Silesia from Prussia depended on effective military cooperation with Russia. This proved impossible to achieve. The Russians demanded the annexation of East Prussia and a portion of Poland as their share of the spoils, but “the prospect of Russia dominating both the Baltic and Poland was vastly more terrifying to both France and Austria than the new power of Prussia.” Austrian fears of their Russian ally were one reason for the failure of their forces to prevail against the numerically inferior Prussians.

⁴⁴ Anderson, “European Diplomatic Relations,” pp. 267–268.

⁴⁵ Britain and Russia were on opposing sides, but they were not formally at war, and British statesmen were determined not to do anything that might preclude a future alliance with Russia. On this, see H. M. Scott, “Great Britain, Poland and the Russian Alliance, 1763–1767,” *The Historical Journal* 19 (March 1976): 53–74, esp. p. 60.

⁴⁶ Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 324–327. See also Patrice Louis-Rene Higonnet, “The Origins of the Seven Years’ War,” *The Journal of Modern History* 40 (March 1968): 57–90; Anderson, “European Diplomatic Relations,” p. 267.

From the very beginning of the war the movements of the Austrian and Russian armies were so imperfectly coordinated and often determined only after such interminable and embittered discussions, that a profound mutual suspicion soon poisoned the military partnership. On two critical occasions the Russians had good reason to complain of Austrian desertion: once in 1758, when the fatal tendency of the Austrians to linger in the Bohemian mountains prevented effective support of the Russian advance before the battle of Zorndorf; and again in 1759, after the two Russian victories at Kay and Kunersdorf, when the Austrians refused to join them in a thrust that might have administered the *coup de grace* to Frederick and made an end to the war.⁴⁷

The absence of any bonds of affinity or affection between allies meant that alliance members generally had few qualms about sacrificing their partners' interests for the sake of their own. Walter Dorn offers the example of England and Austria during the War of the Austrian Succession, characterizing them as "unsuitable allies."

The margin of their common interests was an extremely narrow one . . . Before the war had run its course, Austrian statesmen were ruefully admitting to themselves that every single piece of territory which Austria was called upon to surrender was sacrificed under relentless British pressure to buy off her enemies nearer home, while the Netherlands, which Austria valued least and which concerned Britain most, were returned to her intact after the war. But Austria, financially insolvent, was in no position to pursue an independent policy.⁴⁸

Nor was it unusual for allies to try to thwart each other's schemes. In October 1715, George I of England, acting as elector of Hanover, concluded an alliance with Peter the Great of Russia, promising to help the latter in his war with Sweden if Peter would guarantee the right of Hanover to acquire Bremen and Verden. But the occupation of Mecklenburg by Russian troops in 1716 and the growing awareness on the part of British officials of Russian ambitions in the Baltic suggested that Russia was a greater menace to British and Hanoverian interests than was Sweden. "It was no wonder that Stanhope worked steadily to prevent Russia winning too complete a victory over Sweden when he was virtually in control of English foreign policy after April 1717."⁴⁹

Secret negotiations for a separate peace were another means of advancing one's interests at the expense of one's allies. During the War of the Spanish Succession, the Tory leaders who succeeded the Marlborough-Godolphin government in England "made contact with Louis XIV as soon as they came to

⁴⁷ Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 327.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 150. See also William E. Lunt, *History of England* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1928), p. 561, who adds that "The allies on both sides had conflicting interests, there were no common objectives, and general aimlessness was the result."

⁴⁹ J. O. Lindsay, "International Relations," in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 7, *The Old Regime, 1713–1763* ed. J. O. Lindsay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 196. See also Roberts, *The Quest for Security*, p. 25.

power, and indicated a willingness to deal with France if England's interests could be assured As for the allies, the Tories had no love for any of them: their hatred of the Dutch and their contempt for the Empire alike were boundless, and they had no compunction about negotiating behind the backs of those powers." Marlborough's successor as commander of the English army on the Continent was ordered to avoid combat with the French, to begin correspondence with his French counterpart, Marshall Villars, and to refrain from telling his allies about the change in his instructions. "The result was a defeat of the allied army and Villars' recapture of several fortified places lost in the preceding year."⁵⁰

The slow pace of warfare contributed to the vulnerability of eighteenth-century alliances to sudden breakups and reversals. The need to gather supplies in advance of a campaign, the limited mobility of armies, and the near impossibility of fighting in winter meant that "There was nothing very spectacular about a declaration of war. Frequently months passed before armies were actually on the march, and not infrequently the fighting was restricted to one campaign each year, fought during the open months when maneuvering and transportation were easiest."⁵¹ A state caught without allies or in need of more could always try to split an opposing alliance by offering one of its members a more favorable division of the spoils than the latter could hope to win by maintaining its existing commitments. The common practice of not fighting in winter provided an annual respite from the demands of campaigning that facilitated diplomatic efforts intended to split a rival alliance or play off one's allies against one's opponents.

More important, the competition for territory in which all were engaged provided statesmen with an incentive to pursue alternatives to their current line-up of allies in the hope of selling themselves to a higher bidder, thereby winning a larger share of the territories in dispute for themselves. States frequently deserted their allies, sometimes more than once in the same war.⁵² It was not uncommon for wartime enemies to sign a peace treaty and then immediately open negotiations for an alliance against their former partners. During the Seven Years' War, Peter III of Russia abandoned the Austrians and concluded a separate peace with Prussia in May 1762 in order to free himself to pursue his family's claims in Schleswig-Holstein. In June, the Russian tsar entered into an offensive alliance with Prussia, and in August Russian troops helped the Prussians defeat the Austrians at Reichenbach. Shortly thereafter, Russian troops were withdrawn from the campaign against the

⁵⁰ Wolf, *The Emergence of the Great Powers*, pp. 88–89. See also Lunt, *History of England*, pp. 518–523.

⁵¹ Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, p. 4. See also Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 80; Osgood and Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice*, p. 72.

⁵² See, for example, Walter Dorn's account of Prussian actions during the War of the Austrian Succession (*Competition for Empire*, pp. 144–146).

Austrians by the Empress Catherine, who had deposed her husband in July, thereby earning for Russia the distinction of having deserted both sides in the same war.⁵³ Shifting partners was relatively easy – alliances, like the wars of this period, were between dynasties rather than peoples.

The frequency with which desertions and defections to rival alliances took place had three effects. First, statesmen often entertained morbid suspicions that extended to their allies as well as their enemies. Statesmen suspected their partners of secretly negotiating separate deals for themselves that provided for desertion by means of a separate peace or even defection to an opposing alliance in return for territorial compensation.⁵⁴ Second, the relative ease with which desertions and defections could be arranged precluded close cooperation between the armies of alliance members. Close relationships and frank exchanges of views were unwise in a milieu in which today's ally could be tomorrow's enemy. Allies typically conducted separate campaigns with little coordination between their forces. Third, the frequency with which states switched alliance partners encouraged the "continual contemptuous trickery by which the diplomacy of the eighteenth century was conducted The art of dissimulation and deception was a necessary part of the equipment of any minister of foreign affairs."⁵⁵ Keeping open a line of communication to wartime opponents (without telling one's allies) was a common practice. Staying in touch with one's enemies was essential should it become necessary to desert one's allies or even to execute a reversal of alliances. The very effort to keep options open, however, carried a high risk of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, as statesmen hedged against the treachery of their allies by themselves engaging in secret negotiations with their wartime opponents, which encouraged their allies to do likewise. In effect, eighteenth-century alliances contained within themselves the seeds of their own destruction.

The overall effect of these rivalries and intrigues was to make even the most formidable alliances vulnerable to sudden collapse as a result of decay from within. At the start of the War of the Austrian Succession, France stood at the head of "an apparently irresistible coalition" which included Prussia, Spain, Bavaria, and Saxony against England and Austria. "But this French hegemony was a mirage and the coalition proved to be a very gimcrack affair. The coalition was held together by no stronger cement than the territorial ambitions of its members. Each ally watched

⁵³ Lindsey, "International Relations," 212; Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 377. Meanwhile, on the opposing side, "Even before the treaties of peace were signed in 1763, Britain had made the first move in the direction of St. Petersburg." Russia, meanwhile, was exploring the possibility of a renewed alliance with Prussia (Scott, "Great Britain, Poland and the Russian Alliance," pp. 53, 67).

⁵⁴ Roberts, *The Quest for Security*, pp. 255–257.

⁵⁵ Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, p. 14.

the other with growing suspicion, and instinctively each member adopted a policy of obstruction of common action.”⁵⁶ French statesmen were not interested in fighting to create a new and powerful German empire led by their erstwhile ally, Charles Albert of Bavaria. French policy was instead to perpetuate the division of Germany, which was the prerequisite for French domination of the smaller German states. The sole concern of Frederick the Great of Prussia was to borrow his allies’ armies to overwhelm Austria and thus compel Austrian acceptance of his seizure of Silesia, and he grew irritated when his suggestion of a quick and decisive march on Vienna was not heeded. “He soon became convinced that all his allies were playing with cocked dice. Above all, he refused to become a mere instrument of French policy. The result was the secret convention of Kleinschnellendorf with Austria, by which Frederick allowed General Neipperg to march against the French in return for the cession of Silesia.”⁵⁷

Frederick, however, was soon compelled by a concern for his own security to repudiate the convention and rejoin the war against Austria. No sooner had he resumed the struggle, however, “than he began to bicker with the French over the ineffective prosecution of the war. In his jealous solicitude to maintain the independence of Prussia against his French ally, he reopened negotiations with Austria. . . . In the Peace of Breslau (July 28, 1742), Frederick, after carrying off his booty [Silesia], for the second time deserted his allies.”⁵⁸

Two years later, concerned about reports of an Anglo-Austrian plan to seize Prussian territory to compensate Austria for its cession of territory to Sardinia, Frederick rejoined the war by invading Bohemia. The Bohemian campaign was a fiasco, but victories over the Austrians at Hohenfriedburg and Seer plus the Prussian occupation of Saxony opened the door to peace with Austria (again). Through the Treaty of Dresden (December 24, 1745), Frederick again withdrew from the war, thereby deserting his allies three times in the same war.⁵⁹

The maneuvers and intrigues engaged in by the states of eighteenth-century Europe effectively devalued the worth of any one alliance. The flexibility of alliance policies meant that new allies were almost always available, while the absence of provisions for central direction and control of the armed forces of alliance members meant that not much would be lost if one ally were abandoned for a new one. In a milieu in which today’s enemy could be tomorrow’s ally, there were few incentives to make the concessions and adjustments that long-term alliances would require. Instead, allies were abandoned and alliances broken off or rendered inoperative whenever a better opportunity appeared. Wars were frequent and alliances short-lived; hence, coalitions

⁵⁶ Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 144–145. See also Dorn’s assessment of the coalition assembled by Count Kaunitz of Austria to oppose Prussia during the Seven Years’ War, *ibid.*, p. 326.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 145–146.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 156–158.

formed and re-formed to contest each new round of the struggle for power and empire. The pattern of continually shifting alliances, in turn, helped sustain a working equilibrium among the great powers that restrained and moderated ambitions.⁶⁰

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE NAPOLEONIC WARS

Many eighteenth-century limitations on the size and mobility of armies and hence the destructiveness of wars were swept away as a result of the French Revolution and innovations in strategy and tactics introduced by Napoleon. Changes in alliance policies, however, lagged behind changes in the prevailing mode of warfare. Alliances during the eighteenth century had been prone to sudden dissolution after either victory or defeat; their armed forces lacked central direction and control; and sudden desertions and dazzling reversals were not at all uncommon. Since the rivalry among the great powers for territorial gains continued unabated during the Napoleonic era, the alliances organized to resist French expansion exhibited many of the same qualities that had thwarted the plans of alliance builders during the pre-Napoleonic years.

The most important differences between the period of warfare that began with the French Revolution and the wars of the preceding century had to do with the way in which armies were recruited and led. After 1763, the trend in Europe had been away from conscription as a source of recruits because of the unpopularity of compulsory service and the press-gang methods it entailed. In France, the Constituent Assembly opted initially for a system of voluntary enlistment for pay as the means of recruitment, but “theoretical objections to conscription . . . were of no avail against the practical need for national armed forces, particularly as the increasing violence of the Revolution appeared to be antagonizing the other monarchies in Europe.”⁶¹ Beginning in June 1791, there occurred a series of substantial increases in the size of the French army as a result of large-scale calls for volunteers supplemented by forcible enrollments. Wholesale compulsory enlistments, the *levée en masse*, began in 1793, and by the spring of 1794 France had about 750,000 men under arms, roughly three times as many as in the standing army of Louis XIV. This system of compulsory service was centralized and expanded by Napoleon, and between 1800 and 1812 about 1.1 million Frenchmen were called to serve, although at no time

⁶⁰ Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy*, p. 27; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 176–177, 182.

⁶¹ N. H. Gibbs, “Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies,” in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, v. 9, *War and Peace in an Age of Upheaval, 1793–1830* ed. C. W. Crawley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 62.

was manpower recruited as systematically as would be the case later in the nineteenth century.⁶²

The growth of France's armies and the victories that they won frightened the other European powers into emulating the French example, although the pace of military reform proceeded at varying rates in the other leading states. Russia adopted certain elements of the French system after it was defeated by Napoleon in 1807, but the influence of the reformers on the Russian army was relatively weak. Austria introduced conscription to raise an army for its war against France in 1809 but then reverted to reliance on a professional force after Napoleon's victory at Wagram forced it to sue for peace. In Prussia, universal military service was not introduced until 1813, but by the end of that year Prussia had about six percent of its population – nearly 300,000 men – under arms, a force roughly double the standing army of Frederick the Great.⁶³ The result of these changes was a vast increase in the size of the armies fielded by the great powers.

The generals of the eighteenth century . . . had fought their battles with armies of 50,000 to 75,000 men . . . Napoleon appears to have had about 35,000 men at the start of his brilliant campaign against the Austrian and Piedmontese forces in 1796. For Marengo his numbers were up to 50,000, but for Ulm in 1805 and for Jena in 1806 Napoleon maneuvered armies totaling some 180,000 to 190,000 men on each occasion, while the forces assembled for the invasion of Russia in 1812 rose to three times that number. Nor did Napoleon's enemies fail to conform to this general pattern of development . . . [T]he Austrians assembled some 85,000 men for the Ulm campaign and even more for Wagram. In 1806 Prussia put nearly 150,000 men into the field for the fighting which culminated at Jena. And in 1815 Russia, Prussia, Austria and England agreed to produce a total of nearly 600,000 to march by converging routes on Paris.⁶⁴

Not only did armies grow larger but their mobility improved as well. This was due to the growth of wealth and productivity throughout the eighteenth century plus the considerable improvement in roads and bridges that occurred toward the end of the century. Greater wealth meant "more food and forage in each area and more carts to carry it. An army was therefore more likely to be able to live off the country by requisitions and less obliged to carry everything with it." Better roads and bridges "facilitated the movement not only of men and supplies but also of orders and intelligence." Improvements in the fire-power of infantry and artillery improved the defensive capability of small

⁶² Ibid., pp. 62–63; Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 121–122; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 41, 107–108, 115–116; Colonel F. N. Maude, *The Ulm Campaign* (London: George Allen, 1912), pp. 44–58.

⁶³ Gibbs, "Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies," pp. 65–67; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 132–136; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 18–19.

⁶⁴ Gibbs, "Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies," pp. 66–67. See also Geoffrey Bruun, *Europe and the French Imperium, 1790–1814* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938), pp. 188–195.

groups making it possible to split armies into separate detachments, which could be moved and fed more easily than an army confined to a single road.⁶⁵

The heightened sense of nationalism that took hold toward the end of the eighteenth century also contributed to the greater mobility and fighting effectiveness of armies. Napoleon's victories were due in no small part to the "superior vigor and tenacity of the French soldiers, for whom no marches were too long, no numbers too formidable." Soldiers fighting for a cause were less likely to desert than soldiers fighting for pay, and the risks of battle were more acceptable to commanders who could replace their losses by new levies on the home front.⁶⁶

The changed conditions under which armies clashed provided a milieu that was distinctly favorable to the military talents of Napoleon Bonaparte, whose strategic and tactical innovations constituted a sharp break from the conventions that had dictated the conduct of most eighteenth-century campaigns.

Napoleon threw into the discard the traditional practice of weakening his main army by sending out detachments and observation corps to engage in petty fencing over fortresses, magazines, roads or provinces. Resolutely concentrating the gigantic masses under his command, he sought the complete annihilation of the enemy army as his supreme objective. His chief concern was always to have superior numbers of troops on hand, to march them directly against the enemy's main army, to surprise his opponent by deceptive cavalry feints and, if possible, to envelop him by forced marches and cut off his retreat; on the day of battle to concentrate the attack on a decisive point of the enemy front, to prepare the advance by a massed artillery barrage, to attack in echeloned columns which supplied ever fresh reserves and, after the decision had fallen, to pursue the enemy to the "last breath of horse and man."⁶⁷

The result of these developments was nothing less than a revolution in the prevailing mode of warfare. Whereas during the eighteenth century the goal of commanders had been to outmaneuver an opponent and to parlay small advantages into a dominant position, preferably without fighting, the goal of warfare now became the destruction of an opponent's ability to fight. The infusion of national spirit transformed wars from sparring matches between mercenary armies into struggles between nations. The greater size and mobility of armies meant that battles could no longer be evaded as easily as during the eighteenth century and that they were much more decisive than in the past. "[T]he contrast between eighteenth century and Napoleonic battles is especially clear. After Blenheim, Malplaquet, Fontenoy or Rossbach, the war dragged on for years.

⁶⁵ J. R. Western, "Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies," *The New Cambridge Modern History*, v. 8, *The American and French Revolutions, 1763-1793* ed. A. Goodwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 198-199. See also Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 101; Maude, *The Ulm Campaign*, pp. 61-62.

⁶⁶ Maude, *The Ulm Campaign*, p. 56. See also Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 110.

⁶⁷ Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 329-330. See also Bruun, *Europe and the French Imperium*, pp. 69-70; Gibbs, "Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies," p. 75; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 100-102.

After Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Wagram, or Leipzig, peace overtures began in a few months.”⁶⁸

These changes in the prevailing mode of warfare, however, were not immediately accompanied by changes in the alliance policies of the leading states, all of which (with the exception of England) clung to the forms and practices of eighteenth-century diplomacy, despite the disastrous results that their policies often entailed. Eighteenth-century alliances were largely ineffective as instruments for concerting the actions of their members because the acquisitiveness that characterized the policies of the great powers precluded the emergence of durable and effective cooperative relationships. The inability of alliance members to coordinate their actions was a source of constant irritation to statesmen who hoped to use their allies' forces to overpower an opponent, but the irritation felt was insufficient to overcome the jealousy with which statesmen guarded their freedom of action. The slow pace of warfare and the generally modest goals for which wars were fought provided few incentives to statesmen to subordinate their own territorial goals for the sake of more effective cooperation with their partners. A state that encountered greater-than-expected opposition could always seek to wear down its opponents by delaying tactics. Alternatively, it could sign a separate peace or even defect to the opposing side. Since the costs of losing were likely to be held within tolerable limits by the restrained manner in which wars were fought, eighteenth-century statesmen had few qualms about deserting their allies and accepting some temporary losses, which they could always hope to recoup during the next round of the struggle.

This kind of cost-benefit calculus was rendered obsolete by the changes in the prevailing mode of warfare that were the result of the revolution in France and genius of Napoleon. The growth in the size of armies, the greater speed with which they could be moved across the countryside, and the vigor and tenacity with which Napoleon pursued his opponents meant that the means by which states had formerly escaped from a losing cause at an acceptable cost were no longer available. “With the large national armies of the revolutionary epoch Napoleon could place an entire country under effective military occupation, disarm it, and dictate the peace.”⁶⁹ Losing to Napoleon meant a much harsher fate than had been the case during eighteenth-century wars,⁷⁰ which

⁶⁸ R. R. Palmer, quoted in Richard Rosecrance, *Action and Reaction in World Politics* (Boston: Little Brown, 1963), p. 22. See also Gibbs, “Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies,” pp. 60–61.

⁶⁹ Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 330.

⁷⁰ For example, the Treaty of Pressburg (1805) excluded the Hapsburgs from Italy and reduced their influence and territory in Germany, plus imposing an indemnity of 40 million gold francs (Geoffrey Bruun, “The Balance of Power During the Wars, 1793–1814,” in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, v. 9, *War and Peace in an Age of Upheaval, 1793–1830* ed. C. W. Crawley [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965], p. 267). The Treaty of Tilsit (1807) reduced Prussia to half its former size, forced it to support 150,000 French troops until a large indemnity had been paid, and limited the Prussian army to 42,000 men (Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 132–133). The Treaty of Schoenbrunn (1809) deprived Austria of one-third of its territory, its defensive bastions, and its outlet to the sea (Bruun, “The Balance of Power During the Wars”, p. 270; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 19–20).

put a premium on effective coordination between allies if disaster was to be avoided. France's opponents, however, were slow to develop the habits and practices by which such coordination could be achieved, which Mearsheimer attributes to "considerable buck-passing as well as inefficient balancing among France's enemies."⁷¹ True enough, but the opponents of France were hardly status quo powers seeking only to be secure in the face of French expansionism. Napoleon's opponents were themselves opportunists seeking to advance their interests at the expense of *all* of the other great powers, including the states with which they were allied in opposition to France. As a result of the ongoing rivalry among them, it was only *after* twenty years of defeats at the hands of the French that Austria, Russia, and Prussia were able to join with England to form a unified coalition force, and even then the effectiveness of the fourth and final coalition's forces was limited by the rivalries and suspicions that divided its members.

The first three of the anti-French coalitions were held together mainly by greed in the form of a desire to share in the spoils of war.⁷² The acquisitiveness that motivated the opponents of France had three principal effects on the coalitions that they formed. First, their members' determination to pursue their separate territorial ambitions severely limited the degree of military coordination achieved by their forces.⁷³ The limited military effectiveness of the anti-French coalitions was apparent as early as the summer of 1792, when Austria and Prussia made half-hearted efforts to suppress the revolution in France. The collapse of the royal army and the breakdown of the volunteer system in France meant that the road to Paris lay open, but the cabinets in Vienna and Berlin were more concerned with Russian plans for another partition of Poland, which accounts for the ease with which the French were able to repulse the invaders and seize the Austrian Netherlands.⁷⁴ By the spring of 1793, the First Coalition had grown to include England, Hanover, the Dutch Republic, Portugal, Spain, Sardinia, and Naples; France was once again at the mercy of her enemies. But instead of marching on Paris, the coalition's armies separated, each to seize what they coveted most in anticipation of a peace conference that would partition French territories among them. The division of the coalition's forces gave

⁷¹ John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 273.

⁷² A concise account of the various anti-French coalitions is that of Bruun, "The Balance of Power During the Wars," pp. 250–274. A more detailed account can be found in Bruun, *Europe and the French Imperium*. See also Mearshimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 272–288.

⁷³ See, for example, the discussion of the objectives pursued by the members of the Third Coalition, in Bruun, "The Balance of Power During the Wars," p. 266.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 253–254; Gibbs, "Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies," pp. 61–62; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 106–107; Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 122–123.

the French time to raise and train new armies and then to meet and defeat their opponents separately rather than face their combined forces all at once.⁷⁵

Second, since the members of the anti-French coalitions were fighting for what were in effect private agendas, they had few qualms about deserting their allies and seeking an advantageous separate peace. Prussia deserted the First Coalition in 1795, fearing that the Russians (who had promised only not to aid the French) would win what was left of Poland if Prussia remained mired in the war with France. Austria agreed to a truce with France in 1797 in return for compensation in Italy and Dalmatia, after which the First Coalition crumbled entirely, although England refused to make peace with France.⁷⁶ Russia deserted the Second Coalition in 1799 because Tsar Paul had become disenchanted with his British and Austrian allies, whom he felt were too willing to let the brunt of the fighting fall on Russia. Austria was willing to seek Napoleon's friendship in return for the promise of territorial gain, but the Russian desertion meant that Austria was more dependent than ever on British support, and the British were as yet unwilling to make peace. Austria accepted a British subsidy, promising in return to make no separate peace with France before February 28, 1801. Napoleon's victories at Marengo and Hohenlinden, however, caused them to renege on their promise and sign the Peace of Luneville on February 9, 1801.⁷⁷

Third, fears of a potential partner's treachery hampered efforts to stitch together a new anti-French coalition after the previous one had collapsed. In 1804, the Archduke Charles of Austria argued against Austrian entry into a new war with France on the grounds that "We should fight only if we have allies. Who might these be? There are only the Russians, who urge us to fight without moving themselves. Who can trust them? Who can tell when they will withdraw their support?"⁷⁸ Despite Charles' misgivings, Austria and Russia sought an alliance with Prussia, which first refused for fear of provoking a French attack but then decided to accept after Napoleon marched his army across Prussian territory. "A Prussian negotiator was sent to Vienna to make final arrangements for a treaty of alliance; the Prussian army moved toward the flanks of the French forces invading Bohemia; Russian troops were traversing Poland. A decisive defeat for Napoleon seemed in the making." But the Prussians delayed their final commitment, choosing instead "to haggle over a military frontier along the Weser and to advance a proposal of armed mediation on 'reasonable' terms to obtain one more proof of Napoleon's perfidy While Prussia hesitated, the French army wheeled south and defeated the Austrians and the Russians at Austerlitz."⁷⁹ In view of this

⁷⁵ Bruun, "The Balance of Power During the Wars," pp. 265–266; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 107–108, 121.

⁷⁶ Bruun, "The Balance of Power During the Wars," pp. 255–266; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 112; Lunt, *History of England*, pp. 639–640.

⁷⁷ Bruun, *Europe and the French Imperium*, p. 43; Bruun, "The Balance of Power During the Wars," pp. 257–259; Lunt, *History of England*, pp. 641–642.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Maude, *The Ulm Campaign*, p. 78. See also Bruun, *Europe and the French Imperium*, p. 39.

⁷⁹ Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 14–15. See also Bruun, *Europe and the French Imperium*, pp. 119–121.

history, it is hardly surprising that the negotiations during the summer of 1813 to assemble the fourth and final coalition did not go smoothly because England, Russia, and Prussia all suspected Metternich of Austria of secretly angling for an alliance with France when he insisted that the date for Austrian entry into the war be pushed back in order to gain time to convince the Austrian emperor of the need for such a move.⁸⁰

The rivalries that limited the effectiveness of the anti-French coalitions were skillfully exploited by Napoleon, who played on his foes' acquisitiveness to keep them divided and to ensure that at least one other great power was allied with France. Napoleon's innovations revolutionized the conduct of warfare, but his diplomacy was very much a product of the eighteenth century. Napoleon's foreign policy was based on the principle that every government had its price and that each of the great powers (except England) could be induced to ally with him if offered a sufficiently tempting bribe.⁸¹ Napoleon's alliances were essentially arrangements of convenience between parties whose goal was to cheat the other out of its share of the spoils.⁸² Avarice and contempt are hardly a foundation on which durable and effective alliance relationships can be sustained, so it should come of no surprise that each of Napoleon's allies deserted him after a few years of partnering with him.⁸³ What is perhaps surprising is Napoleon's apparent belief that his so-called allies would learn nothing from their encounters with him and that he could continue to buy their allegiance even after cheating them once.

For the invasion of Russia in 1812, Napoleon assembled a force of approximately 500,000 men, including a Prussian corps of 20,000 and an Austrian corps of 30,000. But Frederick William III of Prussia and Metternich of Austria both sent word to the tsar that their forces would fight no harder than necessity compelled. When Napoleon withdrew from Russia during the winter of 1812–1813, the Prussian and Austrian commanders secretly arranged for Russian maneuvers that would provide them an excuse to retreat toward their home territories while avoiding serious combat with Russian forces.⁸⁴ Napoleon thought he could count on his allies to help replace his losses, but on December 30, 1812, the Prussian corps commander signed a convention with the Russians that took his troops out of the war and permitted the Russians to occupy much of East Prussia. By the Treaty of Kalisch (February 28, 1813), Prussia and Russia became allies, and on March 16 Prussia declared war on France.

⁸⁰ Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 78–79, 85–86.

⁸¹ Bruun, "The Balance of Power During the Wars," p. 258. See also Maude, *The Ulm Campaign*, p. 110; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, p. 63.

⁸² Bruun, "The Balance of Power During the Wars," p. 258. See also Bruun, *Europe and the French Imperium*, pp. 55, 128.

⁸³ Bruun, "The Balance of Power During the Wars," pp. 266–271; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 23, 57–58; Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 98–99.

⁸⁴ Bruun, "The Balance of Power During the Wars," p. 271; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 133; Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 101, 107; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 23–25, 44–45, 63–64.

England formed alliances with Russia and Prussia through treaties concluded at Reichenbach in June 1813, and Sweden, Spain, and Portugal also joined the coalition. Austria was still nominally allied with France, but through a separate treaty, also signed at Reichenbach, it promised to join the coalition if Napoleon did not agree to peace terms by July 20, later pushed back to August 10. This time, the members of the coalition pledged to accept no separate peace with France, and they also agreed to combine their forces under a unified command responsible for producing a strategic plan acceptable to all of the members.⁸⁵

The unified command, headed by Field Marshall Prince Schwarzenberg of Austria, had nominal control over three separate armies: the Northern Army, made up of Prussian, Russian, and Swedish contingents; the Army of Silesia, made up of Prussian and Russian forces; and the Army of Bohemia, mostly Austrian but with some Prussian and Russian contingents attached to it.⁸⁶ In addition, an Anglo-Spanish force had driven the French out of Spain and invaded France from the south. The coalition's strategic plan was to make Napoleon split his forces, wear himself out in constant movement, and fight against armies advancing simultaneously on his center and flanks. This plan won general acceptance among the members of the coalition, but difficulties arose as soon as it was put into effect. These were of two main types.

First, even though Schwarzenberg was designated supreme commander, he could not prevent the assorted kings and princes who supplied the forces under his command from withdrawing them to pursue personal objectives, or threatening to do so out of pique. "From the very beginning of the campaign, Emperor Alexander reserved exclusive command over Russian contingents in the Bohemian Army, as well as over the sizable Russian reserve, and Schwarzenberg could not always count on their presence in the line of battle when needed." The King of Prussia suggested to the commander of the Silesian Army, Marshall Blücher, that it would be wise to avoid committing Prussian troops to battle, since too many losses would weaken Prussia's voice once peace talks began. The real objective of Prince Bernadotte of Sweden, who commanded the Northern Army, was the acquisition of Norway, and he was suspicious of all orders from the supreme command lest they overtax his resources and prevent him from achieving his goal. He thus withheld Swedish forces from battle in order to keep them intact, which led the Russian and Prussian corps commanders serving under him to suspect him of sacrificing their troops for

⁸⁵ Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 136; Bruun, "The Balance of Power During the Wars," pp. 271-273; Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 103, 107-110, 114-123; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 75-76; Gordon Craig, "Problems of Coalition Warfare: The Military Alliance Against Napoleon, 1813-1814," in *War, Politics and Diplomacy* ed. Gordon Craig (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 24.

⁸⁶ This paragraph draws heavily on Craig, "Problems of Coalition Warfare," 24-29.

the sake of his personal interests. Bernadotte, in turn, complained that he could not count on his generals obeying him.⁸⁷

Second, the successes achieved by the Fourth Coalition's armies during 1813–1814 were accomplished despite the continuing rivalries and intrigues of its members, which lay just beneath the façade of unity they were able to cobble together and which on more than one occasion brought the coalition to the brink of collapse. Metternich was aware that Russian forces were larger and fresher than those of Austria and Prussia, so he sought to shape the coalition's military operations in a way that would lead to peace with France while the latter was still strong enough to serve as an obstacle to the tsar's schemes.⁸⁸ Metternich arranged with Schwarzenberg for a slow, cautious advance that avoided large-scale battles while pressuring Napoleon to negotiate. "Exasperated by the long delays, the Tsar was soon openly accusing Schwarzenberg of sabotaging a genuine war effort, and his references to Metternich were hardly more flattering." When the tsar announced that he was opposed to any further negotiations with Napoleon and that he considered Bernadotte the logical candidate for the French throne, Metternich responded by ordering Schwarzenberg to halt the advance of the Bohemian Army until the political situation had been clarified and by urging the King of Prussia to give similar instructions to Blücher.⁸⁹ Metternich also hoped to use Prussia as a check on Russia by suggesting that the Duchy of Warsaw should go to Prussia, which would bring Prussia into conflict with Russia, which had ambitions of its own for Poland.⁹⁰

The formation of a grand alliance to thwart a bid for hegemony by one of the great powers was not in itself a novel development. What was unprecedented was the attempt by the British Foreign Secretary Castlereagh to use the recently assembled Fourth Coalition as the basis for a new and different kind of alliance that would endure even after peace had been concluded.⁹¹ Castlereagh's goal was a long-term alliance among the powers opposed to France, which would continue after victory as a deterrent to renewed French efforts to upset the European balance and which would provide a forum for regular consultations among the representatives of the great powers.⁹²

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 30–31. At the battle of Leipzig, Bernadotte refused to commit anything but his artillery to the common effort; afterwards, he was less interested in crossing into France than in campaigning in Denmark for the sake of control over Norway (ibid., pp. 32–33). See also Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 99–101.

⁸⁸ Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 98–101, 109–112; Craig, "Problems of Coalition Warfare," pp. 33–34.

⁸⁹ Craig, "Problems of Coalition Warfare," pp. 34–35. See also Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 110–113, 121–125; Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, p. 149.

⁹⁰ Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 112–113, 200; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, p. 50.

⁹¹ Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 133–137.

⁹² E. V. Gulick, "The Final Coalition and the Congress of Vienna, 1813–1815," in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 9, *War and Peace in an Age of Upheaval, 1793–1830* ed. C. W. Crawley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 639–640, 670; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 153–155.

The Fourth Coalition was based not on a single treaty of alliance but rather on a patchwork of agreements and understandings among its members. Castlereagh sought to replace these with a consolidating alliance that would spell out the obligations of the members and lay the foundation for a long period of cooperation among them. The paralysis that afflicted the Fourth Coalition as a result of the dispute between the tsar and Metternich provided Castlereagh with an opportunity to revive his plan for a new kind of great power alliance, which had lain dormant since he had first broached the subject in 1813. His suggestion came at an opportune moment because the dispute between the tsar and Metternich served to remind the coalition's members how important it was for them to remain united, not least so they could continue to thwart each other's efforts to use the coalition's resources to advance their own schemes. Castlereagh's proposal was the basis for the Treaty of Chaumont, signed on March 9, 1814 by representatives of England, Austria, Prussia, and Russia. The agreement, which was to last for twenty years,

established precise conditions for the conduct of the coalition, provided for 150,000 troops from each of the Four Powers, bound Britain to a subsidy of 5,000,000 pounds for pursuit of the war, and confirmed through secret articles most of the prior agreements on the recreation of the state system. The coalition, thus consolidated, accepted also the remarkable commitments under Articles 5–16 whereby the Four Powers agreed to defend each other against any future French attack by taking the field, each with 60,000 men (or, in the case of Great Britain, its financial equivalent), the Auxiliary Army to be under the orders of the power requiring help.⁹³

The consolidating alliance sought by Castlereagh was essentially a tool intended to prevent and if need be contain any revival of French expansionism. It reflected his view that the opponents of Napoleon had a common interest in establishing and sustaining a territorial equilibrium that would provide security for all by ensuring the predominance of no one of them; that the principal danger to such an equilibrium came from France; and that steps should therefore be taken to guard against any new effort by France to expand beyond the frontiers of 1792. The Treaty of Chaumont was the natural expression of the interests of an insular power whose territorial goals had been fulfilled by colonial conquests and which thus sought an equilibrium that would hold its rivals on the continent in check. But while Austria, Prussia, and Russia shared with Great Britain an interest in preventing a renewal of French expansionism, their interests clashed on the subject of dividing among themselves the territories conquered by Napoleon between 1796 and 1812. Austria, Prussia, and Russia all claimed to favor a just and durable equilibrium, but each also believed that

⁹³ Gulick, "The Final Coalition and the Congress of Vienna," p. 641. See also Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 151–158; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 131–132; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 194–195.

the best way to achieve such an outcome was to award a generous share of the spoils to themselves.⁹⁴

Perhaps the thorniest problem in this regard stemmed from the alliance within the Fourth Coalition between Prussia and Russia, which had been working in tandem since signing the Treaty of Kalisch in February 1813. The treaty included a promise that Prussia would be restored to the proportions it had enjoyed prior to 1807, but said nothing about how this would be done. Since the principal goal of Tsar Alexander was to win all of Poland for Russia, including parts that had formerly belonged to Prussia, he offered to support a Prussian claim to Saxony as a way of deflecting Prussia from attempting to regain her Polish territories.⁹⁵ The acquisition of Poland by Russia and Saxony by Prussia was judged by Metternich to threaten the vital interests of Austria. Russian power would advance to within 175 miles of Vienna, Austria's frontier with Prussia would double in length, and Austria's vulnerability to her ostensible allies would greatly increase. Metternich thus resolved to accept only half of the Russian formula, and he was initially successful in lining up both Castlereagh and Hardenberg, the Prussian chancellor, in opposition to the Russian plan for Poland. The tsar, however, was able to browbeat the Prussian king into ordering Hardenberg to cease cooperating with Metternich on the question of Poland. Since Russia's hold on Poland was unlikely to be broken in view of the occupation of the territories in question by Russian troops, Metternich swung round and made his stand in opposition to Prussia's claim on Saxony. By the end of 1814, the Prussians were talking of war, and in response England, Austria, and France secretly concluded an alliance in January 1815, promising mutual aid if war should break out.⁹⁶

The dispute over Saxony and Poland was eventually defused by a territorial compromise. Russia reduced its claim on Poland and Prussia settled for roughly half of Saxony plus compensation in western Germany. The frontier between Austria and Russia was determined through private negotiations between Metternich and the tsar, and the resolution of the Polish half of the problem weakened the Prussian position because the tsar, having secured his own gains, was unwilling to risk war merely to satisfy Prussia. Castlereagh, who had been invited by both sides to mediate, was thus able to secure the tsar's agreement to a compromise on Saxony, and the Prussians had no choice but to go along.⁹⁷ In November 1815, after Napoleon's return from Elba had been crushed, the

⁹⁴ Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 170–171, 174, 213; Paul Schroeder, “Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?” and Enno Kraehe, “A Bipolar Balance of Power,” both in *American Historical Review* 97 (June 1992): 689–691, 708–709, respectively.

⁹⁵ Gulick, “The Final Coalition and the Congress of Vienna,” p. 639; Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 110, 189–198; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 152–156.

⁹⁶ Gulick, “The Final Coalition and the Congress of Vienna,” pp. 649–654; Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 191, 201–202, 215–217, 220–226, 233–234, 237–243; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 157–159, 162–163, 167. Bavaria, Hanover, and the Netherlands also joined the Triple Alliance.

⁹⁷ Gulick, “The Final Coalition and the Congress of Vienna,” pp. 655–656; Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 244–247; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 167–171; Schroeder, “Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?” pp. 702–704; Kraehe, “A Bipolar Balance of Power,” pp. 710–711.

members of the victorious coalition signed the second Treaty of Paris (which reduced France to the frontiers of 1790), renewed the Treaty of Chaumont, and formally established a Quadruple Alliance, which included a reaffirmation of the provision in the Treaty of Chaumont calling for periodic conferences among the representatives of the great powers.⁹⁸

The Treaty of Chaumont and the Quadruple Alliance contained features that, had they been adhered to fully and implemented effectively, would have constituted a revolution in the alliance policies of the great powers comparable to the revolution in warfare during the Napoleonic era – namely, a long-term standing alliance based on regular consultations in peacetime and unity of command in wartime. The Treaty of Chaumont and the Quadruple Alliance were an attempt to institutionalize a system of cooperation and regular consultation among the great powers. They were the product of both the moral and physical exhaustion that prevailed in Europe after nearly a quarter-century of war and of a fleeting hope that a reversion to the brittle alliances and frequent wars of the eighteenth century might be avoided.⁹⁹ But the twenty-year alliance proclaimed at Chaumont and renewed eighteen months later at Paris could function effectively only so long as its members were prepared to subordinate their pursuit of territorial gains for themselves to their memories of France's bid for supremacy – memories that proved remarkably short-lived once the threat from France was removed.¹⁰⁰ The Prussian threats of war and the Triple Alliance of January 1815 were pointed reminders of how difficult it would be to overcome the latent rivalry among the leading states, each of which still dreamed that a series of small gains might over time cumulate into a decisive edge. Lacking a common vision of how the system of regular consultations was to function in practice and a common external threat to serve as a stimulus to unity, the Quadruple Alliance collapsed within a few years of the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818, at which it had been formally renewed.

The fault lines within the Quadruple Alliance were basically two: between Britain and the continental members on the issue of collective intervention to suppress revolts against monarchical rule, and among the continental members who used proposals for intervention as a cloak to advance their own interests in the name of the Alliance.¹⁰¹ The British were willing participants in the meeting at Aix-la-Chapelle because it dealt with the future of France and hence with the European equilibrium. The agreement at Aix-la-Chapelle to end the occupation of France and to allow France to join in the consultations planned by the

⁹⁸ Gulick, "The Final Coalition and the Congress of Vienna," pp. 661–663; Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 269–279, 287–291; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 167–171.

⁹⁹ Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 190–197; C. W. Crawley, "International Relations, 1815–1830," in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 9, *War and Peace in an Age of Upheaval* ed. C. W. Crawley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 669–670; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 185–187.

¹⁰⁰ Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 162–163, 225.

¹⁰¹ Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 199–211; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 215–216, 218–220.

members of the Quadruple Alliance had the effect of lessening British interest in an entangling alliance on the grounds that the principal danger to the European balance – namely France – had been dealt with successfully. The British rejected the notion of collective intervention in the internal affairs of lesser states, whereas in the view of Austria, Prussia, and Russia the principal attraction of the Quadruple Alliance was as a tool for sanctioning interventions in the affairs of nearby states.¹⁰²

Castlereagh sought to preserve the system of regular consultations agreed to at Chaumont and reaffirmed at Paris by objecting strenuously to its use to sanction interventions against revolutionary movements. His objection was not to the idea of intervention itself. He was prepared to accept and even encourage great power intervention to suppress revolts in areas where their vital interests were at stake. His concern was rather that any attempt by the great powers to collaborate on inherently divisive matters such as intervention in the affairs of small states would jeopardize the limited system of cooperation that he thought feasible. Castlereagh sought to separate those issues on which collaboration was possible from those which would only drive the great powers apart. His goal was an alliance in which the members “should act jointly whenever their interests permitted and . . . circumspectly, with a regard for the maintenance of their alliance and thus with a tolerance toward each other, whenever, as would often be the case, their interests did not permit joint action.”¹⁰³

Castlereagh, however, was unable to bridge the gap between the noninterventionist sentiments of his cabinet colleagues and the views of the continental autocrats. British disillusion with the Quadruple Alliance grew with each new proposal from one of the continental members for intervention to suppress a revolt against monarchical rule. Under Canning, Castlereagh’s successor, British policy became openly hostile to the idea of an alliance with the other great powers. “Castlereagh’s *de facto* dissent from the methods of the Alliance [was replaced by] Canning’s *de jure* repudiation of its principles.”¹⁰⁴

No less profound than the differences between the British and their former allies were the schisms among the continental members. Metternich preferred to manage affairs in Germany and Italy alone or, if need be, with Prussia; but Russia and France both saw intervention in the name of the Alliance as a device for expanding their influence. Acquisitiveness on the part of any one activated the latent rivalry among them all.¹⁰⁵ The decade that followed the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle thus witnessed the gradual disintegration of the Quadruple Alliance. The absence of a common threat as a stimulus to unity encouraged its members to

¹⁰² Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 202; Gulick, *Europe’s Classical Balance of Power*, pp. 293–294; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 34–36, 221–230, 248–250.

¹⁰³ Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 206–207, 210. See also Crawley, “International Relations,” pp. 670, 674–677; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 251–254, 265–266, 275.

¹⁰⁴ Crawley, “International Relations,” pp. 681–682. See also Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 211; Lunt, *History of England*, pp. 669–670.

¹⁰⁵ Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 211–212. See also Crawley, “International Relations,” pp. 673–676, 679; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, p. 274.

focus their energies on the pursuit of separate national interests – within the framework of the Alliance if possible but outside it if necessary. The growing estrangement of the members and the collapse of the system of limited cooperation envisioned by Castlereagh was not a matter of deep concern to the statesmen of that era with the exception of Castlereagh himself. From their perspective, the collapse of an alliance was a common occurrence. The experience with collaboration had been too brief, the benefits too limited, and the suspicions of each other's intentions too deep seated to have aroused much concern over whether this particular alliance was worth saving. With the collapse of the Quadruple Alliance, older habits and modes of thought reasserted themselves. The result was a period during which the alliances formed by the great powers were similar in many respects to those common in the Europe of the eighteenth century.

EUROPEAN ALLIANCES, 1822–1854

“The death of Castlereagh [in 1822] marked a turning-point in European politics. With Castlereagh disappeared Great Britain's last link with the Alliance, the memory of the wartime coalition. Henceforth, . . . British policy became as insular as the mentality of the people.”¹⁰⁶ Britain's secession from the Quadruple Alliance ushered in an era in which rivalry among the great powers was once again the dominant feature of the web of relationships that bound the leading states together yet also drove them apart. As in the eighteenth century, the competition among the great powers was characterized by a constantly shifting line-up of alliances and ententes, although there were also some important differences between these two periods that reflected the legacy of a generation of war and turmoil between 1792 and 1815.

Of all the factors affecting the competition among the great powers after the breakup of the Quadruple Alliance, perhaps the most important was fear of another cycle of war and revolution. Although many in Europe were dissatisfied with the settlement of 1815, “these dissatisfied elements were not in places of power,” while those in power were “obsessed with the problems of maintaining domestic order.”¹⁰⁷ Fear of disorder exerted a powerful influence over both the domestic and foreign policies of the great powers. Conscription during the Napoleonic era had been very unpopular; hence, all of the leading states took steps to reduce the burden of military service. While all of the great powers except Great Britain retained the principle of universal liability to service, in practice only a small portion of those eligible were conscripted to

¹⁰⁶ Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pp. 312–313. See also Crawley, “International Relations,” pp. 680–681; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 223; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁷ Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 143. See also Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 159–160.

fill the quotas that were not met by volunteers. Exemptions were widespread and those with money could purchase substitutes to serve in their place. Armies during this period were primarily instruments for maintaining order and protecting the ruling elites.¹⁰⁸

The widely shared fear of another cycle of war and revolution was also apparent in the relatively restrained manner in which the rivalry among the leading states was played out. During the eighteenth century, statesmen had plunged into wars with an almost reckless abandon. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, statesmen for the most part avoided actions that risked overturning the compromises that formed the Vienna settlement. The concern of the great powers to maintain the existing international order was reflected in the “remarkable consensus of opinion” that prevailed during this period concerning the way in which relations among them were to be conducted.

With the exception of France, . . . all powers accepted the balance of power: that is to say, they accepted the territorial arrangements laid down at Vienna in 1815 and they agreed with the broader principle that no state should obtain aggrandizement without the consent of the others. Acceptance of the balance, moreover, implied . . . a high degree of restraint on the part of single powers; it implied a respect for existing treaties; and it implied a willingness – in moments when members of the system were led by ambition or indiscretion to seek unilateral aggrandizement – to participate in concerted action to restrain them.¹⁰⁹

In their dealings with each other prior to the Crimean War, the great powers for the most part adhered to these norms. While they did not hesitate to contest for small advantages, the moral and physical exhaustion that was one legacy of the Napoleonic wars left all of them more concerned for the moment with holding on to what they had rather than grasping for more. Hence the period 1822–1854 was one in which the great powers concentrated on adjusting and compromising disputes as they arose. Public law as defined in treaties was accorded a degree of respect that it had not been shown in earlier years. Each of the great powers threatened war at one time or another, but each showed a willingness to respect the vital interests of the others, and each demonstrated a willingness to take collective action to uphold the balance among them. This

¹⁰⁸ Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 143, 147–148, 154; B. H. Liddell Hart, “Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies,” in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, v. 10, *The Zenith of European Power, 1830–1870* ed. J. P. T. Bury (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 312.

¹⁰⁹ Gordon Craig, “The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power,” in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, v. 10, *The Zenith of European Power, 1830–1870* ed. J. P. T. Bury (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 266. See also Richard Elrod, “The Concert of Europe,” *World Politics* 28 (January 1976): 159–174; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, 224–225; Robert Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 199.

was true even of Great Britain, which had left the Quadruple Alliance rather than sanction collective intervention in the affairs of the smaller states.¹¹⁰

But while the leading states were largely agreed on the need to refrain from steps that threatened to overturn the Vienna settlement, they were divided along ideological lines and even more so by the fear that others could not be trusted to practice self-restraint. The ideological split was between the three autocratic eastern powers (Austria, Prussia, and Russia) and the two more liberal western powers (Great Britain and France).¹¹¹ But while the three eastern and two western powers shared certain values that led them to act jointly at times and even to form temporary alliances based on ideological affinity,¹¹² neither could be considered a cohesive bloc. There was no community of economic interests to complement the *entente cordiale* between France and Britain. These two were not only commercial rivals but also frequently at odds as a result of differences over Belgium, Egypt, Tahiti, Greece, and Spain. France cooperated with the three eastern powers to check British intrigues in Spain, while “Great Britain found herself cooperating with the Eastern Powers against France as frequently as she cooperated with France against them.” Elsewhere in Europe, “the growing rivalry of Austria and Prussia in Germany and of Austria and Russia in the Near East produced a similar instability in the eastern camp.” Austria sought British assistance for the sake of restraining Russian pressure on Turkey, while Russia sought to align itself with Britain to restrain Prussian expansionism in the Baltic region.¹¹³

The combination of self-restraint and ongoing rivalries meant that, as in the eighteenth century, alliances between 1822 and 1854 were for the most part brittle, ad hoc instruments formed to deal with a specific problem, after which they were terminated or rendered inoperative. Statesmen during this period often spoke approvingly of solidarity with their allies on behalf of a common cause, but their actions belied their words, which were often intended to encourage others to do what they themselves were reluctant to attempt.¹¹⁴ The great powers competed vigorously to line up allies, but the way in which alliances formed reflected the conservative bias in the foreign policies of the

¹¹⁰ Craig, “The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power,” pp. 266–267; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 196, 213, 225; Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, pp. 188–189, 198; E. L. Woodward, “The Age of European Peace and the Character of European Wars,” in *A History of Military Affairs since the Eighteenth Century* ed. Gordon Turner (New York: 1956), pp. 67–68.

¹¹¹ Craig, “The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power,” p. 246. See also Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 216; A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 2.

¹¹² For example, the Münchengratz agreements of 1833, which joined Austria, Prussia, and Russia in an alliance to preserve the status quo; and the Quadruple Alliance of 1834, which joined Great Britain, France, Portugal, and Spain in an alliance intended to dissuade the eastern powers from meddling in the affairs of the Iberian states (Craig, “The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power,” pp. 252–253; Kissinger, *A World Restored*, p. 313).

¹¹³ Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 217. See also Craig, “The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power,” pp. 246–247, 258–260.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, A. J. P. Taylor’s discussion of the relationship between Prussia and Russia within the Holy Alliance, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 5–6.

leading states. Alliances between 1822 and 1854 were basically “defensive instruments . . . designed to maintain the existing system against any attempts to overthrow it.”¹¹⁵ The prospect of territorial gain had been the glue that held eighteenth-century alliances together; states secured allies by offering a more favorable division of the spoils than that offered by other prospective partners. Alliances between 1822 and 1854, in contrast, were formed to thwart challenges to the status quo; they were held together not by the prospect of gains for the states that formed them but rather by fear of the gains that others might make in the absence of opposition.

Ideological considerations played a larger role in the competition among the great powers between 1822 and 1854 than in the eighteenth century, but the formation of durable ideological blocs was precluded by the economic and political rivalries that divided England and France on the one hand and Austria, Prussia, and Russia on the other. Rivalries within the eastern and western groupings meant that each of the great powers had to look outside the circle of like-minded states for allies. Conversely, ideological barriers to alliance formation were practically nonexistent. The rivalries that divided the great powers and the fears held by each about the intentions of the others meant that each was often in need of allies and thus willing to form temporary alliances with whoever was available. All of the great powers sought to preserve their freedom of action by keeping open lines of communication to all of the others, and they all sought temporary ententes or alliances with their opponents at one time or another. All of the great powers switched partners frequently, and it was not uncommon for states that were opposed on one or more issues to patch up their differences and become allies against their former partners.

To suggest that each of the great powers was prepared to cooperate with whoever was available is not to suggest that such cooperation came easily. Often it did not, because even in the case of states with similar ideological orientations, cooperation was as often rooted in a desire to restrain an ally or thwart its plans as in an affinity of views. Palmerston of England was ready to cooperate with France in support of revolutionary governments in Lombardy and Venetia, less out of concern for Italian nationalism than out of fear of what the French might do if left on their own.¹¹⁶ The British were also prepared to cooperate with the Austrians, but when prospective allies seek to manipulate and use each other they likely will find themselves speaking in ways that mislead their partner and delude themselves. British statesmen routinely expressed themselves in favor of maintaining Austria as a great power, which the Austrians interpreted as meaning British willingness to assist Austria with her problems in Italy. The real goal of British policy, however, was to eject Austria from Italy while keeping the French out too. British officials felt that Austria

¹¹⁵ Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, pp. 198–199.

¹¹⁶ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 21–22; Craig, “The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power,” pp. 263–264.

would be stronger without Lombardy and Venetia than with them, stronger, that is, to hold the balance against Russia in the Near East, which was Austria's essential function in British eyes. They wished Austria's defeat to be complete for her own sake; and they wished it to be speedy so that all northern Italy could be consolidated in a single state before France had time to intervene.¹¹⁷

The frequency with which states changed alliance partners contributed to a climate of suspicion and mistrust, which, as in the eighteenth century, made long-term alliances marked by a high degree of military collaboration impossible. Conversely, the self-restraint exhibited by the great powers, the preoccupation with internal security, and the still-underdeveloped state of military technology meant that long-term alliances marked by close collaboration between the armed forces of the parties were unnecessary. Railway networks and mobilization plans would not significantly affect the prevailing mode of warfare until the second half of the nineteenth century. Advance arrangements were not yet necessary for alliances to be useful, nor was it necessary to specify the terms of cooperation in great detail. "There was still time, once a crisis erupted or a war began, to arrange explicit details of cooperation."¹¹⁸

The short-lived nature of alliances and the frequent switching of partners meant that diplomatic alignments changed as new issues arose.¹¹⁹ As in the eighteenth century, the ready availability of new allies and the ad hoc nature of alliances devalued the worth of any one alliance. The relative ease with which new partners could be lined up meant that a current ally could almost always be replaced, while the absence of detailed arrangements for coordinating the actions of allies meant that not much would be lost by doing so. The collapse of an alliance was still a routine feature of state-to-state relations.

Conversely, the limited nature of the alliances formed by the great powers helped to restrain the struggle for power and empire and prevent the outbreak of wars. Each of the great powers was too divided from the others to make possible close collaboration within the framework of a long-term alliance, and each was deterred from accepting too great a risk by the lack of preponderant power. The fluidity of the European system, which enabled individual states to shift their position and thus bring their influence to bear to prevent an outbreak of war, helped maintain peace among the great powers for forty years, from 1815 to 1854.¹²⁰

Fluidity, however, could serve as a restraint only so long as the leading states were prepared to subordinate their acquisitive instincts to their memories of the wars and upheavals of the Napoleonic era. As those events receded into the

¹¹⁷ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 17–18. See also Craig, "The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power," p. 262.

¹¹⁸ Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, p. 199. See also Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 217–218.

¹¹⁹ Craig, "The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power," p. 247.

¹²⁰ Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 220–223; Craig, "The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power," pp. 247, 253, 266.

past, the generation that had experienced firsthand, the strife that accompanied the French bid for supremacy was replaced by a generation for whom acquisitiveness was the natural function of a great power. The suppression of the revolutions of 1848 brought to power rulers who were “despotic, not conservative. Relying at home on military force, they thought in terms of force in foreign affairs; and, far from believing in any European order, drew new maps of Europe as wildly as any revolutionary.”¹²¹ The crumbling of the inhibitions that had previously restrained the competition among the leading states was itself an important cause of the Crimean War, which was the opening round of a “period of European anarchy” during which the great powers became involved in no fewer than six wars in the span of a quarter-century.¹²²

ALLIANCES DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The conditions that helped keep the peace in Europe between 1815 and 1854 either disappeared or were greatly diminished in the aftermath of the Crimean War (1854–1856).¹²³ The Crimean War was not itself a war between nations; it was instead the “prelude to [a] period of militant and triumphant nationalism. It served to clear the atmosphere and to establish certain relationships between the European powers which continued to be of importance long after the Treaty of Paris [1856] had become only a name.”¹²⁴

Between 1815 and 1854, rivalry among the great powers had been restrained by a consensus in favor of upholding the existing order, a view that rested less on satisfaction with the status quo than on fear of the consequences of another Europe-wide war. The Crimean War “destroyed the old consensus that had existed between the powers and radically changed their attitudes toward the existing distribution of forces on the Continent.” Prior to 1854 the great powers had accepted the idea of a balance among themselves as the best guarantee of peace and stability and had shown a willingness to take concerted action to ensure that the balance was maintained. After 1856, “there were more powers willing to fight to overthrow the existing order than there were to take up arms to defend it.” Prior to 1854 the great powers had by and large refrained from actions that risked plunging Europe into another round of wars and upheavals.

¹²¹ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 24.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 61. See also Craig, “The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power,” pp. 266–267. The wars in question were the Crimean War (1854–1856), France and Sardinia versus Austria (1859), Prussia and Austria versus Denmark (1862), Austria versus Prussia (1866–1867), France versus Prussia (1870–1871), and Russia versus Turkey (1877–1878).

¹²³ For a contrary view, see Paul Schroeder, “The 19th-Century International System: Changes in the Structure,” *World Politics* 39 (October 1986): 1–26, who argues that the nineteenth-century international system inhibited bids for mastery in Europe.

¹²⁴ Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, p. 3. See also Craig, “The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power,” p. 267; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 226.

After 1856, they manufactured war plots and searched for pretexts to go to war.¹²⁵

The effect of these changes on the alliance policies of the great powers was considerable. Between 1822 and 1854 the principal purpose of alliances had been protection against either the threat of revolution or an attempt by one or more powers to extend their influence in ways that threatened to upset the equilibrium established by the Vienna settlement. Between 1856 and 1871, “alliances and diplomatic ‘understandings’ were generally concluded for an aggressive purpose, either to secure the collaboration of the partners in a projected war against a third party or to facilitate the designs of one of the partners by assuring him the benevolent neutrality of the other.”¹²⁶ Between 1815 and 1854 states had often been drawn into alliances and ententes by a feeling that they shared certain things in common, such as representative institutions or a devotion to monarchical rule. Between 1856 and 1871 allies were eagerly sought and alliances and understandings were numerous, but the states that formed them on the whole cared little for each other. Their concern was rather to use one another; the function of an ally was to help distract or overwhelm an opponent, after which it could be and often was discarded, preferably without being rewarded for its efforts. Alliances were thus the product not of mutual affinity or shared interests but rather of a conspiratorial mentality that led statesmen to believe that a rival could be duped into becoming a temporary accomplice by dangling before it a sufficiently tempting bribe, which could then be snatched away once it had performed its role. Buying an ally was good; renting it was even better; and cheating it out of whatever it had been promised was considered the best outcome of all.¹²⁷

As in the eighteenth century, alliances between 1856 and 1871 were essentially arrangements of convenience, mere episodes in the policies of acquisitive states, without lasting or long-term significance.¹²⁸ The states of eighteenth-century Europe had been driven to form alliances, despite the rivalry among them, because doing so offered the only means of quickly increasing the military power at their disposal. Those alliances were generally ineffective as instruments for coordinating the activities of their members because the acquisitiveness that motivated the states of eighteenth-century Europe impelled their leaders to

¹²⁵ Craig, “The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power,” pp. 267–273 (the quoted excerpts are from pp. 267 and 273). See also Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 238–239.

¹²⁶ Craig, “The System of Alliances and the Balance of Power,” p. 271. See also Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 238; Osgood and Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice*, p. 80; Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, pp. 204–205.

¹²⁷ A. J. P. Taylor’s *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, Chapters 5–10, is particularly good at highlighting the cynical motives that lay beneath the surface of many of the offers of alliance and/or professions of friendship that were made during this period.

¹²⁸ Suggested by S. William Halperin, *Diplomat Under Stress: Visconti-Venosta and the Crisis of July 1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 65. Other accounts that highlight the parallels between alliances after the Crimean War and eighteenth-century alliances are those of Osgood and Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice*, p. 80; and Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 238.

compete vigorously for allies yet act instinctively in ways obstructive of common action whenever the gains of their allies threatened to outstrip their own.¹²⁹ In similar fashion, the acquisitiveness that motivated the great powers between 1856 and 1871 meant that their alliances too had a self-defeating quality to them. Like their eighteenth-century predecessors, the importance that nineteenth-century allies attached to achieving their own selfish ends led them to act in ways that reduced the likelihood that their alliances would achieve the goals for which they had been formed. The effects of selfishness and greed on relations between allies can be seen (1) in the way in which states chose their partners, (2) in the absence of effective military coordination between allies, and (3) in the way in which alliance members deserted their partners at the first hint of difficulties greater than they anticipated at the time the alliance was formed.

Concerning the first of these, the role of selfishness and greed in the selection of allies was especially apparent in the brazenness with which statesmen sought to maneuver potential partners into doing for them what they were unwilling to do for themselves. Napoleon III sought an anti-Prussian alliance with Austria in 1867 in order to unload on the latter part of the burden of cutting Prussia down to size. Count Beust, the Austrian foreign minister, was initially receptive to these overtures, but the “Francophobia of powerful elements in ethnically conscious German Austria and the Russophobia of the Magyar co-rulers of the Hapsburg empire . . . forced Beust to shift his ground.” He thus suggested an alliance based on opposition to Russian designs in the Near East, which would have shifted to France part of the burden of underwriting Austrian policy in the Balkans. This hardly suited the French, who were looking for allies who would support their expansionist aims in Western Europe, not drag them into unwanted quarrels in Eastern Europe.¹³⁰

An opportunity to break the deadlock was presented by an Italian offer to join the alliance being discussed by France and Austria. The Italians had no quarrel with either Prussia or Russia, but they feared being left out while the French and the Austrians enriched themselves. The French welcomed the Italian overture because it offered an opportunity to blur the line between an anti-Prussian and an anti-Russian alliance. The French tried first to trick the Austrians into entering a war against Prussia.

Under the guise of a union to preserve the peace of Europe, [the French proposal] was in reality a triple alliance against Russia and Prussia. In case Austria–Hungary was involved in war with Russia, France would put an observation corps on the Rhine and would

¹²⁹ Suggested by Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, pp. 144–145.

¹³⁰ Halperin, *Diplomat Under Stress*, pp. 7–8. See also Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, p. 7; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 187–192. For a similar case, see Taylor’s discussion of Napoleon III’s proposal for a Franco-Russian alliance shortly after the Crimean War (*The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 90, 96).

enter the war if Prussia joined Russia; similarly, in case of a war between France and Prussia, Austria–Hungary would put an observation corps in Bohemia and would enter the war if Russia joined Prussia. In either case, Italy would contribute an army of 200,000 men.

But the Austrians were not so easily taken in, having learned the hard way in 1866 the consequences of deploying an army near the frontier with Prussia. The French then tried to trick the Italians by proposing that the three parties “should merely bind themselves to conclude an offensive and defensive treaty in case of a European war, the conditions to be settled then. The Austrians should be told secretly that they could remain neutral in the event of a Franco-Prussian war; the Italians should not – and thus they would be caught. The French would have their army of 200,000 men.”¹³¹

This bargain suited the Austrians but not the Italians, who demanded payment in advance in the form of a withdrawal of French troops from Rome, which Napoleon III could not agree to without forfeiting clerical support at home. The French tried pretending that the alliance had been “morally signed,” but both the Austrians and the Italians eluded the snare that had been set for them. The cynicism of the French was fully reciprocated by their partners-to-be. The Austrians hoped to obtain an anti-Russian bloc that they could use to their advantage in the Near East yet keep their hands free in the event of a Franco-Prussian war. Victor Emanuel of Italy expected Napoleon III’s Second Empire to collapse in the not-too-distant future, but he was determined to extract what he could in the meantime. He thus continued to dangle before the French the bait of a Franco-Italian alliance until the eve of the Franco-Prussian War.¹³²

The corollary of the cynicism with which statesmen viewed their potential partners was the near-impossibility of arranging effective cooperation between states that were deeply suspicious of each other. Austria sought a defensive alliance with Prussia in 1854 in part to gain security against Russia but also to gain security against Prussia, which was deemed less likely to attack or stir up trouble in Germany if allied with Austria.¹³³ The inability of allies to work together during this period was aptly symbolized by the activities of Prince Hohenlohe, the Prussian military attaché in Vienna during the Crimean War. Despite the alliance between Austria and Prussia, the Austrians evaded Hohenlohe’s requests for information about the state of the Austrian army. He thus resorted to “the standard processes of military intelligence . . . [Hohenlohe] worked out an accurate picture of the Austrian order of battle from study of

¹³¹ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 193–194.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 194–195. See also Halperin, *Diplomat Under Stress*, p. 71.

¹³³ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 62; Paul Schroeder, “Alliances, 1815–1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management,” in *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems* ed. Klaus Knorr (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1976), pp. 238–239.

the daily press, supplemented by salon gossip and the reports of professional agents."¹³⁴

Austrian condescension toward Prussia was repaid a dozen years later when the Prussians trumped up a dispute over Schleswig-Holstein as a pretext for war. The south German states (Bavaria, Saxony, Württemberg, Hesse-Darmstadt, and Baden) were allied with Austria. But instead of deploying their forces against the Prussians, they thought only of themselves, thereby forgetting that a Prussian victory over Austria would mean their own defeat within Germany.

Concerned, as always, first for her own interests, Bavaria in joining Austria had taken care to stipulate that the primary object of her mobilization should be the safety of her own frontiers Bavaria, in fact, hoped to go to war without fighting and without taking any risks. Thus the strongest of the allied states, which should have set an example for the rest, showed the greatest inertia. When the Saxons wanted to join the Bavarians on Bavarian soil they were bidden to keep away, and when the Austrian commander-in-chief called on the Bavarian general to join forces with his own in Bohemia he met with a flat refusal. Not a Bavarian soldier left the kingdom; from first to last Bavaria gave to her ally no useful help whatsoever.¹³⁵

Not only did allies "cooperate" by doing the minimum necessary to hold their partners to the terms of their agreement (and sometimes even less), they also watched each other warily for signs of "treachery," not least because of their awareness of their own readiness to cheat their partners in pursuit of a better deal for themselves. The greed that shaped the policies of the leading states between 1856 and 1871 meant that their alliances often came apart before they achieved what they were intended to accomplish and that attempts at cooperation often ended in mutual recriminations. The alliance between Prussia and Italy that preceded the Austro-Prussian War took months to conclude because the Italians feared betrayal and refused to sign until they were reasonably certain that Prussia would fight.¹³⁶ The Italians complained bitterly when Bismarck made a separate peace with Austria in violation of their agreement, but they were hardly in a position to preach to Bismarck about loyalty to an ally. The Italians had been ready to ally with Austria if the latter would sell them Venetia, but their offer had been rejected. A few weeks before the start of the war, the Italians had connived with the French, offering to support a French plan for a European congress that they expected would award them Venetia. The Italians saw this as a risk-free way of stalling until the alliance with Prussia had expired, thereby allowing them to acquire Venetia without have to fight for it and leaving the Prussians to fend for themselves.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Gordon Craig, "Military Diplomats in the Prussian and German Service: The Attachés, 1816–1914," *Political Science Quarterly* 64 (March 1949): 67.

¹³⁵ William H. Dawson, *The German Empire: 1867–1914*, v. 1 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1919), p. 226. See also Eric Labs, "Do Weak States Bandwagon?" *Security Studies* 1 (Spring 1992): 404–405.

¹³⁶ Schroeder, "Alliances, 1815–1945," p. 241; Dawson, *The German Empire*, p. 207.

¹³⁷ Dawson, *The German Empire*, pp. 206–207, 233–234; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 163–164, 169; Halperin, *Diplomat Under Stress*, p. 60.

The Italians weren't the only ones working both sides of the street. Shortly before the outbreak of the Austro-Prussian War, Napoleon III persuaded the Austrians to sign a treaty providing for French neutrality toward Austria and French efforts to keep Italy quiet. In return, Austria agreed to cede Venetia to France for transfer to Italy and to make no changes in the territorial status quo in Germany without prior agreement with France. The treaty gained nothing for Austria – Napoleon III had already pledged his neutrality to Prussia and had even helped Prussia secure Italy as an ally, his promises to the Austrians notwithstanding. The Austrians expected to compensate themselves for the loss of Venetia by defeating the Prussians and reclaiming Silesia; Napoleon III expected that a Prussian defeat and Austrian gratitude would open the door to French aggrandizement along the Rhine. Both were disappointed. The Austrians were overwhelmed by the Prussians and the French were kept dangling by vague promises from Bismarck of territorial gains in the Rhineland or Belgium, which were then retracted once Bismarck had made peace with Austria and forged alliances with the south German states.¹³⁸

The wars of the mid-nineteenth century were themselves a powerful influence on the way in which states competed for allies after 1871. The Crimean War was a slow-motion conflict fought by professional armies that suffered most of their losses to disease and hardship rather than encounters with the enemy.¹³⁹ The wars fought in Europe between 1859 and 1871 were quite different affairs. Those wars were begun eagerly, not reluctantly; they were fought vigorously, rather than at a leisurely pace; and the decisive battles in each came within a few months of the start of the war.¹⁴⁰ The effect of those wars on the policies of the great powers after 1871 was nothing short of profound, since it was during those wars that the changes that had been taking place in military technology and in the organization and control of military forces were dramatically revealed.

“The forty years from 1830 to 1870 saw a greater change in the means of warfare, both on land and sea, than during the whole previous span of modern history – or of all previous history. Most of the change was concentrated, at least in the sense of being demonstrated, within the last decade of this period.”¹⁴¹ During this period the standard infantry weapon of the Napoleonic wars, the flintlock musket, was replaced first by the percussion musket, then by

¹³⁸ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 160–161, 163–165; Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, pp. 6–7; Dawson, *The German Empire*, pp. 220–221. Napoleon III's misperception of the relative strengths of Prussia and Austria is discussed by Christensen, “Perceptions and Alliances in Europe,” pp. 70–75.

¹³⁹ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 79–81; Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 170–177.

¹⁴⁰ Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 228; Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 182–191.

¹⁴¹ Hart, “Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies,” p. 302. See also Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, p. 205.

the rifled musket, and then by the breech-loading rifle. The result was to greatly increase the range and accuracy of infantry weapons as well as the rate of fire. The rate of fire of the artillery along with its range and accuracy were likewise greatly increased by replacing the smoothbore muzzle-loading gun with the rifled breech-loader. The systematization of recruiting and conscription greatly increased the size of the armies of the great powers, while the construction of railways increased the speed with which armies could be deployed and eliminated the long, exhausting marches that frequently sapped an army's strength before it even reached the frontier. The invention of the telegraph and the emergence of general staffs permitted greater flexibility in the deployment of armies, with the result that battles became more decisive and wars more orchestrated than in the past.¹⁴²

No one of these developments had an impact comparable to the *levée en masse* at the end of the eighteenth century, but cumulatively their effect was another revolution in the prevailing mode of warfare. The changes in this regard were demonstrated most strikingly by the Prussian victories over Austria in 1866 and France in 1870. The most startling development of the Austro-Prussian War was the "extraordinary width of the Prussians' deployment, their main force of 250,000 being extended over a front of 270 miles – in order to cover Silesia as well as Berlin, to make supply easier, and to save time by using all available railways." In 1870, the Prussians mobilized and transported to the frontier a total of 380,000 men in 18 days, compared with five weeks in 1866, with a further 90,000 in reserve who were brought up as soon as rail transport was available.¹⁴³ The Franco-Prussian War was prolonged for six months after the French defeat at Sedan by the raw levies conscripted by the republican government that succeeded Napoleon III, but the attention of soldiers and statesmen everywhere was drawn to the speed with which the Prussians overpowered the French at the start of the war.¹⁴⁴

The Prussian victories against the Austrians at Sadowa and the French at Sedan raised the specter of future wars that would be determined largely by the results of the initial battles. The almost universally drawn conclusion in the aftermath of the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars was that the outcome of those battles would be determined largely by the relative speed with which the combatants could mobilize and deploy their forces and that a state caught unprepared would likely suffer the same fate as the Austrians and

¹⁴² Hart, "Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies," pp. 303–312; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 161–162; Arthur Coumbe, "Operational Command in the Franco-Prussian War," *Parameters* 21 (Summer 1991): 86–99.

¹⁴³ Hart, "Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies," pp. 324–325. See also Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, p. 9; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 169–170; Dawson, *The German Empire*, pp. 350–351.

¹⁴⁴ Hart, "Armed Forces and the Art of War: Armies," p. 327; Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, pp. 9–10; Dawson, *The German Empire*, pp. 358–359; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 173–175.

the French. Hence all of the continental powers became nations-in-arms in peace time, and all sought to emulate the Prussians by enacting compulsory military service, by developing mobilization systems capable of calling up hundreds of thousands of reservists quickly and efficiently, and by building additional railways that could be used to transport armies to the frontier.¹⁴⁵ The Prussian system of short-service tours in the regular army followed by a longer period of service in the reserves spread across the continent, and between 1875 and 1895 the armies of all the continental great powers with the exception of Russia increased in size by one-fifth or more. The increase in reserve forces was even more dramatic:

In 1874, Germany had a regular army 420,000 strong and a war establishment of 1,300,000; in 1897 the regular army had increased by only a third, to 545,000, but the war establishment, at 3,400,000, had nearly trebled. Within the same period the French war establishment increased from 1,750,000 to 3,500,000; the Austrian from 1,137,000 to 2,600,000; and the Russian from 1,700,000 to 4,000,000 Altogether, the number of men which the great powers of Europe could put into the field increased during this period by nearly ten million.¹⁴⁶

The growth in standing armies and reserve forces had two effects. First, all the continental powers adopted war plans that called for going on the offensive as quickly as possible. Since it was widely believed that the offense would dominate in any future war, attacking first was seen as the key to avoiding the economic costs associated with a protracted struggle. Second, the risks of isolation and the burdens of preparedness were deemed so great that all of the European great powers sought to arrange and maintain peacetime alliances in order to compel potential adversaries to divide their forces and to reduce the costs of preparedness by sharing them with others.¹⁴⁷

The lessons drawn from the wars of the mid nineteenth century had a powerful influence on the alliances formed by the leading states and the way in which they dealt with each other. The increased reliance on rail transport

¹⁴⁵ The British did not emulate the Prussian example, opting instead for a small army of volunteers led by gentlemen officers (Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between The Wars* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997], pp. 112–113).

¹⁴⁶ Michael Howard, “The Armed Forces,” in *The New Cambridge Modern History, vol. 11, Material Progress and World-Wide Problems, 1870–1898* ed. F. H. Hinsley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 205, 211–217 (the quoted excerpt is from p. 217). See also Osgood and Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice*, p. 81; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 260; Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, p. 205; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 195.

¹⁴⁷ Howard, “The Armed Forces,” p. 217; Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, pp. 5–6; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 261. See also Beryl Williams, “The Strategic Background to the Anglo-Russian Entente of August 1907,” *The Historical Journal* 9 (#3, 1966), 360–373, who argues that cost cutting was the paramount reason “why the Liberal government in Britain preferred to negotiate with Russia rather than prepare against her” (p. 369).

meant that the decisive battles were likely to be fought early in a future war, which suggested that alliances would have to be in place prior to the next war to be militarily effective and that the parties to them would have to give more attention than before to anticipating and preparing for certain contingencies. Defensive alliances had been frequent during the preceding two centuries, but these had typically been stitched together after the start of a war; they were reactive rather than anticipatory. Great power alliances during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, in contrast, were formed in anticipation of challenges from rival states and thus were characterized by much greater concern to coordinate the military activities of their members than had been the case in the past. The formation of the Austro-German alliance in 1879 coincided roughly with the decision by the elder Moltke to stand on the defensive against France and to press for a quick victory over Russia in the event of a two-front war. At about the same time, the tsarist government resolved to maintain in the western districts of Russia a force estimated by the German and Austrian staffs to be 600,000 troops. Such a force could be defeated quickly only through the combined efforts of the central powers, and in 1882 informal joint planning was begun by the German and Austrian staffs even though it had not been authorized by either government.¹⁴⁸ Toward the end of 1891, the French sought to persuade the Russians that their entente should be supplemented by a military convention that would specify the arrangements that would come into being in the event of war, so that a German attack would not catch them unprepared and unable to respond effectively. These French urgings resulted in the Franco-Russian military convention of 1892, which committed the parties to mobilize their forces in the event of a mobilization by any member of the Triple Alliance, specified the number of men that each would commit against Germany in the event of war, and provided for joint planning in peacetime in order to facilitate execution in wartime of the measures envisaged in the convention.¹⁴⁹

The corollary of these efforts to anticipate and prepare for certain contingencies was much greater emphasis on maintaining and cultivating alliance relationships. The greater speed with which events were expected to move in wartime impelled statesmen to stockpile allies in peacetime, because there was no longer time to arrange support once a war had begun. What this meant in practice was that certain of the alliances formed after the Franco-Prussian War proved much more durable than those formed prior to 1870. The Austro-German alliance of 1879 was the prototype of the more intimate and more durable

¹⁴⁸ Howard, "The Armed Forces," p. 223; Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, p. 176.

¹⁴⁹ Sidney Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 114–120; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 337–338.

kind of alliance that now began to appear in Europe; “it lasted until it collapsed in October 1918 under the pressure of military defeat.”¹⁵⁰

The Austro-German alliance was followed in 1882 by the Triple Alliance, which linked Italy to Germany and Austria–Hungary. The treaties that were the basis for the Triple Alliance were renewed in 1887 for five more years, and then renewed prematurely in 1891, 1902, and 1912, each time for a term of twelve years.¹⁵¹ The Franco-Russian alliance had its origin in contacts between members of the French and Russian military staffs in 1891. As originally drafted, the military convention that transformed the Franco-Russian entente into an alliance was to have a duration as long as the Triple Alliance, but in 1899 the text of the convention was amended so that it would no longer come to an end if the Triple Alliance dissolved.¹⁵²

Despite the changes in both the prevailing mode of warfare and in the alliances formed by the great powers, what is perhaps most striking about the alliance policies of the leading states during the last three decades of the nineteenth century is the continuity with earlier periods, especially in the attitudes held by statesmen toward their alliance partners. The Prussian victories at Sadowa and Sedan made plain for all to see the revolution in military technology that had been gathering momentum during the preceding three decades, but there was no comparable revolution in diplomacy and statecraft. After 1871, the acquisitive urges of the great powers waxed and waned in accordance with the opportunities available and the perceived risks of war, but the rivalry among them continued unabated. As a result, the heightened importance attached to securing and retaining allies was not accompanied by any great upsurge in feelings of amity and solidarity between allies. Allies were rivals as well as partners; states became allies not because they liked each other but because they sought to use each other to hedge against military disaster. All of the great powers absorbed the lesson of the Franco-Prussian War that it was essential not to be caught without allies at the start of the next war, yet each remained reluctant to pay the price that maintenance of durable and effective alliance relationships would entail. Each wanted allies in case its own acquisitive ventures should lead to trouble, yet each was reluctant to support the schemes of an ally. Each expected its allies to renounce their acquisitive ventures, in order to reduce the risk of war, yet each was unwilling to renounce the right to pursue acquisitions of its own. The alliances formed in the aftermath of

¹⁵⁰ Bernadotte Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente* (New York: Henry Holt, 1934), p. 16. See also Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, pp. 174–176, 182–185; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 259–265; Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, p. 88; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 257–258.

¹⁵¹ Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente*, pp. 17–19; Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 80–88, 142–148, 342–346.

¹⁵² Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 105–124; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 317–318, 331–345, 385; L. B. Packard, “Russia and the Dual Alliance,” *American Historical Review* 25 (April 1920): 391–410; Serge Goriainov, “The End of the Alliance of the Emperors,” *American Historical Review* 23 (January 1918): 324–349.

the Franco-Prussian War were thus characterized by a tension between the desire to have allies that could be counted on to play prearranged roles in the event of war and the desire to maximize one's own freedom of action, both to pursue acquisitions and to avoid entanglement in wars fought mainly to satisfy an ally's aspirations.

This tension, of course, had existed prior to 1870, but it had been of lesser import then due to the slow-motion style of warfare and to the relative ease with which alliances could be stitched together once a war had started. The statesmen of eighteenth-century Europe had routinely sought to manipulate and control their allies without infringing on their own freedom of action. But in the eighteenth century, statesmen had less to fear if their efforts in this regard should cause an alliance to rupture – battles could be evaded, campaigns were rarely decisive, new allies were usually available, and even the costs of losing were generally moderate. By the late nineteenth century, statesmen had much more to fear from the loss of an ally – the French defeat in 1870 had resulted not only in the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and imposition of an indemnity but also revolution and disgrace for the regime responsible for the debacle. But even as the risks of isolation were growing, the lure of the “free hand” was still strong.¹⁵³ This put a premium on subtlety and finesse when dealing with allies; statesmen sought to control and exploit their partners while appearing to do no such thing. It was this effort to stockpile allies in advance of the next war while retaining one's own freedom of action that gave alliance policies post-1870 their distinctive style, which is perhaps best described as a certain slyness or craftiness toward actual or potential partners. Statesmen engaged in endless diplomatic maneuvers intended to keep their allies hemmed in by commitments and restraints while they themselves remained free and unfettered.

One frequently used tactic in this regard was to insert into written pledges of support phrases like “to the extent that circumstances shall permit” or “according to the circumstances of the case.” Bismarck once remarked that one could always find ways to evade even the clearest specifications of a treaty, but wording such as this ensured that loopholes would be available. Promises conditioned in this way were largely devoid of value; their real purpose was “to give vague agreements an appearance of substantiality which they do not possess.”¹⁵⁴

Duplicity and even deceitfulness were likewise tools through which statesmen sought to entangle their partners while avoiding entanglement themselves. The Italians demanded German support for their colonial ambitions in North Africa as the price for renewing the Triple Alliance in 1887. Bismarck was willing to provide these assurances, but only after he had persuaded the British to sign an agreement with the Italians directed toward upholding the status quo

¹⁵³ Schroeder, “The 19th-Century International System,” p. 11.

¹⁵⁴ Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, pp. 395, 400–401. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 311, takes a more benign view of these phrases.

in and around the Mediterranean.¹⁵⁵ Once the British were involved, the next step was to induce them to extend a commitment to Austria–Hungary. Toward this end, Bismarck’s correspondence with Lord Salisbury in November 1887 was deliberately vague regarding Germany’s commitment to the Dual Monarchy. As part of his efforts to encourage the British to take a more active role in the Near East, Bismarck was willing to let Salisbury believe that Germany was determined to support Austria–Hungary even in the event of an Austro-Russian clash that resulted from Austrian policy in the Balkans, although Bismarck himself had repeatedly told the Austrians that they could not expect German support if they embarked on such a course. “There was certainly a tinge of duplicity in the whole procedure,” a prominent historian subsequently wrote, “but this was redeemed by the fact that the great chancellor was working for European peace.”¹⁵⁶

Setting one’s partners against each other was a third technique used by statesmen seeking to maintain their freedom of action while restricting that of their allies. As part of his efforts to encourage the formation of a conservative partnership among Great Britain, Austria–Hungary, and Italy, Bismarck had stressed to the British the danger of excessive Russian influence over Turkey, which might enable the Russians to gain control over Constantinople and the straits linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. He did so despite having already promised the Russians support for their efforts to gain control over Constantinople and the straits. Once the conservative partnership had been arranged, Bismarck’s policy was essentially “to encourage the Russians to resume their activity in the East, but at the same time to mobilize the new Mediterranean coalition against Russia and thereby prove to the Tsar that his only hope of success lay in obtaining German support.”¹⁵⁷ Bismarck included renewed assurances of German support for Russian designs on Constantinople in the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia (1887) because the treaty encouraged Russian aggressiveness toward the Ottoman Empire. This was what Bismarck wanted: “fear of a Russian attempt to seize Constantinople helped to keep the cabinets in London and Rome friendly toward Germany. At the same time, Russian designs on Constantinople were a wedge between St. Petersburg and Paris.”¹⁵⁸

Not only did statesmen seek to restrain their allies and limit the latter’s freedom of maneuver, but they also sought to widen their own freedom of action by maintaining ties with the members of an opposing camp. What

¹⁵⁵ Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, pp. 394–395, 402. See also Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 310–312.

¹⁵⁶ Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, p. 402 (also p. 439). See also Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 312–314, 319–321.

¹⁵⁷ Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, pp. 397, 386, 416. See also Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 318–319.

¹⁵⁸ Ludwig Reinert, *The Lamps Went Out in Europe* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing, 1966), p. 15. See also Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, p. 423.

this meant in practice was that the great powers continued to form temporary, ad hoc coalitions that cut across the lines established by more formal groupings like the Triple Alliance and the Franco-Russian alliance.¹⁵⁹ The rivalries that resulted from imperialist expansion in Africa and Asia offered numerous opportunities for the formation of such informal alignments. In the scramble for colonies, “countries which were rivals in Europe might find their interests more or less identical beyond the seas, while powers which had worked in harmony in Europe might fall out in Africa or Asia.”¹⁶⁰ In 1894, Germany joined with France in protesting a treaty between Britain and Belgium that provided for an exchange of territories bordering the Congo Free State. In 1895, “Germany assisted Russia and France in compelling Japan to disgorge part of the spoils of her war with China, thus, as it were neutralizing the Dual Alliance in Europe by converting it into a Far Eastern Triple Alliance.” In 1900, troops from Germany, France, Russia, and Great Britain participated in a joint operation to suppress the Boxer Rebellion in China.¹⁶¹

Nor were statesmen content to form temporary coalitions with one or more members of a rival alliance. Statesmen often pursued written understandings and even formal alliances with the states that were the target of an earlier alliance. Within two years of the signing of the Austro-German treaty directed against Russia, Bismarck negotiated a secret agreement with Russia that he renewed and kept effective as long as he was in power.¹⁶² Bismarck’s successors attempted to persuade either the French or the Russians to enter a “continental league” intended to offset British colonial and naval supremacy – a policy that rested on the belief that if either member of the Dual Alliance could be persuaded to join such a venture the other would follow rather than accept the risks of isolation.¹⁶³ In 1902, Italy agreed to a renewal of the Triple Alliance, which entailed a promise of support for Germany against France, but a few months later the Italians promised the French through an exchange of notes that they would not attack France nor

¹⁵⁹ For example, the secret agreement in May 1897 between Austria–Hungary and Russia for cooperation in the Balkans, which lasted until January 1908, described by M. B. Cooper, “British Policy in the Balkans, 1908–9,” *The Historical Journal* 7 (#2, 1964): 259–260. See also Cooper’s discussion of Russia’s subsequent invitation to Austria to resume their collaboration even as the British foreign secretary (Sir Edward Grey) “was under the impression that Britain and Russia were working ‘hand in hand’ in the Balkans” (ibid., p. 265).

¹⁶⁰ Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente*, pp. 45–46.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 48. See also Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 122–126; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 350–352, 356–358.

¹⁶² Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 70, 74–75; Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, pp. 418–423, 497–503; Packard, “Russia and the Dual Alliance,” pp. 392–394; Goriainov, “The End of the Alliance of the Emperors,” pp. 325–347.

¹⁶³ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 131–132, 170–171; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 358–371, 427–434.

would they support Germany if it attacked France.¹⁶⁴ At Björkö, in 1905, the Kaiser persuaded his cousin the tsar to sign a Russo-German treaty of alliance, which the tsar subsequently renounced after being persuaded by his advisers that it was contrary to the spirit of the Franco-Russian alliance.¹⁶⁵

The period between the Franco-Prussian War and the Bosnia crisis of 1908–1909 was a period during which all of the great powers except Great Britain and the United States “were preparing for war with a diligence for which modern history had hitherto offered no parallel.”¹⁶⁶ Yet it was also a period of practically unbroken peace for Europe, during which all of the great powers deferred further acquisitions in Europe in favor of a scramble for colonies in Africa and Asia. They thus exhibited a degree of restraint in their dealings with each other similar to that during the three decades prior to the Crimean War.¹⁶⁷ At least part of the explanation for the apparent inconsistency can be traced to the nature of the alliances formed during this period. The quality of slyness or craftiness that infused the alliance policies of the leading states encouraged the illusion that they had achieved the best of all possible worlds – namely, that they were secure by virtue of their alliances, but they were also free to choose when and where to become involved in a future conflict by virtue of the loopholes written into the treaties they had signed and the secret agreements and understandings that they cultivated with the members of a rival camp, both of which hedged against the risk that they would be called on to honor their commitments to their allies. Their desire to preserve the understandings that they had reached with their rivals made statesmen hesitant to push disputes to the brink of war, while the relatively close links maintained by the members of rival alliances made possible private contacts and discussions that facilitated the resolution of crises.

There was, however, a price to be paid for the cynical and manipulative ways that statesmen used with their allies. Slyness toward allies had two closely related effects, neither of which was conducive to coordinated action by allies. First, even in the case of supposedly permanent alliances like those between Germany and Austria or France and Russia, relations between the partners were conducted under a cloud of suspicion and mistrust because statesmen could never shake off the doubts they felt about the loyalty and/or wisdom of their allies. Second, statesmen were understandably reluctant to share sensitive information about their own state’s armed forces and their plans for the future with allies whose loyalty they questioned and whose motives they

¹⁶⁴ As Taylor notes (*The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 406–407), the Italians in effect promised not to keep a promise they had made a few months earlier. See also Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 141–151.

¹⁶⁵ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 171–177; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 432–434; Reiners, *The Lamps Went Out in Europe*, pp. 49–52.

¹⁶⁶ Howard, “The Armed Forces,” p. 204. See also Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 256.

¹⁶⁷ Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 254–255; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 255–256.

mistrusted. Despite elaborate staff conferences and planning exercises, allies were on the whole poorly informed about the capabilities and intentions of their partners. Military staff talks were held during which likely opponents were identified and agreements to mobilize simultaneously were concluded, but that was about as far as arrangements for coordinated action were taken. The Russians did not inform the French of their plans to seize the heights overlooking the Bosphorus and Constantinople,¹⁶⁸ nor did the Germans inform the Austrians of their decision to revise their war plans so that the initial blow would be aimed at France rather than Russia. Schlieffen, as Gordon Craig notes,

did not trust the ability of the Austrians to keep secrets . . . He communicated with them as infrequently as possible and, when he made proposals, did so with scant courtesy or consideration for Austrian views. His decision to shift the focus of German action in case of war from the eastern to the western front – which could not help but have a serious effect on Austrian war dispositions – was made independently and passed on to Vienna belatedly; and in the subsequent period the German chief of staff showed no desire to advise his allies concerning the necessary adjustments in their own line of battle.¹⁶⁹

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The evolution of alliance relationships during the first two decades of the twentieth century is not easy to describe, in large part because the policies of the leading states during this period were something less than a model of consistency. Interactions between allies became more intensive and more extensive in scope as statesmen stepped up their efforts to hold on to their allies and ensure effective support from them in the event of war. On the other hand, statesmen continued to cling to the ideal of the “free hand” in the sense of extracting binding pledges from their allies while minimizing their own obligations. The zigs and zags that resulted from this delusion make it difficult to identify clear-cut trends in the way in which allies dealt with each other, but a few important changes stand out fairly clearly.

First, the emergence of seemingly durable groupings such as the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente and the rivalry between them encouraged statesmen to pursue agreements with their allies on the ways that they and their partners would use their armed forces during the initial stage of the next war. A recurrent theme in the alliance policies of all of the great powers in the years prior to 1914 was the need to tighten their alliances, and

¹⁶⁸ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 363–364, 366–367, 371–372.

¹⁶⁹ Gordon Craig, “The World War I Alliance of the Central Powers in Retrospect: The Military Cohesion of the Alliance,” *Journal of Modern History* 37 (1965): 337. See also Holger Herwig, “Disjointed Allies: Coalition Warfare in Berlin and Vienna, 1914,” *Journal of Military History* 54 (July 1990): 272–275; Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Dell, 1962), p. 36. The Austrians reciprocated the Germans’ contempt – Conrad, the Austrian Chief of Staff, referred to the Germans as “our secret enemies” and to the German Kaiser as a “comedian” (Herwig, “Disjointed Allies,” p. 265n).

especially to devise joint plans for mobilization and deployment in order to secure the largest possible advantage over their prospective enemies at the start of the next war. The French and Russian military staffs held annual conferences, beginning in 1900, during which they prepared elaborate plans for joint action in the event of war and exhorted each other to increase their efforts at preparedness.¹⁷⁰ Conversations between British and French naval and army officers began in 1905 and 1906, respectively, during which the partners in the Anglo-French entente developed minutely detailed plans for deploying a British Expeditionary Force (BEF) on the left wing of the French line in the event of war with Germany and reached agreements on the coordination of naval deployments in the North Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Far East.¹⁷¹ A Franco-Russian naval convention was signed on July 16, 1912, providing for naval cooperation in wartime aimed at preventing the Austrian and Italian fleets from entering the Black Sea and threatening the left flank of the Russian army in Europe. Also included was a provision for regular conferences between the French and Russian naval staffs to lay the groundwork for cooperation in peacetime.¹⁷² The British began military staff talks with the Russians in 1914, although “British relations with Russia never reached the same degree of intimacy as those with France.”¹⁷³ Toward the end of 1913, the members of the Triple Alliance reached agreement on a naval convention providing for cooperation in wartime aimed at gaining control over the Mediterranean. In March 1914, a German-Italian military convention committed the Italians to send three army corps and two cavalry divisions to fight with the German army in a war against France.¹⁷⁴

A second important change had to do with the range of issues addressed within the context of formal alliance ties. Alliance obligations during the second half of the nineteenth century had for the most part been construed very narrowly. Bismarck refused to choose between Austria-Hungary and Russia in their quarrels over the Balkans; the Austrians refused to promise to support Germany in a war with France over Alsace and Lorraine; France declined to support Russia in the latter’s quarrels with England, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey; Russia refused to support France in a war of revenge against Germany and gave only verbal support to French efforts to win a

¹⁷⁰ Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente*, pp. 95–96; Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 39–40, 346; Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, pp. 76–78; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 229.

¹⁷¹ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 192, 211, 213, 318–323; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 437–439, 479–481; Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente*, pp. 75, 78, 88; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 231–232; Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, pp. 63–74.

¹⁷² Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 324–326; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 488.

¹⁷³ Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente*, pp. 98–99. See also Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 512–513.

¹⁷⁴ Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente*, pp. 100–101.

foothold on the upper Nile.¹⁷⁵ After the turn of the century, however, the importance attached by statesmen to ensuring that allies would be supportive in the event of a showdown meant that alliances between the great powers gradually developed into open-ended arrangements that extended to more and more of the points at issue between the members of rival camps.¹⁷⁶

Third, the broadened scope of the alliances formed by the great powers meant that those alliances gradually lost their defensive character and took on a more aggressive tinge. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the principal purpose of alliances in Europe had been to preserve the status quo; those alliances had been defensive in nature and specific in terms of the *casus foederis*. After the turn of the century, the alliances formed by the great powers began to lose their defensive and specific nature and took on instead the character of aggressive military blocs.¹⁷⁷

The decade-and-one-half prior to the First World War was thus a period of consolidation for both the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. Consultations became more intimate and more wide-ranging, arrangements for cooperation in wartime became more extensive and more detailed than ever before, and the alliances themselves seemingly grew more vigorous and more robust than any that had preceded them. But the appearance of unprecedented intimacy and solidarity between allies masked a darker side to these relationships that had its roots, paradoxically, in the very strengthening of alliances that had begun toward the end of the nineteenth century. The consolidation of the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente and the extension of alliance solidarity to a growing set of issues by no means brought an end to the rivalries and tensions that existed within these two alliances.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, it was the tightening of those alliances that gave their members greater leverage over one another, which they did not hesitate to use when pursuing gains for themselves.

The Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907, to cite one example, divided Persia into Russian and British spheres of influence, with a neutral buffer in between. The Russians, however, “found it difficult to moderate their ambitions for long. They soon slipped back into assuming that Russia was the greatest, or even the only, Power in the world; and the temptation to cheat in Persia was increased by the fact that Teheran, the capital, was in the Russian zone. Whatever the foreign ministry said in St. Petersburg, the Russians at Teheran constantly encroached on Persia’s independence.”¹⁷⁹ Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign secretary, protested these Russian encroachments, but he “was helpless

¹⁷⁵ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 68–69, 83, 113–114, 119; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 339, 352–353, 361–362, 368–370, 381.

¹⁷⁶ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, p. 34 (also pp. 224–225, 330–331). See also Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 487.

¹⁷⁷ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, p. 224. See also Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente*, p. 95; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 486–488; Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, p. 207; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 257.

¹⁷⁸ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, p. 225.

¹⁷⁹ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 445.

to make his protests effective, because his distrust of Germany made him unwilling to take a really stiff attitude to Russia, or to recede from the Agreement of 1907, lest he should thereby endanger the solidarity of the Triple Entente. The Russians were quite aware of this, and took advantage of it."¹⁸⁰

Within the Triple Alliance, the counterpart of the Anglo-Russian rivalry in the Middle East was the competition between Austria-Hungary and Italy for influence in the Balkans. Austria and Italy had been allies since 1882 but they were also rivals vying for supremacy in the Balkans and for control over the Adriatic Sea. Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 both heightened this rivalry and nudged Italy further in the direction of defection from the Triple Alliance.

Italy had not been fully consulted beforehand by her ally, nor had she been able to take any important part in the solution of the crisis. Italian pride had been offended, and Italian ambitions seemed threatened by Austria's further grip on the Balkan Peninsula . . . Italy's doubts of the value of the Triple Alliance to herself were increased. She was quite ready a few months later to sign with Russia the secret agreement of Racconigi. This aimed at Russo-Italian diplomatic cooperation against Austria in the Near East, and marked another milestone in Italy's shift from the Triple Alliance to the Triple Entente.¹⁸¹

Italy's allies were naturally alarmed by the meeting between the tsar and Victor Emanuel at Racconigi in October 1909, "but they were given the solemn but lying assurance that nothing had been agreed to except the laudable desire of Italy and Russia to preserve the status quo in the Balkans and to allow the Balkan states their normal and peaceful development."¹⁸²

In effect, statesmen continued to be pulled in two directions at once: toward the ideal of solidarity with their allies, to ensure that their state would not have to fight alone, and toward the ideal of the free hand, both to defend their interests against encroachments by their ally-rivals and to guard against entanglement in unwanted wars. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, statesmen had sought to avoid choosing between these ideals by means of tricks and deceptions. They sought the best of both worlds – to have allies firmly committed to them while escaping obligations of their own. By the turn of the century, however, the continued growth in armies and improvements to mobilization systems made this a more difficult and more dangerous game to play.¹⁸³ Allies had to be treated

¹⁸⁰ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 221–222.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 396–397.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 409. In fact, Italy and Russia pledged to make no agreements with third parties concerning the Balkans and to look benevolently on Russia's interest in gaining control of the straits at Constantinople and Italy's interest in Tripoli. A few days after the Racconigi meeting, the Italians signed an agreement with Austria-Hungary, "behind Russia's back and in total disregard of the Racconigi promise," pledging that neither should make an agreement concerning the Balkans with a third party without the knowledge of the other (*ibid.*, p. 408).

¹⁸³ Paul Kennedy notes that "the outbreak of war [in 1914] was preceded by an arms race of staggering proportions" ("The First World War and the International Power System," *International Security* 9 [Summer 1984]: 7–40, esp. pp. 7–10).

more respectfully, courted more assiduously, and reassured more frequently if the dangers of isolation were to be avoided. Even so, the alliance policies of the leading states remained tinged by wariness of their partners' schemes, which they ascribed to rash judgment and/or a penchant for double-dealing.

And they had good reason to do so! The British were determined not to sacrifice their ententes with France and Russia to the Germans, but this did not prevent them from negotiating separately with Germany on naval and colonial issues or from cooperating with the Germans during the Balkan Wars to restrain the Russians and the Austrians.¹⁸⁴ The French refused to support the Russians in their war against Japan because they did not wish to endanger their relations with Britain, the ally of Japan. The Russians, for their part, gave the French only perfunctory support in the Agadir crisis because they did not wish to endanger their recently improved relations with Germany.¹⁸⁵ The Austrians did not give the Germans timely warning of their decision to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina, and they practically flaunted their neutrality during the second Morocco crisis in 1911.¹⁸⁶ The British refused to support a Russian scheme to open the straits at Constantinople only to Russian warships because they feared the consequences of allowing the Black Sea to become a Russian naval sanctuary. The Russians welcomed tensions between Britain and Germany because these offered them greater freedom to pursue their own aims in Persia and China.¹⁸⁷ The Italians did not inform their partners in the Triple Alliance of their intention to seize Tripoli from Turkey; and the Austrian Chief of Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorf, was so convinced of Italy's disloyalty that he referred to her as Austria's principal opponent and urged a preventive war against her.¹⁸⁸

What all this meant in practice was that, despite the exhortations to tighten alliances and step up joint military preparations, alliance members remained reluctant to become too deeply entangled in the affairs of their partners. They also remained determined to deal separately with the members of the opposing camp. Such dealings had to be conducted with delicacy and circumspection lest an ally be permanently alienated and thus unwilling to render support

¹⁸⁴ Sean Lynn-Jones, "Détente and Deterrence: Anglo-German Relations, 1911-1914," *International Security* 11 (Autumn 1986): 121-150. See also Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente*, pp. 101-102; Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 304-308, 311; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 476-478, 502-504.

¹⁸⁵ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 292-293, 330, 413-414; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 468.

¹⁸⁶ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 385-387; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 452, 468, 473.

¹⁸⁷ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 380-381; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 452, 462.

¹⁸⁸ Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 344-345; Reiners, *The Lamps Went Out in Europe*, pp. 95-96; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 450.

when it was needed most, but the right to maintain such contacts was one that no great power would willingly forgo.¹⁸⁹ By insisting on the principle of separate dealings with members of the opposing alliance, statesmen kept open the option of a diplomatic realignment, which was essential to the success of their efforts to moderate and contain the ambitions of their allies, which often conflicted with their own. In this way, statesmen clung to the illusion that they could still have it both ways – namely, militarily effective alliances based on detailed advance planning and a free hand to decide whether, when, and where to commit themselves. In reality, their policies resulted in the worst of both worlds – the freedom of action that they thought they had retained was frittered away as fears of isolation mounted in response to the continued growth in armies and navies, while the wariness felt by statesmen toward their allies meant that the elaborate staff talks and planning exercises produced only the illusion of cooperation rather than the reality.¹⁹⁰

The great powers that plunged into war in August 1914 were heirs to a long tradition whereby statecraft aimed at improving one's position against one's allies as well as one's enemies.¹⁹¹ They thus entered the prewar staff talks and consultations more with an eye toward using each other rather than pooling resources in order to use their combined forces to greatest advantage against a common foe. The Germans tried to persuade the Austrians to allocate as many troops as possible to the Galicia front in order to draw Russian forces away from East Prussia. The Austrians wanted the Germans to take on more of the burden of fighting the Russians in order to free Austrian forces to deal with Serbia.¹⁹² The French wanted the Russians to invade East Prussia within fifteen days of the start of mobilization whether Russian forces were ready to move or not, in order to draw German forces from the expected assault on France. The Russians encouraged the French to increase the size of their army in order to tie down more German divisions on the western front, thereby enabling the Russians to direct their own main effort against Austria.¹⁹³

Because their goal was to manipulate and control each other, the World War I allies were reluctant to speak candidly to each other concerning their intentions and goals. "Despite twenty years of Franco-Russian military talks, there was no

¹⁸⁹ Taylor notes in this regard that each member of the Triple Entente claimed for itself the right to deal separately with Germany in pursuit of better bilateral relations while deploring the efforts of the other members to do the same (*The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 468).

¹⁹⁰ The link between perceptions of offensive dominance and the formation of tight, durable alliances (chain ganging) is discussed by Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44 (Spring 1990): 137–168. See also Christensen, "Perceptions and Alliances in Europe, 1865–1940."

¹⁹¹ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 537. Using alliances to manage and control the activities of one's allies is a major theme of Schroeder, "Alliances, 1815–1945"; and Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*.

¹⁹² Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, p. 344; Craig, "The World War I Alliance of the Central Powers," p. 339.

¹⁹³ Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, pp. 76–77; Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, p. 40; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, pp. 500–501, 539–540.

common war plan and no program of war aims. Joffre and Grand Duke Nicholas, the two commanders-in-chief, did not reveal their strategy to each other or attempt to combine their operations."¹⁹⁴ A similar reticence was present between the Germans and the Austrians. In 1908, Moltke and Conrad, the two chiefs of staff, began a correspondence concerning military cooperation that lasted until the eve of the First World War. Moltke hoped to ease the resentment that had built up in Vienna as a result of Schlieffen's reluctance to give the Austrians a detailed account of his plans, but he "was no more favorably inclined to a true measure of joint planning than Schlieffen himself had been." Communications between the German and Austrian staffs were limited to letters exchanged by Moltke and Conrad, supplemented by occasional meetings between them. "The striking feature of this intermittent correspondence . . . was that it at no time touched upon the subject of coordinated direction of operations in a future war . . . and that in all matters affecting the military cohesion of the alliance it was singularly imprecise."¹⁹⁵

The inadequacy of the prewar staff talks was painfully apparent in the military disasters and mutual recriminations that plagued both sides once the war had begun. The French neither knew nor cared about the materiel shortages that hampered the movements of the two Russian armies that invaded East Prussia; their sole concern was to get the Russians moving in the direction of Berlin. "From the moment the war opened, the French, uncertain that Russia really would or could perform what she had promised, began exhorting their ally to hurry."¹⁹⁶ Their pride stung by French complaints that they were not doing enough, the Russians launched their offensive on the fifteenth day of mobilization, as promised, even though their armies had not yet completed concentrating and were woefully short of ammunition and supplies. By moving before they were ready, the Russians were unable to exploit their numerical superiority, and a single German army was able to repel two Russian armies by defeating them individually before they could come to each other's aid. The French achieved their goal of goading the Russians into a hasty invasion of East Prussia, but the price was the annihilation of one of the two Russian armies at Tannenberg.¹⁹⁷

The French were better informed about the plans of the British, but this did not avert a near-disaster on the western front during the early weeks of the war. By 1914, the staff officers involved in the Anglo-French military conversations had worked out a plan for deploying the BEF to France, complete to the last billet for every battalion and even to the places where the troops would drink their coffee.¹⁹⁸ But the planners had not addressed the question of what would

¹⁹⁴ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 539.

¹⁹⁵ Craig, "The World War I Alliance of the Central Powers," pp. 337–338. See also Herwig, "Disjointed Allies," pp. 274–280; Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, pp. 342–344; Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, pp. 192, 522n.

¹⁹⁶ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 539. See also Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, p. 77.

¹⁹⁷ Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, pp. 297–346; Reinert, *The Lamps Went Out in Europe*, pp. 175–177.

¹⁹⁸ Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, p. 74.

happen once the armies were set in motion. The French expected to launch an offensive that would carry them to victory with the British trailing in their wake. The latter could hardly question the expectations of their ally since they were contributing only six divisions while the French contributed roughly seventy. When the French offensive stalled and then was wrenched into reverse by the power of the German attack, the differences between British and French interests, which had been glossed over during the military conversations, were forced to the surface. The British commander, Sir John French, could think only of saving the BEF, which contained virtually all the trained officers and men that Britain then had to offer. “The immediate purpose for which the BEF had come to France – to prevent her being crushed by Germany – appeared to escape him, or at least he seemed to react with no sense of urgency.”¹⁹⁹

Coordination between the BEF and the French was abysmal. The retreat of the French Fifth Army was carried out without consulting the British, which left the BEF in danger of being enveloped. Meanwhile, British plans for a rapid and deep retreat threatened to open a gap between the French Fifth Army and the newly forming Sixth Army which, if exploited by the Germans, could have led to a defeat worse than Sedan.²⁰⁰ The French had expected the BEF to follow in their wake. Instead it was the British who pulled the French backwards. Each time the BEF retreated, two French armies had to fall back in order to prevent the opening of a gap through which the Germans could advance unopposed. It was only through the intervention of Kitchener, who came to Paris to order Sir John French to hold a place in the line, that the BEF and the French armies on either side of it were aligned in a way that permitted the French to hold at the Marne.²⁰¹

Because of their geographical contiguity and central location, Germany and Austria–Hungary were better positioned to coordinate the movements of their forces than were the Entente powers. But since the German and Austrian staffs had never agreed on priorities in the event of war, the Central Powers began the war with a “wholly uncoordinated offensive on three fronts . . . which eventuated in serious setbacks on all three.” The Austrian plan was to send two-fifths of their army against Serbia while the rest formed the southern part of an Austro-German pincers against the Russian armies in Poland. The only thing lacking was the German part of the pincers. The Austrian offensive into Galicia thus headed straight for disaster. In the fighting around Lemberg, the Russians inflicted on the Austrians a defeat that, in numbers at least, was even more crushing than their own defeat at Tannenberg. Conrad blamed the defeat on the failure of the Germans to keep their “solemn promise” to launch an offensive toward Warsaw, but the Germans deflected the accusation by noting that the German army in East Prussia had repelled Russian forces roughly twice its size

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 290–291, 395, 410.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 395–482.

while the Austrian army in Galicia had been overwhelmed by a Russian force of roughly equal strength.²⁰²

The failure of the initial offensives transformed the conflict from a war of movement to a war of attrition. In order to hold their own in such a struggle, the members of each alliance were compelled to mobilize their resources to an extent unprecedented in history and to coordinate their military operations over multiple fronts. The scope and scale of the fighting made it unlikely that any one of the combatants could achieve its war aims without first securing an unprecedented degree of collaboration with its allies, either in the form of joint operations on a single front or diversionary operations aimed at drawing off enough opposing forces to make a breakthrough possible. Such collaboration, however, did not come easily to states that for centuries had regarded their allies as mere accomplices who would likely turn against them if a sufficiently tempting opportunity arose. Each member of the wartime alliances exhorted its partners to ignore purely national interests for the sake of the common effort, but each was reluctant to follow this advice in shaping its own policy. What this meant in practice was (1) alliance members often worked at cross-purposes and (2) they continued to try to thwart each other's schemes, even at the cost of prolonging the war.

The Gallipoli campaign provides an obvious, although by no means the only, example of how rivalry among the members of the wartime alliances frustrated efforts to prosecute the war effectively. The well-known Russian interest in Constantinople along with the announcement by the British in November 1914 that they intended to annex Egypt stirred fears among the French that their allies would divide the Ottoman Empire between them while France's strength was drained by the struggle on the western front. The French were not enthused by the proposal for an attack on the Dardanelles because they feared it would divert British resources from the struggle against Germany. Even so, they agreed to participate, not because they wanted to help the Russians but because they wanted to thwart them. The French had no intention of capturing Constantinople only to hand it over to the Russians; their goal was to keep the Russians out, not let them in. Hence the French kept the preparations for the expedition secret from their Russian ally. But the British were more concerned to keep the Russians in the war than out of Constantinople, so they boasted to the Russians of the coming campaign. The Russians refused to agree to a British proposal to use Greek troops to attack Constantinople, which they coveted for themselves. The British and the French refused to call on the Russian Black Sea fleet for help, even though it was closer to Constantinople than any force in the Mediterranean.²⁰³

²⁰² Craig, "The World War I Alliance of the Central Powers," pp. 340–341. See also Herwig, "Disjointed Allies," pp. 265–267; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 230; Reiners, *The Lamps Went Out in Europe*, pp. 178–179; Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, p. 345.

²⁰³ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 541; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 253; Reiners, *The Lamps Went Out in Europe*, pp. 188–191.

The members of the Triple Entente also found themselves at odds on the question of adding new members to their side of the struggle. In August 1914, the Russians were fervent advocates of adding Italy to the side of the Triple Entente because they needed Italian forces to distract Austria while they launched their offensive into East Prussia. But the talks with the Italians came to nothing because the latter demanded territory along the Adriatic that the Russians intended to give to Serbia as compensation for Macedonia, which they planned to take from Serbia in order to bribe Bulgaria into joining their side too.²⁰⁴ By 1915, it was apparent that Russian forces were greatly inferior to those of the Germans, but the Russians were holding their own against the Austrians and still hoped to defeat them. The Russians thus opposed a French proposal to add Italy to the Entente side on the grounds that Italian participation was of no value and would only complicate the division of the spoils. Russian obstinacy infuriated the British and the French, but for once greed supplied a motive to do what diplomacy had been unable to accomplish. The Italians feared that if they delayed their entry any longer, the Russians would defeat Austria without their help and deprive them of a share of the spoils. Hence they gave up their claim to Dalmatia, which the Russians still hoped to give to Serbia.²⁰⁵

Much like the Russians, the Germans too had a penchant for giving away territory that did not belong to them. The Germans urged the Austrians to buy Italian neutrality by ceding the Tyrol and Trentino, and they evaded Austrian requests for German forces to help defend the border with Italy. The Germans urged the Austrians to buy Rumanian neutrality by ceding some or all of Transylvania, to which the Austrians responded by reiterating their request for German troops to defend the territory in question.²⁰⁶

The rivalries among the members of the wartime alliances also impeded efforts to establish joint commands that could employ the forces of alliance members where they were needed most. As long as German forces facing Russia were numerically inferior to those of the Austrians, the Germans resisted Austrian suggestions that the Austrian *Armee Oberkommando* be given supreme authority on the eastern front. As German troop strength in the east increased, it was the Germans who advanced proposals for a unified command and the Austrians who resisted. The latter's inability to cope with the demands of the war without German reinforcements compelled them to give way, and in September 1916 a cumbersome joint command covering all fronts was agreed on, although

²⁰⁴ Taylor notes that Sazonov, the Russian foreign minister, had a penchant for giving away territory that belonged to someone else: "He offered Serbian and Bulgarian territory to Rumania; Rumanian, Turkish, and Serbian territory to Bulgaria; and Bulgarian territory to Turkey, if any of them would join the war" (*The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 533).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 544–546.

²⁰⁶ Gerald Silberstein, "The High Command and Diplomacy in Austria-Hungary, 1914–1916," *Journal of Modern History* 42 (December 1970): 592–602; Reinert, *The Lamps Went Out in Europe*, pp. 192–193.

it proved to be of limited value because of the Germans' lack of knowledge of the condition of the Austrian armies and Austrian resistance to German direction.²⁰⁷

Unity of command came even more slowly to the Western allies. The Entente powers were allied only in the sense that each was fighting at the same time as the others its own war against Germany and its protégés.²⁰⁸ From the start of the war until the spring of 1918, their armies fought as separate entities, each responsible for a separate front or, in the case of the British and the French, separate sectors of the same front. They also fought for separate political goals – the British for the destruction of the German fleet and seizure of German colonies; the French for Alsace-Lorraine; the Italians for territorial gains at the expense of Austria-Hungary; and the Russians for Constantinople. Each sought to keep its allies going for the sake of keeping up the pressure on the other side, but each cared little about the objectives of its partners and would have gladly sacrificed them for the sake of peace on its own terms. The ability to fight independently was not just the irreducible minimum for great power status; it was a necessity for allies who worried their partners might be too successful and who thus conducted their military and diplomatic campaigns with a view to acquiring positions of strength from which to confront both their enemies and their allies once the war was over.²⁰⁹

In this situation, proposals for placing the forces of one ally under the command of officers from another were almost always rejected by statesmen who feared the consequences – both at home and abroad – of surrendering their ability to pursue separate national goals while fighting.²¹⁰ When on occasion such a proposal was adopted, albeit to a limited degree, the result was often unfortunate.²¹¹

The Russian collapse in 1917 and the near-collapse of the Italians after their defeat at Caporetto, however, made it abundantly clear that the war would have to be conducted differently if defeat were to be averted. A Supreme War Council was organized in November 1917 in an attempt to bring greater coherence to the Allied war effort. This group, however, “was a political body [that] did not attempt to direct military operations in the field.” A committee of Permanent

²⁰⁷ Craig, “The World War I Alliance of the Central Powers,” pp. 341–343.

²⁰⁸ Tasker Bliss, “The Evolution of the Unified Command,” *Foreign Affairs* 1 (December 1922): 2. See also W. B. Fest, “British War Aims and German Peace Feelers During the First World War,” *The Historical Journal* 15 (June 1972): 285–308, esp. p. 286; Roy Prete, “French Military War Aims, 1914–1916,” *The Historical Journal* 28 (December 1985): 887–899.

²⁰⁹ Schroeder, “Alliances, 1815–1945,” p. 250. Mark Stoler notes that even after the United States entered the war, “Instead of concentrating on the western front for the defeat of Germany, these powers consistently proposed peripheral campaigns to achieve their self-serving political objectives. They also attempted to break up and use the American Expeditionary Force in such efforts” (*Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000], p. 11).

²¹⁰ Bliss, “The Evolution of the Unified Command,” p. 7; Ernest May, “Wilson,” in *The Ultimate Decision: The President as Commander-in-Chief* ed. Ernest May (New York: George Braziller, 1960), p. 123.

²¹¹ See, for example, the discussion of the Nivelle campaign in 1917, in Bliss, “The Evolution of the Unified Command,” p. 3.

Military Representatives advised the Council, but the former “had no executive authority.”²¹² Unity of command was not achieved until April 1918, when the German spring offensive threatened to drive a wedge between British and French forces. When the French commander, Petain, proposed to swing his flank to protect Paris, the British countered with a proposal that a French officer – one who could order Petain to maintain contact with British forces – be appointed Supreme Allied Commander along the western front.²¹³ Marshall Foch was given the assignment of coordinating the actions of the Allied armies on the western front, but his authority extended only to strategic direction of the troops; the national commanders retained tactical control. “Each could, in principle, appeal to his government if he considered that Foch’s orders endangered his army. Every nation retained a separate section of the front, and the Allied forces were composed of self-sufficient national units under a supreme commander.”²¹⁴

In this instance, unity of command was essentially a tactical device to cope with a battlefield emergency, although once set in motion it proved an effective arrangement largely because of Foch’s personal qualities. His “good sense, kindly tact, personal magnetism and supreme professional qualifications . . . secured the degree of cooperation necessary for success and made him in fact if not in name inter-Allied Commander-in-Chief on the western front.”²¹⁵

ALLIANCES DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD

At the Versailles peace conference, the French had wavered between relying mainly on their own strength to hold Germany in check and forming alliances in order to offset Germany’s superior military potential. Despite the restrictions written into the Versailles settlement concerning the size and quality of the armed forces that Germany would be allowed to have, the French were convinced that the advantages they had won were only “temporary and precarious.” Germany, in the French view, “was potentially far stronger than France. A country of forty million inhabitants was facing one of seventy million.” German power, moreover, had been overcome during the First World War only through the efforts of a coalition of great powers, and this fact convinced the French that the wartime alliance would have to be carried over to the postwar period in one form or another. The reluctance of the United States and Great Britain to join with France in a permanent alliance, however, dealt a severe blow to French hopes to secure their country against a renewal of the conflict with Germany.²¹⁶

²¹² Bruce Russett, *Community and Contention: Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1963), p. 164. See also Bliss, “The Evolution of the Unified Command,” pp. 4–6; May, “Wilson,” pp. 119–124.

²¹³ Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 266; Bliss, “The Evolution of the Unified Command,” pp. 25–28; Reiners, *The Lamps Went Out in Europe*, p. 256.

²¹⁴ Russett, *Community and Contention*, p. 170. See also Bliss, “The Evolution of the Unified Command,” pp. 28–29.

²¹⁵ Bliss, “The Evolution of the Unified Command,” p. 30. See also Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 266–267.

²¹⁶ Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars*, pp. 12–13, 16–17.

The manner in which the anti-German coalition came apart left the French feeling especially bitter toward their former allies. At Versailles the French had sought to detach the territory on the left bank of the Rhine permanently from Germany, but the British and the Americans were unwilling to accept such a step, with the result that the Versailles Treaty provided instead for the permanent demilitarization of the Rhineland and for its occupation by Allied forces for a period of fifteen years. To convince the French to allow the Rhineland to remain part of Germany, the United States and Great Britain promised to assist France in the event of another German attack. Bilateral treaties to this effect were signed at Versailles on June 28, 1919.²¹⁷

The intent of this compromise was to remove the danger of a sudden invasion of France by demilitarizing the Rhineland, thereby providing time for the Anglo-Saxon powers to come to its aid. But the treaty with the United States never reached the floor of the U.S. Senate, and the preamble to the Franco-British treaty specified that the latter's obligation to France was contingent on American acceptance of a similar obligation. Hence the Franco-British treaty never took effect even though the British Parliament voted to approve it.²¹⁸

To replace these lost treaties, the French sought alliances with the small states that bordered Germany, which the French believed would be staunch defenders of the status quo and thus the natural allies of France. This policy resulted in a military agreement with Belgium in 1920, an alliance with Poland in 1921, a consultative pact with Czechoslovakia in 1924, and pacts of mutual guarantee with Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1925. The key to the successful operation of these alliances was the provision in the Treaty of Versailles that mandated the permanent demilitarization of the Rhineland. The French were aware of German discontent with the Versailles settlement, and they were especially concerned that the Germans would begin their effort to overturn the status quo not with an assault on France but rather with an effort to regain the territories Germany had lost to Poland and Czechoslovakia. The demilitarization of the Rhineland was to be the means through which France could forestall a German thrust to the south or east. As long as the Rhineland was defenseless, Germany was vulnerable to a French invasion. A demilitarized Rhineland also offered a corridor through which French troops could move in order to render assistance directly to Czechoslovakia and Poland.²¹⁹

As long as French military superiority was assured by German adherence to the restrictions on German military power laid down in the Treaty of Versailles, France could safely rely on her own efforts supplemented by the alliances with Belgium, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Alliances with the larger European states, such as Italy and the Soviet Union, were both unnecessary and, as seen by France, undesirable in view of Italy's dissatisfied

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19, 95–96, 102–103, 109.

status and the fears of France's smaller allies of Soviet designs on their territory.²²⁰ This situation changed, however, as a result of Germany's resurgence beginning in 1933, and it was no coincidence that French efforts to arrange a rapprochement with both the Soviet Union and Italy began that same year. French policy from 1933 onward aimed to create a new and more powerful ring of alliances to supplement the inner ring in central Europe. Agreements intended to resolve various issues at stake between France and Italy were signed in Rome in January 1935, followed a few months later by an exchange of promises of military assistance and an Italian promise to defend the demilitarized zone in the Rhineland in exchange for a French promise to defend Austria's independence.²²¹ In May 1935, France reached agreement with the Soviet Union on a pact of mutual military aid. In April 1936, the British and French governments exchanged promises of military assistance in the event of an unprovoked German attack.²²²

In the French view, promises of military assistance could substitute for additional armed forces only if they implied "immediate and automatic assistance" based on "prearranged military plans."²²³ But the French were reluctant to accept the same obligations that they sought to impose on others. The French talked endlessly about the need for allies to cooperate effectively in order to offset the threat posed by Germany, but their actions were those of a state more concerned with receiving than giving support. Talks between the French and Czech general staffs began in January 1924, "but collaboration was never very active and was soon nonexistent."²²⁴ The French resisted Soviet suggestions for military staff talks to accompany the Franco-Soviet pact of 1935, both to alleviate the concerns of France's smaller allies and to leave open the possibility of an agreement with Germany from which the Soviet Union would be excluded.²²⁵ Military staff talks between France and Great Britain began in April 1936 but the British, wary of French intentions, refused to discuss operational matters.²²⁶

A similar absence of provisions for effective military coordination characterized the Rome–Berlin Axis. German and Italian officials cultivated the myth

²²⁰ Ibid., pp. 102–103, 132–134, 143–145.

²²¹ Ibid., pp. 145–147; Raymond Sontag, *A Broken World, 1919–1939* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 281–284; Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, pp. 160–161.

²²² Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars*, pp. 76–77, 136; Sontag, *A Broken World*, pp. 284–285; William Scott, "Balance of Power as a Perennial Factor: French Motives in the Franco-Soviet Pact," in *Foreign Policy in the Sixties* ed. Roger Hilsman and Robert C. Good (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1965), pp. 207–228.

²²³ Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars*, pp. 24–25.

²²⁴ Ibid, p. 74. See also Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, pp. 144, 227; Kier, *Imagining War*, p. 51.

²²⁵ Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars*, pp. 138–141.

²²⁶ Gates, *End of the Affair*, pp. 13, 16. As described by Paul Schroeder, Britain sought "to retain as free a hand as possible in European and world affairs, leading and controlling her allies, France in particular, so that Britain would not become entangled in other peoples' quarrels" ("Munich and the British Tradition," *The Historical Journal* 19 [March 1976]: 225).

that their states worked well together, but the reality was something else. Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were rapacious states whose policies reflected their awareness that more for their ally meant less for themselves. The alliance between them rested on little more than the confidence of their leaders in their own superior ability to swindle their partner before the latter could do the same to them. Important steps were not concerted with each other, and each sought to deceive the other concerning future plans for expansion. "The Italian attack on Albania was deliberately concealed from the Germans as a riposte to the lack of warning given of the German march into Prague a fortnight before." The Germans returned the favor by keeping the Italians almost completely in the dark concerning their plans to expand at the expense of Poland and the Baltic states. The Italians concluded from military staff talks in April 1939 that the Germans did not envisage war in Europe for another two or three years, a conviction that loomed large in the Italian decision to accept a new bilateral alliance (the Pact of Steel). At Hitler's order, Germany's plans for war with Poland were concealed from the Italians.²²⁷

As always there was a price to be paid for according first priority to manipulating and using one's partners for the sake of national rather than common interests. The alliances formed by the democratic states were largely ineffective as instruments for resisting the expansionist plans of Germany and Italy, while the pacts signed by the latter were incapable of fostering effective collaboration for more than a brief period. The result was that the decade prior to the Second World War was a period of varying and even contradictory alignments as the states of Europe, large and small alike, jockeyed for position in anticipation of a renewal of the struggle for supremacy.

Almost immediately after the renewal in 1931 of the Treaty of Berlin, whereby Germany and the Soviet Union pledged to stay neutral in the event one of them became involved in a war with a third party, the Soviets concluded similar neutrality agreements with France and Poland, the countries against which the Treaty of Berlin had been aimed.²²⁸ Poland was France's ally, but as it came to realize the dangers it faced from Germany and France's reluctance to use force for any purpose other than self-defense, it sought safety in a "policy of contradictory pacts," signing an agreement with Germany in 1934, "which seemed to link the two countries so closely that some even suspected Poland of having become a German ally."²²⁹ The Italians exchanged promises of mutual aid with the French in 1935 but then abandoned them in favor of the Germans.

²²⁷ D. C. Watt, "The Rome-Berlin Axis, 1936-1940: Myth and Reality," *Review of Politics* 22 (1960): 520-521, 534-537. See also Sontag, *A Broken World*, pp. 358, 372; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, pp. 289-291. Hitler and Mussolini continued to spring surprises on one another even after the Second World War had begun; see, for example, John L. Snell, *Illusion and Necessity: The Diplomacy of Global War, 1939-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), pp. 61-62.

²²⁸ Sontag, *A Broken World*, pp. 124-125.

²²⁹ Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars*, p. 126. See also Sontag, *A Broken World*, p. 273.

The Soviets allied with France in 1935 but then abandoned them in favor of a partnership with Germany aimed at dividing Eastern Europe between them. The French sought to avoid irrevocable commitments to the Soviets lest they preclude an agreement with Germany, which was deemed within the realm of possibility as late as 1938.²³⁰

Even the most durable alignment of the interwar period, the entente between Great Britain and France, did not lead to effective policy coordination between its members, in large part because of lingering suspicions of each other's plans and intentions.²³¹ The rivalry between Great Britain and France over colonial and naval issues had so diminished by the 1920s that war between them was no longer a possibility. But successive British governments continued to think in terms of a balance of power on the Rhine as the key to peace in Europe even as the French sought to achieve overwhelming superiority vis-à-vis Germany. The British and the French thus defeated each other's efforts to hold Germany in check. The British disparaged and undermined French efforts to encircle Germany with a ring of allied states, while French intransigence thwarted British efforts to remove the sources of Germany's discontent. As a result, it was not until March 29, 1939 that Anglo-French staff talks concerning military coordination in the event of war with Germany finally got under way.²³² By then, Germany had already occupied all of Czechoslovakia, making the war that neither Britain nor France wanted all but inevitable.

²³⁰ Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars*, pp. 139–140; Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, p. 318.

²³¹ Christensen and Snyder (“Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks”) attribute this British reluctance to cooperate more fully with the French to a belief that it was safe for Britain to hold back, since France’s elaborate defenses made conquest unlikely. Randall Schweller sees British strategy as “distancing” rather than “buck-passing,” the reason being that German power exceeded that of Britain and France combined, which meant that explicit support for France would likely draw Britain into an unwinnable war (“Tripolarity and the Second World War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 37 [March 1993]: 87–89). For Christensen’s response to Schweller, see “Perceptions and Alliances in Europe, 1865–1940,” pp. 83–91.

²³² Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars*, pp. 77, 201, 242ff.; Gates, *End of the Affair*, pp. 10, 16. Robert Kaufman criticizes of the Anglo/French failure to balance growing German power (“‘To Balance or to Bandwagon?’ Alignment Decisions in 1930s Europe,” *Security Studies* 1 [Spring 1992]: 417–447). Stephen Walt responds that Britain and France did indeed engage in balancing, albeit belatedly (“Alliances, Threats, and U.S. Grand Strategy: A Reply to Kaufman and Labs,” *Security Studies* 1 [Spring 1992]: 448–482). Randall Schweller adds a unit-level explanation to his earlier work on tri-polarity, namely, that Britain and France “underbalanced” (“Unanswered Threats,” *International Security* 29 [Fall 2004]: 159–201).

Creating a Contentious Alliance

What exactly is the Atlantic Alliance? Why and how was it formed? The farther the creation of the Alliance recedes into the past, the blurrier the answers to these questions seem to become.

On one side are those who see the Alliance as “no more than a classical defense alliance,”¹ “based on a shared perception of threat from the Soviet Union,”² and thus vulnerable to collapse once the common enemy disappeared.³ Regardless of how it is done, any attempt to squeeze NATO into a generic category labeled “alliances” is likely to conceal much more than it reveals. The alliances of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, as we saw in [Chapter 2](#), were formed by statesmen whose idea of partnership was crafting a bargain at a third party’s expense,⁴ who feared their allies as much if not more than their enemies, and who thus instinctively reacted in ways obstructive of common action whenever an ally was about to secure gains greater than their own. Prior to the changes in warfare made apparent by the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars, the members of these alliances typically sought to use each other to create a diversion or cover a flank while they snatched a province or two from today’s enemy, after which they often abandoned each other with alacrity, *before* their erstwhile ally could win gains too. After the Franco-Prussian War, the members of these alliances sought to ensnare each other in arrangements that limited their partners’ freedom of action but not their own, in part so they would have allies when the next war

¹ Dieter Mahncke, “Transatlantic Security: Joint Venture at Risk?” in Dieter Mahncke, Wyn Rees, and Wayne Thompson, *Redefining Transatlantic Security Relations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 52.

² Thomas Mowle, *Allies at Odds? The United States and the European Union* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 9.

³ For example, Kenneth Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War,” *International Security* 25 (Summer 2000): 5–41, esp. pp. 18–26; Stephen Walt, “The Ties That Fray,” *The National Interest* 54 (Winter 1998/99): 3–11; John Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War,” *International Security* 15 (Summer 1990): 5–56.

⁴ Suggested by Adam Ulam’s characterization of Soviet diplomacy during the Cold War, “The Cold War According to Kennan,” *Commentary* 55 (January 1973): 69.

came, in part so their ally could not, would not go to war against them.⁵ Prominent here would be the Triple Alliance, which included two states that considered themselves mortal enemies (Austria–Hungary and Italy), and the Triple Entente, membership in which was used by the British and the Russians to gain leverage over each other in their ongoing rivalry in Persia and Afghanistan.

The Atlantic Alliance, in contrast, had its origins in the habits of cooperation forged by British and American soldiers and statesmen during the Second World War. Both sides were frequently exasperated with each other,⁶ but neither saw the other as a potential enemy and thus they did not fear each other's strength.⁷ These habits of cooperation carried over to the postwar period as British and American officials instinctively sought each other's help with problems such as threats to Greece and Turkey, how to revive occupied Germany, and above all how to meet the challenge posed by a Soviet Union that was openly hostile to Western-style democracy.⁸ The Atlantic Alliance brought together countries that, in the words of a British policy paper, "have been nurtured on civil liberties and on the fundamental human rights. Moreover, most Western European countries have such recent experience of Nazi rule that they can apprehend directly what is involved in their loss. All in a greater or lesser degree sense the imminence of the communist peril and are seeking some assurance of salvation."⁹ Seen this way, there is hardly anything "traditional" or "classical" about the Atlantic Alliance; its members dealt with each other very differently than did pre-1939 allies.¹⁰

On the other side of the "What is NATO?" question are those who see it as an institution rather than a mere alliance.¹¹ NATO's founders did indeed

⁵ Patricia Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

⁶ "The only thing worse than fighting a war with allies," General Marshall once said to Eisenhower, was "waging a war without allies" (Evan Thomas, "Band of Brothers, Team of Rivals," *Washington Post Book World*, June 17, 2007, p. 4). See also Mark Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

⁷ See, for example, Walter Millis, Harvey Mansfield, and Harold Stein, *Arms and the State* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1958), pp. 25–30.

⁸ Still useful is the account by Joseph M. Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks* (New York: Viking Press, 1955). See also Escott Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947–1949* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).

⁹ "Summary of a Memorandum Representing Mr. Bevin's Views on the Formation of a Western Union," reprinted in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948*, vol. 3 (hereafter FRUS), p. 5.

¹⁰ This contrast is developed further in Wallace Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), p. 5.

¹¹ For example, Robert Hunter, "Maximizing NATO," *Foreign Affairs* 78 (May/June 1999): 190–203; James Goldgeier, *Not Whether But When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1999); Harvey Waterman and Dessie Zagorcheva, "Correspondence: NATO and Democracy," *International Security* 26 (Winter 2000/2001): 221–230; Rachel Epstein, "NATO Enlargement and the Spread of Democracy: Evidence and Expectations," *Security Studies* 14 (January–March 2005): 59–98.

have a “breathtaking vision . . . of moving erstwhile adversaries from the battlefield to the boardroom, from conflict to cooperation, to so intertwine the security and economic interests of the member states that war in Europe would become all but unthinkable.”¹² But visions alone are unlikely to sustain an alliance intended to last essentially forever. Unlike virtually all previous alliances, the treaty that brought into being the Atlantic Alliance had no expiration date, which meant that its members would have to be able to adapt to changing circumstances (like the start of the Korean War in 1950, the invention of tactical nuclear weapons, or the end of the Cold War) in ways more imaginative than simply abandoning today’s allies in favor of new arrangements elsewhere.¹³ As circumstances changed, NATO members acquired new responsibilities and new roles within the Alliance. Changing circumstances also meant new expectations regarding how NATO members would behave toward each other. Those expectations were not always met, and when behavior failed to live up to expectations the result was often acrimony, angry comments, and public exchanges critical of some members’ performance – in other words, another so-called crisis for the Alliance.

This is where the crisis literature begins, and ends – namely, with an analysis of underlying problems and suggestions on how to fix them. But this is an incomplete and thus unsatisfactory response because it begs important questions, such as how can an alliance perpetually in upheaval last so long and accomplish so much? What actually happens during these so-called crises? To answer these questions, we need to know why and how the Atlantic Alliance has proved both crisis-prone and yet exceedingly resilient (compared to pre-1939 alliances). Put differently, the growth in Soviet power during and after the Second World War meant that some sort of alliance between the United States and the countries of Western Europe was more or less inevitable after the war ended, but even after the North Atlantic Treaty had been signed the shape the alliance would take was yet to be determined. The states that formed the Atlantic Alliance had a great deal in common to be sure, but they also disagreed about the nature of the threat posed by the Soviet Union and the best way to deal with it. How those disagreements and common interests would interact to form a contentious yet seemingly permanent alliance is the subject of this chapter.

¹² Alexander Vershbow (then serving as U.S. Ambassador to Russia), quoted in Mahncke et al., *Redefining Transatlantic Security Relations*, p. 106.

¹³ In place of an expiration date, Article 13 of the North Atlantic Treaty states that “After the Treaty has been in force for twenty years, any Party may cease to be a party one year after its notice of denunciation has been given to the Government of the United States of America, which will inform the Governments of the other Parties of the deposit of each notice of denunciation.”

AMERICAN VIEWS ON THE NEED FOR AN ALLIANCE

The Truman Administration's acceptance of a peacetime alliance with Western Europe has often been described as a revolutionary departure from traditional American isolationism.¹⁴ Truman's policies were indeed a break from the ideas and concepts that previously guided American foreign policy, but for all practical purposes the break occurred in 1945 and 1946, not 1949.¹⁵ The imposition of communist governments on Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria; Soviet pressures on Turkey and Iran; and the efforts of communist parties in Greece, Italy, France, and elsewhere to gain power by both violent and nonviolent means suggested to many in the United States a repetition of the tactics used by Germany in the 1930s to isolate and then swallow vulnerable territories on its southern and eastern borders.¹⁶ American officials took for granted that the states of Eastern Europe would have to be on good terms with the Soviet Union, but the brutality with which communist rule was imposed on those societies provoked disgust in the West and raised fears about how far Soviet ambitions might extend.¹⁷ Soviet pressure on Turkey and Iran suggested that they were not content, as British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin put it, with a "Soviet sphere [that] extended from Lübeck to Port Arthur."¹⁸ By February 1947, when the British informed the U.S. State Department of their intention to withdraw from Greece and Turkey and to

¹⁴ For example, Kenneth Condit, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, Volume 2, 1947-1949* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., no date), p. 355 (hereafter JCS History); Herbert Feis, *From Trust to Terror: The Onset of the Cold War, 1945-1950* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), p. 307; Lawrence Kaplan, *A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program, 1948-1951* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, 1980), p. 1; Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO and the United States* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), p. 1; Armin Rapoport, "The American Revolution of 1949," *NATO Letter* 12 (February 1964): 3-8. This section draws on an earlier treatment of this subject: Wallace Thies, "Learning in U.S. Policy toward Europe," in *Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy* ed. George Breslauer and Philip Tetlock (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), especially pp. 160-161.

¹⁵ Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 37.

¹⁶ See, for example, the comments by President Truman, quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 36. See also Les Adler and Thomas Paterson, "Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930s-1950s," *American Historical Review* 75 (April 1970): 1046-1064.

¹⁷ George Kennan expected the Soviets to carve out a large sphere of influence in Eastern Europe; see David Mayers, "Soviet War Aims and the Grand Alliance: George Kennan's Views, 1944-1946," *Journal of Contemporary History* 21 (1986): 57-59. Kennan's superior in the Moscow embassy, Ambassador W. Averill Harriman, stressed the brutality with which the Soviets were imposing their rule on Eastern Europe; see George C. Herring, Jr., "Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of the Cold War, 1944-1945," *Journal of American History* 56 (June 1969): 100-101. See also Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, pp. 26, 29-32; and Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, the first chapter of which is titled "A Spheres of Influence Peace?"

¹⁸ Quoted in Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 36.

cut off aid to those two countries, the Truman administration was for the most part agreed that if the United States were to stand aside, as it had during the 1930s, the balance of power would grow less favorable to the democratic states, Soviet ambitions would expand, and the likelihood of war would increase.¹⁹ From this conviction flowed the decisions to extend military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey, to sponsor the European Recovery Program (better known as the Marshall Plan), and to undertake the rehabilitation of West Germany and its reintegration into the economic and political life of Western Europe.

The frequency with which analogies between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia were bandied about during the postwar years did not mean that U.S. officials were unaware of the differences between them. Particularly within the State Department, analogies between Hitlerism and Stalinism were viewed as misleading and dangerous because they drew attention away from the real danger posed by the Soviet Union.²⁰ Unlike Hitler's Germany, the Soviet Union had no timetable for conquest and preferred to make gains by political rather than military means.²¹ Soviet activities constituted an assault against the West, but it was an assault conducted to a large extent through the activities of local communist parties and/or limited to territories close to the Soviet Union, where Soviet military power could be used to awe and intimidate smaller, vulnerable countries into submitting to Soviet demands.²² There was no need for the Soviets to resort to overt military action when they had other tools at their disposal – strikes, riots, protests, subversion of democratic regimes – all carried out by surrogates ready to do their bidding. The Soviets could also be counted on to be obstructionist on important political issues on which their conquests during the Second World War gave them a right to be heard, like the future of Germany. They would try to block and delay settlements for the Second World War and keep Europe in upheaval, in the hope that mounting chaos there would clear the way for more communist takeovers.

The Truman administration thus expected that the Soviets would try to pick up anything that fell into their hands in this fashion, but it also expected that

¹⁹ Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks*, pp. 129–170.

²⁰ See, for example, the remarks by George Kennan to the ambassadors of Great Britain, France, Canada, and the Benelux countries, July 7, 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 3, p. 157. See also Eduard Mark, "October or Thermidor? Interpretations of Stalinism and the Perception of Soviet Foreign Policy in the United States, 1927–1947," *American Historical Review* 94 (October 1989): 937–962.

²¹ See the summaries of Kennan's views in John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 34–35; Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, p. 62; and Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), p. 277.

²² See, for example, Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: New American Library, 1970), p. 262. See also John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 37–38.

they would *not* push their activities to the point of war.²³ The possibility that war could come by accident or miscalculation could never be completely discounted, but in view of the enormous devastation suffered by the Soviet Union during the Second World War and the Soviet leadership's fear of mutinies and large-scale defections in the event of another war, the Truman administration was convinced that the Soviet Union did not want war and was unlikely to press its demands to the point of war, the way Germany had in 1939. In George Kennan's words, "Russia cannot possibly be regarded as a power that has solved all its internal problems, is armed to the teeth and ready to plunge the world into war."²⁴

More serious than the danger of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe were two other possibilities. One was that the peoples of Western Europe would become so demoralized by the hardships endured first during the Second World War and then during the postwar effort to rebuild that economic recovery would slow to a crawl or even come to a halt, economies would stagnate, societies would sink into disorder and decay, and the peoples of Western Europe would turn in desperation to the communists in their search for rulers who could at least ensure adequate supplies of food and fuel.²⁵ The other was that the democracies in Western Europe would succumb to a kind of psychological paralysis brought on by the need to live in the shadow cast by Soviet military power, which could leave them so pessimistic about their future prospects that they would stop trying to stand up to Soviet threats and intimidation, leaving

²³ See, for example, the October 7, 1946 memorandum by George Kennan, quoted in David Mayers, "Containment and the Primacy of Diplomacy: George Kennan's Views, 1947–1948," *International Security* 11 (Summer 1986): 130–131; Kennan's November 7, 1947 "Résumé of World Situation," quoted in Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, p. 235; James Forrestal's diary entry for March 16, 1948, *The Forrestal Diaries* ed. Walter Millis (New York: Viking Press, 1951), p. 395; the description of NSC 20/2 (1948) in Robert Jervis, "The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 24 (December 1980): 565; and the September 1949 remarks by John Foster Dulles, quoted in Robert Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 50. See also Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, pp. 41, 56, 62; Melvyn Leffler, "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945–1948," *American Historical Review* 89 (April 1984): 359–362.

²⁴ Remarks by George Kennan, "Organization Meeting on Russia," June 12, 1946, quoted in David Mayers, "Containment and the Primacy of Diplomacy," pp. 145–146. Kennan reiterated this judgment in a September 1948 lecture at the National War College, quoted in Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 35.

²⁵ See, for example, the comments (during 1946) by Jefferson Caffery, U.S. ambassador to France, and William Clayton, assistant secretary of state for economic affairs, quoted in William Hitchcock, *France Restored* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 60. See also the excerpts from a 1947 memo by Clayton and from the memoirs of Paul Hoffman (the American administrator in charge of the Marshall Plan), quoted in Alan Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945–1951* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 2, 3. For more on the danger of economic collapse in Western Europe, "which indigenous communist parties would then exploit for the benefit of Moscow," see A. W. Lovett, "The United States and the Schuman Plan: A Study in French Diplomacy, 1950–1952," *The Historical Journal* 39 (June 1996): 428.

them vulnerable to communist-led coups backed by the threat of intervention by the Red Army.²⁶

Concerning the first of these, progress toward economic recovery in Western Europe was actually quite rapid during the eighteen months following the German surrender in May 1945. Factories were rebuilt and filled with capital goods imported from the United States, a skilled labor force was in place, and industrial production quickly climbed toward prewar levels.²⁷ Then came the brutal winter of 1946–1947. Particularly in Great Britain, rivers and canals froze, making it difficult to move coal by barge to power-generating stations. Blackouts were frequent, forcing factories to shut down. Factories that could not produce for export were unable to earn the hard currency needed to pay for imports of food, capital goods, and raw materials.²⁸ The exceptionally harsh winter was followed by a summer drought that resulted in crop yields that in some places were “extraordinarily low.”²⁹ All across Western Europe, currency reserves were dwindling, raising the specter that economic recovery – still very much dependent on a continuing flow of imports, particularly from the United States – would grind to a halt before it was complete. Economists on both sides of the Atlantic remembered how the restocking boom of 1919 had been followed by depression in 1920 once inventories had been rebuilt.³⁰ Was history now repeating itself?

This was a prospect that deeply concerned the Truman administration. Between July 1, 1945 and June 30, 1947, the United States allocated about \$10 billion to Western Europe in the form of loans, dollar credits to purchase U.S. government property left behind all over the world, and relief operations like UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Recovery Agency) and GAROIA (Government Aid and Relief in Occupied Areas).³¹ Congress could hardly be expected to fund relief programs indefinitely, but without continued help how could the peoples of Western Europe muster the energy and the confidence needed to save, invest, and rebuild? As of the first half of 1947, industrial production in Britain, France, Italy, and Belgium was still below the level reached in 1937.³² The countries of Western Europe had all run large trade deficits in 1946 as they imported the capital goods and other materials necessary for the recovery. Those trade gaps had been expected to narrow during

²⁶ See, for example, the excerpt from NSC 20/2, quoted in Jervis, “The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War,” p. 570. See also Thies, “Learning in U.S. Policy toward Europe,” p. 161.

²⁷ Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, pp. 7–15; Hitchcock, *France Restored*, pp. 62–65.

²⁸ Richard Mayne, *The Recovery of Europe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), Chapter 2 (“The Waste Land”). On the British coal crisis, see Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, p. 8.

²⁹ Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, pp. 31–32.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 3 (also 477).

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45 (see also the table on p. 46).

³² See the charts in *ibid.*, pp. 9, 10, 12.

1947 as the recovery became self-sustaining, but instead they widened.³³ “More and more as week succeeds week,” *The Economist* wrote in its 31 May 1947 issue, “the whole of European life is being overshadowed by the great dollar shortage.”³⁴ In the United States, there was a “sudden awareness . . . that Western Europe’s fragile external economic position threatened its reconstruction programs.”³⁵ While in Moscow for a foreign ministers meeting in April 1947, U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall told Stalin that the United States was “determined to do what we can to assist those countries which are suffering from economic deterioration which, if unchecked, might lead to economic collapse and the consequent elimination of any chance of democratic survival.” In a radio address on April 28, 1947, Marshall was more blunt: “the patient is sinking while the doctors deliberate.”³⁶

Hence the Marshall Plan – also known as the European Recovery Program, or ERP – was essentially an injection of billions of dollars intended to pay for vital imports, combined with U.S. insistence that the Europeans produce a plan showing how the money would be used and how they would work together to solve the recovery problem once and for all.³⁷ Merely doling out relief was unacceptable; the goal of the Marshall Plan was “the rehabilitation of the economic structure of Europe,” to be achieved by transforming Western Europe from a collection of small states looking out for themselves into an economically integrated and maybe even politically unified continent – peaceful, prosperous, able to take care of itself, and thus no longer a drain on the United States.³⁸

The Marshall Plan was based on a sophisticated calculation of risks and dangers. The Truman administration was well aware that the Red Army was deep in the center of Europe and facing a Western Europe that was practically defenseless.³⁹ But it also believed strongly that the Soviet Union did not want

³³ Ibid., pp. 18–20. Hitchcock, *France Restored*, pp. 82–87, likewise cites declining gold and currency reserves as the source of the crisis-like atmosphere in France in 1947.

³⁴ Quoted in G. John Ikenberry, “Rethinking the Origins of American Hegemony,” *Political Science Quarterly* 104 (Autumn 1989): 391.

³⁵ Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, pp. 44–45.

³⁶ Quoted in Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 62.

³⁷ Concerning the difficulties involved in meeting this requirement, see Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, pp. 76–89.

³⁸ The quoted excerpt is from Marshall’s June 5, 1947, commencement address at Harvard, reprinted in Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks*, pp. 281–284. For a skeptical look at the U.S. attempt to use Marshall Plan aid to promote economic integration and political unity in Europe, see Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, pp. 56–61.

³⁹ Concerning the military balance in 1947, see Matthew Evangelista, “Stalin’s Postwar Army Reappraised,” *International Security* 7 (Winter 1982/1983): 110–138; Philip Karber and Jerald Combs, “The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe: Military Estimates and Policy Options, 1945–1963,” *Diplomatic History* 22 (Summer 1998): 413–414. Evangelista and Karber/Combs agree that Soviet forces were unprepared for war in 1947, but Karber and Combs emphasize the improvements the Soviets made beginning in the fall of 1947, apparently in anticipation of the confrontation over Berlin in 1948.

war and was unlikely to start one.⁴⁰ The Marshall Plan thus included a determined effort to persuade the Europeans to be realistic about the dangers that they faced. Despair, disorder, decay from within – these were the likely dangers, not a Soviet invasion. Hence the Truman administration encouraged the Europeans to set aside their fears of Soviet military power and focus instead on regaining their economic strength. As their economies recovered, more resources would become available that the Europeans could use to rebuild their armed forces. As they regained their self-confidence and rebuilt their military strength, they would gradually become more secure, despite the presence of Soviet forces in eastern and central Europe.⁴¹

And the Americans were willing to put their money where their advice was. During 1947, 1948, and 1949 U.S. defense spending was declining, and U.S. military power was shrinking rather than expanding.⁴² This reflected a deliberate policy decision, described by Secretary of Defense James Forrestal in December 1947 as a “calculated risk” whereby “we are keeping our military expenditures below the levels which our military leaders must in good conscience estimate as the minimum which would in themselves ensure national security” in order to “increase our expenditures to assist in European recovery.”⁴³

The communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, a short-lived war scare in March,⁴⁴ and then the Berlin blockade in June showed the limits of this line of reasoning and compelled the Truman administration to consider stronger measures – most prominently a formal security arrangement for the North Atlantic area – to achieve its goal of reviving confidence in Europe. The Marshall Plan was expected to produce complete economic recovery in Western Europe, but this would take years, not months, to achieve. And it would have to be done by peoples living in the shadow cast by Soviet military power, which the Soviets would surely try to exploit. “The Russians don’t want to invade anyone,” George Kennan wrote in April 1948, but the possibility that they might do so was eroding the nerves of governments and publics in Western Europe and diverting their attention from the more pressing problems of

⁴⁰ The British shared the view that the Soviet Union did not want war, although they expected it to seek “to undermine British and American influence in all parts of the world” (FO371/66546, quoted in Anthony Adamthwaite, “Britain and the World, 1945–1949: The View from the Foreign Office,” *International Affairs* 61 [Spring 1985]: 227). See also John Baylis, “Britain, the Brussels Pact and the Continental Commitment,” *International Affairs* 60 (Autumn 1984): 618–619.

⁴¹ For more on the Truman administration’s thinking in this regard, see Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, pp. 56, 62.

⁴² The decline in U.S. military strength is described more fully in Condit, *JCS History*, vol. 2, pp. 18–23, 191–255. See also Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, pp. 36–38, 50–52.

⁴³ Millis (ed.), *The Forrestal Diaries*, pp. 350–351. See also Melvyn Leffler, “The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945–1948,” *American Historical Review* 89 (April 1984): 371.

⁴⁴ For more on this, see Millis et al., *Arms and the State*, pp. 210–215; Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, pp. 79–80; Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, pp. 32–33.

economic recovery and domestic political stability.⁴⁵ As seen by U.S. intelligence analysts, Soviet forces were not prepared for war in 1946, 1947, and early 1948, which lessened fears of Soviet military action during the Czech coup and the Berlin blockade.⁴⁶ The Europeans saw things differently – they were, as Marshall told Truman upon returning to Washington in October 1948 from a brief trip to Paris, “completely out of their skin and sitting on their nerves.”⁴⁷ And for the Marshall Plan to work in the short term, the Europeans who were its beneficiaries would have to be convinced that they would be there in the long term to enjoy the fruits of their labors.

But while events in 1948 compelled American officials to recognize that the Marshall Plan alone might not suffice to bring about a secure and prosperous Europe, their acceptance of the need for some kind of military alliance between the United States and Western Europe was grudging at best, for three reasons. First, despite the Czech coup and the March war scare, the Truman administration continued to believe that war was unlikely and that it should do nothing that might cause this estimate to change. President Truman was willing to accept a defense supplemental appropriation intended to pay for a modest increase in U.S. military strength, but he also told his advisers in May that “he wished to make it very clear to all present that the increases on which he had given the green light . . . were not to be construed as preparation for war – ‘that we are preparing for peace and not for war.’”⁴⁸

Second, even before the Czech coup and the March war scare, a consensus had formed in the Truman administration that the advance of Soviet power in Europe had been halted, at least temporarily, and that this outcome was largely, although not exclusively, the result of the United States’ refusal to withdraw the remaining American armed forces in Europe prior to the conclusion of satisfactory peace settlements there and to the prospect of U.S. aid in the form of the Marshall Plan.⁴⁹ The burden that this effort entailed weighed heavily on U.S. officials:

We have borne almost single handedly the burden of the international effort to stop the Kremlin’s political advance. But this has stretched our resources dangerously far in

⁴⁵ Quoted in David Meyers, “Containment and the Primacy of Diplomacy,” p. 141. See also Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 35; Karber and Combs, “The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe,” p. 413.

⁴⁶ Karber and Combs, “The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe,” p. 413. See also the intelligence estimates cited by Melvyn Leffler, “Strategy, Diplomacy and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945–1952,” *Journal of American History* 71 (March 1985): 808–811; Leffler, “The American Conception of National Security,” p. 367.

⁴⁷ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 83.

⁴⁸ Millis (ed.), *The Forrestal Diaries*, pp. 436–438. Regarding the FY49 defense supplemental, see Condit, *JCS History*, v. 2, pp. 191–212.

⁴⁹ This view was argued most cogently in a paper prepared under Kennan’s supervision by the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, PPS-13, November 6, 1947, a summary of which was presented to the Cabinet by Secretary of State Marshall on November 7; FRUS, 1947, vol. 1, pp. 770–777.

several respects In these circumstances it is clearly unwise for us to continue the attempt to carry alone, or largely single handed, the opposition to Soviet expansion. It is urgently necessary for us to restore something of the balance of power in Europe and Asia by strengthening local forces of independence and getting them to assume part of our burden.⁵⁰

Third, U.S. policy toward Europe in 1948 was still based on an expectation that American forces would be withdrawn within a few years, and U.S. officials feared that any hint of American willingness to stay longer and/or do more would be taken by the Europeans as an excuse to do less.

These considerations influenced the subsequent development of U.S. policy toward Europe in several ways. British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin raised the idea of an alliance between the United States and the countries of Western Europe with Secretary of State Marshall in December 1947, while they were both in London for a foreign ministers meeting, with a follow-up contact through the British embassy in Washington in January 1948. These suggestions were politely rebuffed. U.S. policy at the time was to keep the focus on economic recovery in Europe. Any talk of a military alliance, the Truman administration feared, might jeopardize passage of ERP by the Congress and/or divert attention in Europe from the primary goal, namely economic recovery. Besides, with war unlikely, a military alliance seemed unnecessary at the time.⁵¹

The Americans were more willing to discuss some kind of military arrangement in the aftermath of the coup in Czechoslovakia at the end of February 1948, but even so they resisted British efforts to entangle the United States in a formal alliance that would include specific commitments by the United States.⁵² U.S. defense spending was still on a downward path as of 1948 and 1949 and U.S. troop strength was holding steady at only about 1.5 million. An alliance, in the American view, should be a political/psychological tool intended to complement the Marshall Plan. Military power “cast shadows and influenced policy,” and as of 1948 it was the Soviets who were casting

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 772–773. Kennan made the same point in a note dated October 13, 1947, quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 58. See also Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 57.

⁵¹ Bevin’s approach to Marshall and the U.S. response are described by Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope*; Nicholas Sherwen (ed.), *NATO’s Anxious Birth* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985); Don Cook, *Forging the Alliance: NATO, 1945–1950* (New York: William Morrow, 1989). A contemporary but well-informed account is that of Theodore H. White, *Fire in the Ashes* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1953), pp. 287–290. The message transmitted by the British Embassy in Washington is reprinted in FRUS, 1948, vol. 3, pp. 3–6. See also Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, pp. 21–32.

⁵² Cees Wiebes and Bert Zeeman, “The Pentagon Negotiations March 1948: The Launching of the North Atlantic Treaty,” *International Affairs* 59 (Summer 1983): 351–363; Martin Folly, “Breaking the Vicious Circle: Britain, the United States and the Genesis of the North Atlantic Treaty,” *Diplomatic History* 12 (Winter 1988): 59–77.

the longer shadow.⁵³ The primary purpose of an alliance should be to bolster confidence in Europe by means of a pledge to the Europeans that they could count on American support in the unlikely event of a confrontation with the Soviets, so that they could get on with the task of economic recovery, which would ultimately allow them to take care of themselves, and thus make possible a U.S. withdrawal from Europe. In the American view, a pledge of support was all that was needed and all that should be offered. Hence American representatives resisted any and all European suggestions that the United States should station additional forces in Europe. American representatives also resisted European efforts to word what would become the North Atlantic Treaty in a way that the United States would be automatically engaged in a future war in Europe.⁵⁴

And while it finally did sign a treaty of alliance with ten European states and Canada, the Truman administration's estimate of Soviet intentions did not change from 1948 to 1949, or from 1949 to 1950, despite changes in the size and composition of Soviet forces that improved their ability to invade Western Europe should they so desire.⁵⁵ War was *not* the primary danger facing Europe, in the U.S. view; hence, America's European partners should be patient and remain focused on achieving economic recovery. What was needed by way of reassurance and, eventually, rearmament, was not a crash program but rather a carefully tailored collective effort that – like the Marshall Plan – put a premium on European initiative and self-help. The U.S. contribution would be mostly economic aid (the Marshall Plan) supplemented by a modest military aid program and the reassurance offered by the presence of U.S. occupation forces in western Germany.⁵⁶ The emphasis in U.S. policy during these years was on moving carefully and deliberately to solve Europe's problems. It was more important, in the American view, to get it right than to do it fast.

In summary, U.S. policy toward Europe during the immediate postwar years was guided by what appears in retrospect as a coherent and very sensible response to the challenge posed by European weakness and Soviet hostility. The Soviet threat was real, but it was more a political/psychological threat than a military one. A political/psychological threat aimed at disrupting and preventing economic recovery in Western Europe demanded a political/psychological response. The principal purpose of the Atlantic Alliance, in the Truman administration's view, was to offset the shadow cast by Soviet military power, thereby allowing economic recovery to go forward. As economic recovery

⁵³ Remarks by George Kennan, July 7, 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 3, p. 157. For a specific example, see Nils Ørvik's discussion of Norway during the late 1940s, "Scandinavian Security in Transition: The Two-Dimensional Threat," *Orbis* 16 (Fall 1972): 732.

⁵⁴ Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope*, Chapter 12 (The Pledge); Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, pp. 32–52.

⁵⁵ Karber and Combs, "The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe," pp. 413–414.

⁵⁶ The French, in contrast, argued in favor of a much greater emphasis on defending Western Europe on the ground, for example, by joining Western armies into an integrated force commander by an American general (Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 84).

progressed, Europe would regain its self-confidence and, eventually, its military strength. As it did so, the burdens being borne by the United States would diminish and eventually U.S. armed forces then in Europe could come home.

Above all, the Truman administration's policies toward Europe were aimed at keeping political and economic considerations at the forefront. In the administration's view, spending too much on defense was as bad as spending too little. Too much emphasis on defense could erode support in Congress for the multi-year program of economic aid that full recovery in Europe would require. In addition, too much military spending by the Europeans could consume resources vital to economic recovery *and* frighten the peoples of Western Europe into believing that war was imminent and thus that neutralism offered their only chance for survival. Spending too little on defense was also bad because it might increase the danger of war by accident or miscalculation. But in view of how firm was the belief that the Soviets did not want war, spending too little on defense was clearly the lesser of the two dangers. Hence, even after the Truman administration had come round to the idea of a military alliance with the countries of Western Europe, it continued to subordinate the goal of creating larger forces-in-being to the goal of economic recovery and prosperity for Western Europe. Such a policy carried distinct military risks, but those risks were felt to be tolerable given that war was deemed unlikely. Given time, the Truman administration believed, Europe would recover and the democracies there could then construct a favorable political-military position from which to defy Soviet threats and intimidating gestures more or less indefinitely. In George Kennan's words, "The West could win this cold war."⁵⁷

MILITARY ARRANGEMENTS

Even though the Truman administration considered an alliance with Europe to be first and foremost a political/psychological solution to a political/psychological problem, it nonetheless gave careful thought to the military arrangements that such an alliance would include, for reasons that were not entirely consistent with one another. On one hand, those arrangements should add credibility to the promise being extended by the United States – namely, to stand with the countries of Western Europe from the start of any confrontation with the Soviets, rather than allow doubts to arise about what the United States would do, as had been the case in 1939 and 1940. On the other hand, the Truman administration continued to believe that the withdrawal of most American armed forces from Europe was both desirable and inevitable, making it eager to limit the Europeans' claims on American resources.⁵⁸ Plus the

⁵⁷ FRUS, 1948, vol. 3, p. 157. See also George Kennan to Walter Lippmann, April 6, 1948, quoted in Mayers, "Containment and the Primacy of Diplomacy," p. 142. Truman's confidence in the West's ability to meet the Soviet challenge is described by Feis, *From Trust to Terror*, p. 86.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Condit, *JCS History*, vol. 2, p. 367; Poole, *JCS History*, v. 4, p. 183; Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, p. 58; Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, pp. 52–64, 78–92.

Senate was unlikely to consent to any treaty that made the Europeans de facto wards of the United States.⁵⁹ In effect, the administration was constrained to promise neither too little nor too much. The solution that it came up with was one that would torment the European–American relationship for decades to come.

The initial steps in this regard were taken within the U.S. Defense Department, which in the summer of 1948 drafted a strategic concept paper in preparation for the modest program of military aid that the Truman administration expected would be part of the American contribution to the alliance then being discussed with the Europeans. The strategic concept paper was itself a bold departure from pre-1939 alliance practices that reflected the lessons and experiences of the Second World War.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the strategic concept paper was its proposal, rooted in memories of how the United States and Great Britain had fought the Second World War against Germany, that the prospective members of the Atlantic Alliance should aim for (1) an integrated defense of the North Atlantic area, (2) based on an international division of labor, (3) resulting in balanced collective forces for the Alliance as a whole.⁶⁰ Unlike pre-1939 alliances, whose members for the most part fought separate wars against the same foe, the American conception for the Atlantic Alliance was that its members should pool their resources, which would then be used for the benefit of all. Ostensibly, such an approach was aimed at making the most efficient use of scarce resources by having each member contribute whatever armed forces it was best suited to provide, but there were vital American interests at stake too. The Truman administration was especially concerned to (1) perpetuate what was then the U.S. nuclear monopoly, (2) retain sole control for the United States over the strategic bombing mission, and (3) avoid any commitment to keep sizable American forces in Europe more or less indefinitely. Thus the strategic concept paper called for each member to be assigned those missions that it was best suited to perform, and for each member to refrain from creating armed forces that another member was better suited to provide. In practice, this meant that the United States should have exclusive responsibility for a strategic air offensive in the event of war (and the Europeans should not attempt to duplicate U.S. capabilities in this regard), the United States and Great Britain should share responsibility for naval missions in the North Atlantic, Great Britain, and France should provide most of the tactical air forces in Europe, and the continental members should provide most of the ground forces.

⁵⁹ Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope*, pp. 87–98.

⁶⁰ The concept paper is reprinted in FRUS, 1949, vol. 4, pp. 353–356. See also Condit, *JCS History*, vol. 2, pp. 399–400; Samuel Huntington, *The Common Defense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 315–316; Timothy Ireland, *Creating the Entangling Alliance* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), pp. 155–156; Hastings (Lord) Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years* (Paris: 1954), p. 27.

The American concept paper was accepted by the Europeans and became the foundation for the Alliance's initial attempt at defense planning.⁶¹ It was also testimony to the aspirations of Alliance members and to the inconsistencies that characterized their policies.⁶² On one hand, the Americans expected that the Europeans could and should stand largely on their own once economic recovery had been achieved, provided they concentrated on enhancing their *collective* ability to defend Western Europe and didn't waste scarce resources attempting to acquire the full spectrum of armed forces for each of them individually.⁶³ Hence the Americans wanted an alliance that placed primary responsibility for rebuilding their armed strength on the Europeans *and* that specified how they should do so while leaving the United States free to use its resources as American officials saw fit. The United States laid claim to the strategic bombing mission (something it intended to pursue anyway, alliance or no alliance), but this was aimed as much or more at preserving the U.S. nuclear monopoly and thwarting British and French ambitions to duplicate the U.S. strategic bomber force as at deterring the Soviets.⁶⁴ To make the scheme more palatable to the Europeans, the Truman administration coupled its claim to the strategic bombing mission with a promise that, if war ever did come to Europe, the United States would respond with a strategic air offensive against the Soviet Union (not just Soviet forces in Eastern Europe) that would include nuclear as well as conventional bombs. "Evaluation of targets that could be attacked to retard Soviet advances had already begun [in the spring of 1949] in response to the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty."⁶⁵ In September 1949, NSC-57 "sanctioned the first-use of nuclear weapons by the United States. It was also

⁶¹ The paper, designated DC 6/1, was approved, with minor changes, by the Alliance's Standing Group, Military Committee, and Defense Committee on October 10, October 29, and December 1, 1949, respectively. The paper's progress through the Alliance's committee structure is described in a memo from Secretary of State Dean Acheson to President Truman on January 3, 1950, in FRUS, 1950, vol. 3, pp. 1-3. The North Atlantic Council approved the paper on January 6, 1950. See also Condit, *JCS History*, vol. 2, p. 399; Brigadier General Robert Richardson III, USAF (ret.), "NATO Nuclear Strategy: A Look Back," *Strategic Review* 9 (Spring 1987): 36.

⁶² The concept paper was supplemented by a strategic guidance paper prepared by the American joint chiefs of staff, intended to serve as the basis for regional defense plans to be prepared by the Alliance's five regional planning groups. The guidance paper, designated SG 13/9, was subsequently rewritten within the Standing Group on the basis of comments received from other Alliance members (Condit, *JCS History*, vol. 2, pp. 400-403).

⁶³ Note in this regard Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson's suggestion to the Dutch Defense Minister that the Netherlands didn't need a navy because the U.S. Navy could handle those missions (Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, p. 93).

⁶⁴ Toward this end, the U.S. joint chiefs attempted to have all references to any NATO responsibility for strategic air operations deleted from the revised draft of SG 13/9 (Condit, *JCS History*, v. 2, p. 403). Regarding the U.S. effort to dissuade the British from duplicating U.S. air-atomic capabilities, see Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), 725-727.

⁶⁵ David Alan Rosenberg, "American Atomic Strategy and the Hydrogen Bomb Decision," *Journal of American History* 66 (June 1979): 74.

the first to encompass the ‘umbrella’ concept in NATO, in which U.S. atomic hegemony would provide not only the principal deterrent against a Russian attack on Europe but also the means for halting Soviet aggression if deterrence failed.”⁶⁶

In effect, American officials sought to solve two problems with some well-chosen words: the Europeans would be reassured (so that economic recovery could proceed) and yet discouraged from duplicating American air-atomic capabilities. As things turned out, the promise to cross the nuclear threshold first in the event of war in Europe proved a source of trouble for decades to come,⁶⁷ for reasons that were easily foreseeable at the time the promise was made. First and foremost, U.S. officials were confident that America’s atomic monopoly would allow the United States to prevail in any war against the Soviet Union, but it would be a pyrrhic victory at best. War plans prepared during 1948 and 1949 anticipated an early withdrawal of U.S. ground forces, first to the Rhine and then to French and Italian ports for evacuation from the continent.⁶⁸ An inability to hold on the ground meant the United States would likely have to bomb its own allies to prevent the Soviets from incorporating Western Europe into their war economy. The knowledge that the United States might do so would hardly inspire confidence in Western Europe, something that U.S. policy was supposed to provide.⁶⁹

Second, even if the United States didn’t bomb its allies, war in Europe would still be catastrophic for the Europeans. The Harmon Committee, named after its chairman, Lt. General H. R. Harmon (USAF), reported to the joint chiefs of staff on May 12, 1949, that a strategic air offensive with nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union likely would not affect the ability of Soviet forces to advance rapidly into Western Europe, although it would diminish Soviet ability to sustain these advances because of inability to resupply.⁷⁰ This would be small consolation to the peoples who lived in the path of the Soviet advance. “It must be perfectly apparent to the people of the United States,” General Omar Bradley pointed out on April 5, 1949 (the day after the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty), “that we cannot count on friends in Western Europe if our strategy in the event of war dictates that we shall first abandon them to the enemy with a

⁶⁶ Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, p. 301. U.S. war plans are described in Condit, *JCS History*, v. 2, pp. 283–310; Thomas Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis (eds.), *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945–1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 277–334; Rosenberg, “American Atomic Strategy,” pp. 68ff.; David Alan Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945–1960,” *International Security* 7 (Spring 1983): 15ff.; Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, pp. 218–234, 266–267.

⁶⁷ See Chapter 5.

⁶⁸ Condit, *JCS History*, v. 2, p. 368; Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 51–53.

⁶⁹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, pp. 89–90.

⁷⁰ Condit, *JCS History*, vol. 2, pp. 313–314; Poole, *JCS History*, v. 4, pp. 163–164; Rosenberg, “American Atomic Strategy,” pp. 72–73; Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill,” p. 16; Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, pp. 293–294.

promise of late liberation.”⁷¹ But this was U.S. strategy up until the start of the Korean War. Only after the start of the Korean War did the United States make a serious effort to organize a defense of Western Europe that would begin as far to the east as possible.

Third, what would happen once the nuclear monopoly was gone? In January 1948, the Finletter Commission on Air Policy published a report predicting that “Atomic bombs will not long remain our monopoly It would be safe to assume . . . that possibly hostile powers will not be producing atomic weapons in substantial quantities before the end of 1952 The conclusions of the commission thus fix as the target date by which we should have an air arm in being capable of dealing with a possible atomic attack on this country as January 1, 1953.”⁷² The forecast was prescient but the conclusion was a *non sequitur*. As Millis, Mansfield, and Stein comment, “our own strategy had been based on the assumption that there was no way of ‘dealing’ with a possible atomic attack; the atom bomb was the ‘ultimate weapon’ against which there was no defense.”⁷³ Trachtenberg suggests that when the U.S. atomic monopoly was broken by the Soviets in August 1949, “everything changed practically overnight.”⁷⁴

Did it really? What most impresses an observer looking back on these events is *how little* changed in response to the Soviet atomic test. U.S. war plans continued to target Soviet industry, apparently in the belief that the Soviet Union would simply collapse as a result of the strategic air offensive.⁷⁵ On both sides of the Atlantic, defense spending did not go up,⁷⁶ armed forces did not get larger, and the military plans produced by the Alliance’s regional planning groups were essentially wish lists of forces they hoped would someday be created.⁷⁷ It was only after the outbreak of the Korean War that forces-in-being and defense budgets went up substantially.

The Europeans too were hardly paragons of consistency. On one hand, it was to them self-evident that their societies could never match the military power of the Soviet Union; hence, safety could only be found in an alliance with the United States that made it crystal clear to the Soviets that war in Europe meant war with America too. The Europeans pressed repeatedly for a large and permanent American military presence in Europe, both to dissuade the Soviets from ever starting another war and to provide a defensive shield for their societies in the event war should come. They accepted – indeed,

⁷¹ Quoted in Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, pp. 100–101.

⁷² Quoted in Millis et al., *Arms and the State*, pp. 205–206.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁷⁴ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 97.

⁷⁵ Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill,” pp. 16–18.

⁷⁶ In the United States, defense spending was expected to decline (again) from fiscal 1950 to fiscal 1951. On this point, see the discussion of the fiscal 1951 defense budget in Poole, *JCS History*, vol. 4, pp. 19ff.

⁷⁷ Condit, *JCS History*, v. 2, p. 406. See also Jervis, “The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War.”

encouraged – the American promise of a strategic air offensive with nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union as a deterrent⁷⁸ (even though U.S. bombs falling on Soviet targets would hardly shield them from the horrors of another war), and they were reluctant to make much of an effort to acquire larger ground and tactical air forces of their own, even though collectively the countries of Western Europe were wealthier and more populous than the Soviet Union. If the Europeans had been serious about pooling resources for the sake of an integrated defense, they could have done a great deal by way of a defensive shield, especially in combination with the United States. But to the Europeans, even to try for something along these lines would wreck their economies and demoralize their societies. In effect, the Europeans preferred to let the Americans to handle the Soviets rather than attempt even part of the job themselves.

It was this assortment of ideas and preferences that produced the distinctive aspirations of the North Atlantic Treaty, signed in Washington on April 4, 1949. While there were many important features embodied in the Treaty's spare prose, five in particular are central to the purposes of this chapter.⁷⁹ First was the commitment to self-help and mutual aid in Article 3, which was important because it set the stage for a never-ending argument over who should be doing what to make the Alliance a success (the Americans preached self-help to the Europeans; the Europeans stressed mutual aid, to be supplied mostly by the United States). Second was the pledge in Article 5 that an attack on one member would be regarded as an attack on them all, which the Europeans saw as a way of ensuring that the United States would almost automatically come to their assistance, which in their view was crucial if the Soviets were to be deterred and stay deterred. The Americans, on the other hand, made sure that their commitment was anything but automatic by including in Article 5 the qualifying phrase that each member "will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, *such action as it deems necessary*, including the use of armed force."⁸⁰ Third was the creation of a North Atlantic Council and a Defense Committee, both of which were intended to add substance to the pledge in Article 5 and to make possible much closer and more continuous cooperation than in any previous alliance. Fourth, the North Atlantic Council was empowered by Article 9 to create "such subsidiary bodies as may be necessary" for the effective implementation of the treaty. The Americans saw this nascent organizational apparatus as a means for prodding

⁷⁸ Rosenberg, "American Atomic Strategy," p. 75.

⁷⁹ The best and fullest account of the negotiation of the North Atlantic Treaty is Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope*. See also Ireland, *Creating the Entangling Alliance*; Sherwen (ed.), *NATO's Anxious Birth*; and Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, Chapter 2.

⁸⁰ Reid's account makes clear that this qualification was written into Article 5 at American insistence, and that the United States would not have signed the Treaty had that qualification not been included (*Time of Fear and Hope*, Chapter 12).

the Europeans to do more by way of self-help; the Europeans saw it as a way of entangling the Americans in issues relating to European security. Finally, the Alliance was to be open-ended in duration – another way of symbolizing how different this alliance was to be from all that went before (it was to be permanent, and not just another ad hoc arrangement to be discarded once it had served its immediate purpose).⁸¹

It is also important to notice what was missing from the Alliance as of 1949. Even though it included three of the greatest military powers in the history of the world (the United States, Great Britain, and France), the armed forces available to it in Europe as of mid 1949 numbered only about ten divisions – poorly equipped, mostly under-strength, and located so as to occupy western Germany, not to resist an invasion from the east. There was no unified command structure, no supreme commander, no headquarters, no secretary general, no permanent staff, and no one in charge.⁸² There were only layers of committees intended to oversee the rebuilding of Europe's military strength – the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and the Defense Committee (both of which were mentioned in the North Atlantic Treaty), and various subsidiary bodies created by the NAC during the Alliance's first year: a Military Committee (chiefs of staff), Standing Group (American, British, and French chiefs of staff), Defense Financial and Economic Committee (finance ministers), Military Production and Supply Board (a subministerial group of production experts), and five regional planning groups.⁸³ None of these was in continuous session, and there was little in the way of staff support. There was an Atlantic Alliance, but there was as yet no NATO, and this was essentially what the United States wanted, to avoid having its armed forces fall under multinational control. The Europeans, for their part, did not have enough in the way of armed forces to make the construction of an integrated force under a unified command an effort worth making.⁸⁴

This, then, was the situation within the Alliance during its first year in being. During 1949 and 1950 prior to the Korean War, military issues were by and large neglected; military strength was more latent than actual; the issue of who should do what was studied but not resolved. The Military Committee, the Defense Committee, and the North Atlantic Council all endorsed the American idea that Alliance members should aim for a division of labor leading to balanced collective forces for the Alliance as a whole, but this was more in the way

⁸¹ See note 13 in this chapter.

⁸² Cook, *Forging the Alliance*, p. 228.

⁸³ The creation of an organizational structure for the Alliance is described more fully in Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, Chapter 3 (Bargaining Channels).

⁸⁴ Britain, France, and the Benelux countries had made a start in this regard by signing the Brussels Treaty on March 17, 1948, which created the Western Union Defense Organization. But the WUDO had then been subsumed by the Atlantic Alliance, becoming the Alliance's Regional Planning Group for Western Europe. Suffice it to say that the signers of the Brussels Treaty never took the WUDO very seriously; it was simply a device to show Washington that the Europeans were trying and thus would be worthy partners within an Atlantic Alliance.

of a formality, intended to clear the way for an American-funded military assistance program by putting the Alliance on record in support of ideas favored by the United States. A division of labor, however, was at least in part a ploy by the United States to claim for itself the technologically sophisticated air and naval missions, to solidify the American nuclear monopoly within the Alliance, and to head off European efforts to duplicate U.S. air and naval forces.

THE IMPACT OF THE KOREAN WAR

The North Korean attack on South Korea on June 25, 1950, had several important consequences for the Atlantic Alliance. First and foremost, it raised the subjective probability of war in Europe, albeit temporarily. Until the very eve of the Korean War, governments on both sides of the Atlantic were largely agreed that war in Europe was unlikely; hence, it was safe for the Alliance to have only small forces in being in Europe in order to free up money that might otherwise have gone to defense and spend it instead on economic recovery. In the aftermath of the attack on South Korea, analogies between divided Korea and divided Germany suddenly seemed compelling; the danger of war in Europe seemed much greater than in the pre-Korea period.

Second, the opening weeks of the Korean War made the task of defending Europe seem much more difficult than before. Prior to the invasion of South Korea, the Truman administration's belief that the Soviet Union did not want war had allowed U.S. officials to take a relatively relaxed view of the threat posed by the presence of the Red Army in eastern Germany.⁸⁵ In addition, U.S. officials were able to rationalize away some of the military danger by holding to the view that, in the unlikely event war in Europe did break out, a strategic air offensive from bases in Great Britain and North Africa would degrade Soviet military power to the point where another cross-channel invasion and liberation of Western Europe would be possible.⁸⁶ If they had to, the Americans and the British would fight World War II again, but this time with atomic bombs as part of their arsenal.⁸⁷

The opening weeks of the Korean War quickly dispelled that kind of wishful thinking. Even with sizable American forces nearby in Japan, the first two months of the war were one defeat after another for the UN side, which

⁸⁵ See, for example, Karber and Combs, "The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe," pp. 413–414.

⁸⁶ In this regard, the U.S. joint chiefs responded to the Harmon Report by requesting an increase in the production of fissionable materials, so there would be more atomic bombs available for the strategic air offensive. President Truman approved this request in the autumn of 1949; he approved a further increase in October 1950, after the war in Korea had begun (Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill," p. 22; Rosenberg, "American Atomic Strategy," pp. 78–79).

⁸⁷ See the description of war plan OFFTACKLE in Condit, *JCS History*, v. 2, pp. 301–302; Poole, *JCS History*, v. 4, pp. 161–162; Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, p. 290. See also Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill," pp. 12, 15–18.

heightened the feeling that policy prior to the war had been based on foolish overconfidence. Prior to the Korean War, merely agreeing on a set of plans aimed at eventually assembling the forces needed to defend Western Europe was regarded as a great achievement.⁸⁸ The ease with which the North Koreans had overrun most of South Korea in a matter of weeks made the Alliance, with its layers of committees and working groups but not much in the way of forces in being, suddenly appear to be little more than an empty shell. The recall to active duty of General Dwight Eisenhower to serve as NATO's first Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), was intended to alleviate some of these anxieties, but the very act of recalling the commander who oversaw the liberation of Western Europe in 1944 and 1945 contributed to a growing awareness that nuclear weapons in Soviet hands would likely make it impossible even to assemble the forces needed to seize a beachhead on the continent, much less carry out another D-Day-style landing.⁸⁹ Korea not only dramatized Europe's vulnerability, it made it imperative to find a way to stop an invasion as far to the east as possible. From the second half of 1950 onward, Americans and Europeans became increasingly preoccupied with invasion scenarios.⁹⁰

Third, the heightened concern with invasion scenarios set in motion within the Alliance a very substantial military build-up in which all of the members except Iceland participated.⁹¹ As of May 1951, NATO forces in Western Europe numbered only 15 divisions and fewer than 1,000 aircraft; but these increased to approximately 35 divisions, in varying states of readiness, and slightly fewer than 3,000 aircraft by December 1951.⁹² By the end of 1953, the ground forces commanded by General Matthew Ridgway, Eisenhower's successor as SACEUR, included about twenty-five active-duty divisions and forty to fifty reserve divisions in Western Europe, plus fourteen Turkish and eight Greek divisions, backed by an extensive and growing infrastructure of airfields, headquarters, and the like.⁹³

A fourth effect of the Korean War was to convince Alliance members that a new form of political/military organization was necessary to make the most

⁸⁸ See the description of the Short-, Medium-, and Long-Term Defense Plans in Roger Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," in *NATO and American Security* ed. Klaus Knorr (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 11–36. See also Condit, *JCS History*, v. 2, pp. 400–408; Poole, *JCS History*, v. 4, pp. 183–184.

⁸⁹ General Bradley told the House Armed Services Committee on October 19, 1950, that "large-scale amphibious operations" such as the 1944 Normandy landing "will never occur again...[T]he atomic bomb properly delivered almost precludes such a possibility" (Omar Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983], p. 510).

⁹⁰ Karber and Combs, "The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe," pp. 415ff. See also Thies, "Learning in U.S. Policy toward Europe," pp. 171–172.

⁹¹ Iceland has no national armed forces.

⁹² Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, pp. 40, 102. These totals do not include Greek and Turkish forces, which came under NATO command in 1952.

⁹³ *Ibid.* pp. 107, 114–124; Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," pp. 22–23; Coral Bell, *Negotiation from Strength* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), p. 51. See also Thies, "Learning in U.S. Policy toward Europe," pp. 164–165.

efficient use of the increased resources that they were devoting to defense. Soon after the start of the Korean War the Atlantic Alliance – brought into being as a political arrangement – was transformed into NATO, namely, a political–military organization overseeing an integrated defense force under the control of unified international military commands.

Military integration *in peacetime* was an important innovation and a significant advance over what had previously been possible within alliances. Instead of separate national armed forces fighting separate wars against one or more common foes, NATO members agreed to assign their armed forces to integrated commands which would oversee the training and equipping of those forces in peacetime, so they really could fight as one force if need be, and which would employ them as necessary in wartime to defend *all* NATO members and not just one or two. They also agreed to share with each other an unprecedented amount of information regarding the size and quality of their armed forces, the weapons and equipment in their possession, and their future plans regarding budgets and forces.⁹⁴ Unlike the members of pre-1939 alliances, who often sought to keep each other in the dark regarding their capabilities and their intentions, NATO members opted for integration and transparency in their defense efforts to a degree never before achieved in the history of alliances, except perhaps for the Anglo-American effort against Germany during World War II.

These were impressive achievements, but they were not enough to avoid a fifth and final consequence of the Korean War – namely, a set of beliefs that came to be widely held in both the United States and Western Europe as a result of the experience of responding to the war in Korea. Fears that the attack on South Korea was but a precursor of an attack in Europe dissipated quickly during the winter of 1950–1951, and the subsequent stalemate on the Korean peninsula, the start of truce talks in the summer of 1951, and the increasing unpopularity of the war and the sacrifices that it required all combined to reduce the urgency of the rearmament effort. The NATO build-up was sustained throughout 1951 and 1952, but the longer it continued the less enthusiasm that NATO members were able to muster for it. “There had been,” as Millis, Mansfield, and Stein note, “a considerable relaxation of the near-panic of the year before. It was now more and more generally accepted that this time, at least, the Russians were not going to march.” As a result, the rearmament effort ground to a halt by the end of 1952, short of the targets set for it at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Lisbon in February 1952. By May 1953, “the whole emphasis was on retrenchment.”⁹⁵

Failure to complete the rearmament program agreed to at Lisbon and the subsequent scaling back of force goals in the face of pleas of financial hardship had the effect of saddling the Alliance with a lingering sense that Western armies were inadequate and that democracies could never match dictatorships

⁹⁴ See the description of the Annual Review process in Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, pp. 93–106.

⁹⁵ Millis et al., *Arms and the State*, pp. 352, 396.

when it came to mobilizing manpower for military purposes.⁹⁶ Official NATO estimates credited the Soviet Union alone with an army of 175 divisions, of which 140 were believed to be operational standing divisions, backed by a capability to mobilize as many as 400 divisions in thirty days.⁹⁷ Facing a foe this strong, the twenty to twenty-five active-duty divisions assembled by NATO members along the central front in Germany appeared so vastly outnumbered that the West had no choice but to rely on early and extensive use of nuclear weapons in the event of a Soviet attack.

Whether the military balance in Europe really was so unfavorable to the NATO countries that there was no alternative to reliance on nuclear weapons for both deterrence and defense is open to question.⁹⁸ In August 1950, at the height of the “near-panic” caused by the Korean War, Western military weakness had been the source of acute political and psychological problems among the European members, which to State Department analysts appeared as a “fear and resignation psychosis” that threatened to erode the Alliance’s “moral tissue.”⁹⁹ The NATO build-up in response to the Korean War fell short of the goals set for it during the war, but it still accomplished a great deal. On February 1, 1951, General Eisenhower told the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees that NATO could protect “rather significant portions” of Western Europe even with far fewer forces than those of the Soviet Union. In his judgment, forty divisions (active and reserve) could offer effective resistance.¹⁰⁰ By 1953, the military balance along the central front in Germany was actually quite favorable to the NATO countries. “Stripped of words and

⁹⁶ See, for example, Alain Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 118–121, 138–141; Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance*, pp. 20, 39–40, 64; Thies, “Learning in U.S. Policy toward Europe,” p. 167.

⁹⁷ Karber and Combs date the 175-division figure to November 1947, although estimates of the readiness of many of those divisions would vary considerably in years to come (“The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe,” pp. 404ff.). See also Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance*, p. 118; Col. Andrew Goodpaster, USA, “The Development of SHAPE, 1950–1953” *International Organization* 9 (May 1955): 259; Ben Moore, *NATO and the Future of Europe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 70; Enthoven and Smith, *How Much Is Enough?*, pp. 120–121, 133.

⁹⁸ For the reasons why, see Evangelista, “Stalin’s Postwar Army Reappraised,” pp. 110–138; Karber and Combs, “The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe,” pp. 411–414; Thies, “Learning in U.S. Policy toward Europe,” pp. 167–169. See also Chapter 5.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Poole, *JCS History*, v. 4, p. 186. The State Department paper cited here, “Establishment of a European Defense Force,” August 16, 1950, is reprinted in FRUS, 1950, vol. 3, pp. 212–219.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Poole, *JCS History*, v. 4, pp. 222–223. Karber and Combs add that “Western military leaders were not demanding a number of divisions equal to those in the projected Soviet [invasion] force and . . . were indeed counting Western divisions as superior to their Soviet counterparts” (“The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe,” p. 421). Using different numbers, Evangelista concludes that, pre-Korea, there was “rough parity” between a prospective Soviet invasion force and Western defensive forces (“Stalin’s Postwar Army Reappraised,” pp. 291–292). See also Theodore H. White, *Fire in the Ashes* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1953), p. 296; Hilsman, “NATO: The Developing Strategic Context,” pp. 23–24.

propaganda, the Atlantic effort in Europe has reached the point where, in Germany . . . we can mass a heavier weight of armor and men than can the Russians. At the critical German front, we can mass 500,000 men against the Russians' 300,000."¹⁰¹ In June 1954, General Alfred Gruenther, the third SACEUR (after Eisenhower and Matthew Ridgway), asserted that the Soviets would be severely defeated if they were foolish enough to attack.¹⁰² Toward the end of 1954, Gruenther said "flatly that we have such an enormous advantage over the Soviet bloc that there is absolutely no danger of their attacking us now."¹⁰³ In October 1955, Gruenther told a National Security Council (NSC) meeting that, "if the Soviets were to attack now, the NATO forces could lick them."¹⁰⁴ Assessments such as these *could* have been used to argue that, with the military imbalance largely rectified, it was time to return to the original vision of the Alliance as a political/psychological tool intended to solve a political/psychological problem. But this did not happen, for two reasons.

First, the Americans, more so than the Europeans, had been powerfully affected by the experience of responding first to the invasion of South Korea and then to the Chinese intervention toward the end of November 1950. They saw the world in general and Europe in particular as a much more dangerous place compared to the relatively relaxed view that had prevailed in 1948 and 1949. Even before the Chinese entry into the war, the U.S. joint chiefs were predicting that the Soviets would lose their war production advantage by the end of 1951 and their capability to conquer Western Europe by 1954. From this the chiefs concluded that 1954 was no longer the so-called year of maximum danger (as had been predicted in the famous policy paper NSC 68); the more likely period for a Soviet attack would begin in 1951 and end sometime during 1953.¹⁰⁵ Once the Chinese entered the war, the conclusions drawn by American officials became even grimmer. President Truman wrote in his diary, "It seems like World War Three is near."¹⁰⁶ Secretary of State Dean Acheson told the congressional leadership on December 13, 1950, that there was "only one choice open to us, and that was the greatest possible build-up of our own strength and that of our allies." He could see "no other way to stop the Soviet drive for world domination."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ White, *Fire in the Ashes*, p. 296. See also the discussion of the conventional imbalance in the Soviet missiles case in [Chapter 5](#).

¹⁰² Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, pp. 108–109. See also Edmund Taylor, "The Atlantic Alliance: After Gruenther, What?" *The Reporter* 12 (June 2, 1955): 18; Thies, "Learning in U.S. Policy toward Europe," p. 168.

¹⁰³ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 180.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁰⁵ Poole, *JCS History*, v. 4, pp. 51–52 (also p. 81). The literature regarding NSC 68 is enormous, but one of the best is Paul Hammond, "NSC-68: Prologue to Rearmament," in Warner Schilling, Paul Hammond, and Glenn Snyder, *Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962). See also Samuel Wells, Jr., "Sounding the Tocsin: NSC-68 and the Soviet Threat," *International Security* 4 (Fall 1979): 116–158. NSC-68, dated April 7, 1950, is reprinted in FRUS, 1950, vol. 1, pp. 235–292.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Poole, *JCS History*, v. 4, p. 67.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 72.

Two months later, Acheson told the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees that the Soviets would inevitably erode the U.S. lead in airpower and atomic weapons, making it imperative that the United States and its European allies use the time available to create balanced collective forces for deterrence and defense after the atomic advantage had been lost.¹⁰⁸ “The United States and its allies,” the drafters of NSC 114/1 wrote in August 1951, “are already in a period of acute danger which will continue until they achieve a position of strength adequate to support the objectives defined in NSC 68.”¹⁰⁹

Second, however, Americans were no more immune than Europeans to the lure of retrenchment once truce talks were under way in Korea. “In Congress, the clamor for cutbacks everywhere resounded. A large deficit (estimated at \$14 billion for FY 1953) was called economically unendurable, but a tax increase was deemed politically unacceptable.”¹¹⁰ President Truman sensed the prevailing political winds too – at a White House meeting on December 28, 1951 he announced his intention to “stretch out the build-up” begun in response to the Korean War.¹¹¹ And his successor, President Eisenhower, was committed not just to stretching out the build-up but reversing it – namely, cutting forces and budgets in order to reconcile “security with solvency,” as the Republicans put it. It was hard enough to challenge the conventional wisdom that NATO was greatly outnumbered while the Korean War build-up was still underway; but it became almost impossible to do so once retrenchment had taken hold in the United States as well as in Europe.

But if the world really was as dangerous as the joint chiefs and Secretary Acheson and the drafters of NSC 114/1 had all affirmed it to be, how could Europe be made safe in the face of what seemed like an overwhelming Soviet advantage on the ground, which the Soviets would surely try to exploit? The preoccupation with invasion scenarios made unlikely a return to the pre-Korea conception of the Alliance as embodying an American promise to stand with the Europeans in the face of Soviet threats and intimidating gestures (in other words, a political/psychological solution to a political/psychological problem). Of perhaps equal importance, by 1952, the Marshall Plan had worked and worked wonderfully. Economic recovery in Europe had proven both sustained and powerful; the Europeans were much better situated to contribute to their own defense and American officials were not shy about asking them to do so. One consequence of retrenchment in the United States, as the Joint Strategic Plans Group noted in a January 4, 1952, memo to the joint chiefs of staff, was that, “The United States will be in a position of urging European nations to increase their military efforts while at the same time we decrease our own.”¹¹² Given a choice between consistency and pressuring the Europeans to do more,

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 92.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹¹¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 110.

¹¹² Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 110–111.

U.S. officials consistently picked the latter, a source of considerable resentment among the Europeans, who by 1951 wanted to scrap the rearmament effort and return to the status quo ante.

How then to reconcile the desire to retrench with the belief that the world was a more dangerous place post-Korea? The one answer that Americans and Europeans could agree on was to rely more heavily on the nuclear option – specifically, the U.S. pledge to respond to a Soviet attack on Western Europe, even a nonnuclear attack, with a strategic air offensive that would use nuclear weapons to degrade the Soviet ability to wage war against Western Europe. At the time that pledge was first made, in 1949 (pre-Korea), it had seemed a relatively cheap and easy way for the United States to satisfy the self-help and mutual aid provision in Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The prevailing view at the time was that war was unlikely, which meant it was also unlikely that the United States would be called on to go through with its promise to cross the nuclear threshold first in the event of another war. The pledge was useful, too, as a way of responding to suggestions from the Europeans, primarily the French, that the United States should station additional forces in Europe, by arguing that the United States' primary contribution to European security took the form of its nuclear stockpile and Strategic Air Command. Finally, the pledge coupled with the balanced collective forces concept was a way of discouraging the British and the French from attempting to duplicate the U.S. Strategic Air Command.

None of these reasons seemed very compelling once the U.S. nuclear monopoly had been broken and war in Korea had made the world seem a more dangerous place. In addition, by the time of the Korean War, there were good reasons to doubt the efficacy of a pledge to cross the nuclear threshold first. In February 1950, the Weapons System Evaluation Group advised the joint chiefs that night attacks on the Soviet Union would likely cost about one-third of the planes involved, while massed daylight raids would likely lose half of the attacking force.¹¹³ These estimates suggested that the United States likely could not sustain a strategic air offensive against the Soviet Union long enough to affect the outcome of any fighting in Western Europe. Soviet industrial capacity would be reduced by such attacks, but a May 1952 Army study concluded that the Soviets possessed stockpiled reserves sufficient to wage war for one year. "Therefore, atomic attacks upon Soviet industry could not retard the Red Army's advance into Western Europe."¹¹⁴ More important, NSC 114/1 (August 1951) estimated that the Soviet Union would accumulate by mid 1953 the stockpile of 200 atomic weapons that NSC-68 had forecast for 1954.¹¹⁵ In effect, it would no longer be enough merely to destroy the Soviet military/industrial complex. It would also be necessary to destroy the Soviet bomber force *before* it could be

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 163–164; Rosenberg, "American Atomic Strategy," p. 83.

¹¹⁴ Poole, *JCS History*, v. 4, p. 167.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 92. For NSC-68's estimate of the Soviet atomic bomb stockpile and ability to strike the United States, see FRUS, 1950, vol. 1, pp. 245–246, 249–252.

used against the United States (and Europe too). But instead of looking for alternatives to the pledge to cross the nuclear threshold first – for example, relying more heavily on the forces obtained through the NATO build-up inspired by the Korean War – American officials clung to it more tightly than before.

PUTTING THE “COLLECTIVE” IN COLLECTIVE DEFENSE

The preoccupation with invasion scenarios that took hold, especially among American officials, after the North Korean invasion of South Korea, proved to be a divisive rather than a unifying element within the Atlantic Alliance, for three reasons. First, fears of a Soviet invasion were not shared equally between the Alliance’s two wings – North America and Western Europe. Fear of war did go up in Europe during the summer and fall of 1950, but it began to decline almost as soon as UN forces were able to stabilize a defensive line on the Korean peninsula in January/February 1951 and then dropped sharply once truce talks began in the summer of 1951. As the war scare faded, the Europeans – many of whom did not have forces fighting in Korea – grew increasingly eager to jettison a rearmament effort they had never been enthused about. All of the European powers had been greatly diminished by the hardships and exertions required of them during the Second World War. When they compared themselves to the Soviet Union, it seemed inconceivable that they could ever hope to stand up to the Soviets on their own. The Europeans preferred to turn the problem over to the Americans – in effect, to tie themselves to the United States and let the Americans take care of military security in Europe. Once the situation in Korea had been stabilized, what the Europeans really wanted was to go back to the pre-Korea conception of the Alliance – namely, as a means to commit the United States to stand with them in any confrontation with the Soviets. In the European view, defense was likely impossible, so why bother to try? Better to rely on the American nuclear deterrent because the Soviets will never attack if they know for sure they will have to fight the United States.

The United States, on the other hand, could hardly pretend that Europe was somebody else’s problem. Plus, the Americans were still fighting in Korea, which inclined them to continue to see the world as a dangerous place even after truce talks had begun. “Overt Soviet attack, once an improbable hypothesis, now seemed a menacing possibility; the gross imbalance between NATO’s means and ends required rapid rectification.”¹¹⁶ Hence the Truman administration strongly favored rearmament *by the Europeans* as a way of redressing the military imbalance in Europe. When the Europeans looked at themselves, they saw a collection of small states that couldn’t possibly stand on their own. When the Americans looked at Europe, they saw a potential superpower, provided the Europeans organized their efforts properly, concentrated on those military capabilities they were best suited to provide, and did not try to duplicate what the United States was already doing. Hence the Americans did not

¹¹⁶ Poole, *JCS History*, vol. 4, p. 186.

hesitate, in the words of the joint chiefs, to “apply the necessary pressure upon NATO and other allies,” which had the effect of irritating the Europeans rather than reassuring them.¹¹⁷ The result was that the Americans argued unceasingly for the Europeans to do more, although it grew harder to make this argument, especially after the death of Stalin in March 1953, the truce in Korea in July 1953, and the Soviet shift to a foreign policy stressing “peaceful coexistence” during the mid 1950s.¹¹⁸

A second reason why invasion scenarios and the need to prepare for them proved inherently divisive can be traced to the fact that *all* NATO members felt greatly overburdened, even those that were not fighting in Korea. As of 1950 and 1951 the Europeans had still not completely recovered from the Second World War. They thus resented American suggestions that they should greatly increase defense spending even if this meant delaying economic recovery. The United States, on the other hand, was bearing most of the burden of fighting in Korea; it had recently sent four divisions to West Germany to join the two already there; and it was providing military and economic aid to virtually all of NATO Europe. The Americans thus resented what they saw as European whining and excuse making. The Americans were especially put off by what they saw as European efforts to shift to the United States most of the burden of making Europe secure as well as prosperous.

The third and final reason why invasion scenarios and the post-Korea rearmament effort proved divisive within the Alliance had to do with practical political considerations. The British and American governments had taken the lead in promoting rearmament in response to the Korean War. Both had greatly increased defense spending, both had increased taxes in order to pay for war in Korea and rearmament in Europe, and both were resoundingly defeated in elections held in 1951 and 1952, respectively. In France, the government led by Prime Minister Edgar Faure, which had been contemplating a tax increase to pay for France’s share of the Korean War rearmament effort, fell four days after the close of the NATO foreign ministers meeting in Lisbon in February 1952. “Its demise came as a direct result of France’s proposal to increase the defense budget by 15% in order to meet European troop commitments agreed upon in Lisbon while simultaneously maintaining the war effort in [Indochina].”¹¹⁹ The fate of governments that raise taxes to pay for higher defense spending was a lesson quickly learned and long remembered by NATO members.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 50.

¹¹⁸ Harder or not, the Americans did not stop trying. Concerning the arguments that they used and the results achieved, see Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, Chapter 4 (Bargaining Strategies) and Chapter 5 (Bargaining Outcomes).

¹¹⁹ Douglas Stuart and William Tow, *The Limits of Alliance: NATO Out-of-Area Problems since 1949* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 196.

¹²⁰ Alfred Grosser, *The Western Alliance* (New York: Continuum, 1980), p. 164; Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Survey of International Affairs, 1952* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 36–37; FRUS, 1952–1954, vol. 5, pp. 142–143. See also Thies, “Learning in U.S. Policy toward, Europe,” pp. 164–168.

In this situation – namely, one in which it seemed imperative to do more militarily but there were also important political and economic constraints on the ability of governments to raise taxes and thereby increase defense spending – one seemingly appealing solution was to look for ways to heighten the element of collective defense in the hope that a more unified, Alliance-wide effort would prove more efficient and hence more effective than separate national defense efforts. There were at least two reasons why doing more collectively was very appealing to NATO members, both during and after the Korean War.

The first was that collective action for the sake of collective defense is politically appealing to liberal democratic states. On one hand, it harkened back to the Second World War, when the United States and Great Britain made historically unprecedented efforts to pool their resources in order to defeat Germany and, to a lesser extent, Japan. On the other hand, collective action taken openly and transparently by an alliance of democracies contrasts favorably with Europe's long and sordid history of secret alliances, wheeling and dealing, cheating and swindling, and so on. When a democracy acts jointly with other democracies, the underlying motives must be decent and honorable or the latter would never associate themselves with such an effort – an important consideration for governments that must stand for reelection in the not-too-distant future.

The appeal of collective action on behalf of collective goals notwithstanding, democracies also share an aversion to spending money on defense.¹²¹ Militarism is generally weak in liberal democratic states, and democratic governments get reelected essentially by showering important constituencies with tangible economic benefits – a prosperous economy that creates lots of jobs, public works programs, welfare and unemployment benefits, subsidies for depressed industries, high prices for domestically produced agricultural commodities, and the like. None of these are cheap, and raiding the defense budget in order to find the money to pay for politically rewarding domestic programs is likely to be a constant temptation for democratically elected governments.

Hence the second reason why acting collectively for the sake of common security and collective defense was very appealing to NATO members was the hope that there would be efficiencies and economies of scale to be found in a NATO-wide collective effort that would make possible greater defense capabilities at less cost than if they were purchased separately by members pursuing separate national defense efforts. It was hoped, for example, that substantial savings would accrue from eliminating overlap and duplication in the members' defense efforts, like separate research and development programs.¹²² It was also hoped that economies would result if NATO members specialized in providing certain military capabilities in which they had a comparative advantage. And finally it was hoped that efficiencies and economies of scale would result

¹²¹ Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, Chapter 1.

¹²² See, for example, Ann Warburton and John Wood, *Paying for NATO* (London: Friends of Atlantic Union, no date).

from standardizing weapons and equipment, which would permit longer production runs and thus economies of scale that would make collective defense cheaper than separate national defense efforts.¹²³

Toward this end, NATO members embarked during the early 1950s, as part of the Korean War rearmament effort, on a quest to endow the Alliance with a set of agencies intended to promote the goal of collective defense to a degree unprecedented in the history of alliances. The mission of the Military Production and Supply Board, later replaced by the Defense Production Board and then the Production and Logistics Branch of the NATO International Staff/Secretariat, was to search for unused productive capacity within the Alliance's members that could be used to produce standardized weapons more efficiently than anywhere else, thereby making the best possible use of the members' resources. The mission of the Defense Financial and Economic Committee, later replaced by the Finance and Economic Board, was to search for an economic or statistical formula that would apportion cost shares and benefits of the collective effort fairly among the members.¹²⁴ The effort to find such a formula proved fruitless, but the more important point is that in trying to do these things, NATO members set for themselves standards of transparency and intrusiveness that were without precedent in the history of alliances. NATO members also did far more collectively than the members of any previous alliance, wartime or peacetime – for example, the common infrastructure program, which paid for airfields, headquarters, pipelines, and so on, according to a formula that defined cost-shares for each member. The Alliance established and maintained multiple headquarters (e.g., the civilian headquarters in Brussels, the military headquarters in Mons, Belgium), paid for by the members collectively through a formula that determined individual cost-shares. The Alliance maintained its own defense college, its own integrated air defense system, its own fleet of airborne early warning aircraft, and so on.

A CONTENTIOUS ALLIANCE

The innovations described so far are important not only for the contrast they offer with pre-1939 alliances, but also because they contributed to the diplomatic equivalent of a “perfect storm” that periodically caused so-called crises within the Alliance. In part, these were the product of the familiar structural divide within the Alliance, which included the United States – a superpower with global interests and the power projection capabilities to support them, yet also secure in its own hemisphere, separated from Europe by three thousand miles of ocean – and the states of Western Europe, diminished from their former status as great powers, sharing a continent with a hostile superpower and thus

¹²³ The production issue is discussed more fully in Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, Chapter 3.

¹²⁴ Lincoln Gordon, “Economic Aspects of Coalition Diplomacy – The NATO Experience,” *International Organization* 10 (November 1956): 529–543. See also Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, pp. 95–106.

compelled to rely on the United States for the security they could no longer provide for themselves. Structure, however, is only part of the answer; NATO crises were also the product of a particular confluence of factors that resulted from choices made as the Alliance was first created and then adapted to circumstances – the outbreak of war in Korea and the ensuing heightened sense of danger in Europe. The Atlantic Alliance may not have been born crisis-prone, but it became so practically in its infancy.

In this regard, the U.S.–Soviet rivalry after the Second World War meant that the United States had a vital interest in keeping Western Europe out of Soviet hands, yet it also had an interest in doing so as cheaply as possible in order to conserve resources that might be needed for superpower rivalry in other parts of the world. The United States tried to resolve this problem initially by combining a political guarantee (the North Atlantic Treaty) with a pledge to use nuclear weapons to deter and if need be defend against a Soviet attack on Western Europe. The conditions that made the United States willing to cross the nuclear threshold first disappeared shortly after the pledge itself had been made – the American nuclear monopoly ended in August 1949, and the Korean War made Europe seem a very dangerous place only a year later. But having made the pledge, the Americans were reluctant to disavow it, which might make them seem an unreliable ally, which could mean defeat in the political/psychological struggle for Europe's allegiance during the Cold War. Hence they turned their attention to finding ways to make it less likely that they would be called upon to make good on their pledge. In the early 1950s, this took the form of the NATO-wide rearmament effort set in motion in response to the Korean War, which in turn spawned a host of Alliance bodies intended to coordinate and stimulate the rearmament effort, which in turn produced a degree of intrusiveness into the defense efforts of the individual members unprecedented in the history of alliances. The Americans were the foremost advocates of an extensive and an intrusive NATO, which they hoped would spur rearmament by the European members to such an extent that the Europeans could by and large take care of themselves.¹²⁵ The Europeans, however, resented this American sermonizing, which they saw as a misguided and unwelcome attempt to shift to Europe defense burdens that the United States was better suited to bear than they were. They also resented subsequent American efforts, during the 1960s, to reduce the likelihood that the United States would be called on to honor its pledge to use nuclear weapons first in the event of war in Europe, in the form of a new military strategy, flexible response, and the associated effort to build so-called firebreaks between conventional and nuclear war in Europe, and also between the use of tactical and strategic nuclear forces.

The geographical separation of America from Europe and American doubts about the wisdom of honoring its own pledge to go nuclear first were the source of many of the so-called crises that plagued the Alliance during the 1950s through the 1980s. Whenever the Americans suggested that the Alliance should

¹²⁵ American aspirations in this regard are described more fully in [Chapter 3](#) of Thies, *Friendly Rivals*.

rely more heavily on nonnuclear forces for defense in the event of war, the Europeans accused the United States of backing away from its promises and undermining deterrence. When the United States did indeed brandish its nuclear forces as a way of warning the Soviets not to try to change the status quo in Europe (e.g., in Berlin), the Europeans complained that the Americans were reckless cowboys who were prepared to destroy Europe in order to save it. Adding to the acrimony was the perpetual argument over who was bearing their fair share of the burden of contributing to the objectives of deterrence and defense both within Europe and outside it – an argument that was fueled by the very norms of transparency and intrusiveness that made the Alliance such a striking departure from all of its predecessors.

An alliance wracked in this fashion by seemingly annual crises would be one that often seemed on the brink of falling apart. Yet it is also important to notice what did *not* happen within the Atlantic Alliance. When the members of pre-1939 alliances grew disenchanted with one another, and they almost always did so, their usual response was to maneuver or goad their partners into breaking the alliance so as to preserve their own reputation as a good ally, which would make it easier for them (and, they hoped, harder for their ex-allies) to line up new partners for the next round of the competition. But when NATO members grew exasperated with one another, and they often did, they did not try to break up the Alliance or find new partners elsewhere – after all, where would they go? With whom might they realign? And it was not just inertia or lack of imagination that held the Alliance together. Looking back at the history of the Alliance, it is informative to notice that complaints by one or more members were often – not always, but often – met with sympathy rather than disdain by the targets of those complaints.

During the Korean War, for example, the Truman administration took very seriously allied concerns about expanding the war to include air attacks on Manchuria. President Truman told General MacArthur in January 1951 that the United States needed to hold together a UN majority on the war because such a majority “is not merely a part of the [UN] organization but is also the nations whom we would desperately need to count on as allies in the event the Soviet Union moves against us.”¹²⁶ During an NSC meeting on December 10, 1951, “there was general agreement that war against China could not be fought without the consent of the allies.”¹²⁷

Similarly, when NATO’s Korean War rearmament program lagged because of sudden increases in the price of raw materials caused by the Korean War plus rearmament in Europe, the result was a gap between what the Medium-Term Defense Plan (MTDP) called for and what the European members were prepared to offer. The American response to this situation was not a threat to withdraw in disgust but sympathetic consideration of the Europeans’ economic problems. In particular, the International Security Affairs Committee (an inter-agency group

¹²⁶ Quoted in Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 50.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

within the U.S. government) suggested adjusting the MTDP to reduce its costs by \$8 billion to \$9 billion while increasing U.S. military aid by 30 percent or so.¹²⁸ In a separate report, the Committee concluded that France could bear at most a token increase in its defense burden; Italy should receive a lighter burden than that recommended by the joint chiefs of staff; and projected assignments to Belgium, the Netherlands, and Great Britain appeared reasonable. When the committee's reports were discussed by State and Defense Department officials on June 21, 1951, Secretary of Defense Marshall noted that "a cut by five percent in the European standard of living meant the difference between white bread and black on the table, while in similar American homes such a cut would mean foregoing a radio or television." General Bradley too noted he was "unsure whether we should press the Europeans at this time to increase their commitments."¹²⁹

When the French dragged their feet repeatedly on German rearmament, the American joint chiefs proposed that they be given a bluntly worded warning: either allow German rearmament to proceed or "public opinion in the United States may demand that the rate of the United States' build-up in Europe be dependent upon a satisfactory solution to this problem." The chiefs were, however, overruled by civilian authority, which opted for a softer line.¹³⁰ The French for their part worried that, unless some compromise could be worked out with the Americans, they – and Foreign Minister Robert Schuman in particular – would be blamed for breaking up the Alliance.¹³¹ And when Aneurin Bevan resigned from the Labor and National Service Ministry in the Attlee government in Great Britain in protest against the extent of the rearmament program and the resulting cuts in social services, the British government did not look for alternative security arrangements nor did its allies threaten to desert it if it did not show more enthusiasm for rearming.¹³² When the British warned that their deficits in foreign trade and dollar/sterling balances might compel them to sacrifice defense spending in favor of exporting more, and when the French complained that they were anticipating a \$500 million balance of payments deficit in 1952 and experiencing serious shortages in their economy, their partners responded not by threatening to abandon them but by forming a committee of so-called wise men charged with determining whether the Alliance's military authorities were asking too much or governments were offering too little.¹³³

In summary, NATO members behaved toward each other very differently than the members of virtually all pre-1939 alliances. What accounts for this difference? And how does an Alliance perpetually in crisis manage to survive for decades, unlike virtually all of its predecessors? These questions are the subjects of [Chapter 4](#) and [Chapters 5–7](#), respectively.

¹²⁸ Poole, *JCS History*, v. 4, pp. 241–242, 245.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 245–246.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 256–257.

¹³¹ Hitchcock, *France Restored*, p. 151.

¹³² Poole, *JCS History*, v. 4, p. 254.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 267, 270; Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, 43–44.

Why NATO Is Different

Alliances are as old as states themselves, but the way their members act toward each other has changed greatly over the past several centuries. The transformation of alliance members from rivals in an ongoing struggle for power and empire to partners sharing common interests and pooling armed forces has been the product of many factors, but in retrospect three stand out as especially prominent: changes in the scope and pace of warfare, changes in the distribution of power among the leading states, and the presence or absence of divisive ideological issues. The rate of change has been uneven rather than constant, but it is nonetheless possible to identify three periods in the evolution of alliance relationships, with significant differences among them in the behavior of states toward their allies.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ALLIANCE RELATIONSHIPS

During the eighteenth century and for much of the nineteenth, the ability of states to increase their military power by mobilizing domestic resources was for the most part very limited, due to the underdeveloped state of military technology and the need to restrict the size of armies so as not to impede economic growth.¹ The formation of alliances was thus the only way to quickly augment national power, but the all-against-all character of the struggle for power and empire meant that alliances were for the most part temporary, ad hoc affairs organized by states that had few interests in common and which sought to use each other to pursue their separate territorial goals. Statesmen feared isolation lest their state be set upon by a coalition bent on partitioning its territory, but they also feared that an ally's gains might exceed their own and that its newly won strength would be turned

¹ Many of the points made in this section first appeared in Wallace Thies, "Randomness, Contagion and Heterogeneity in the Formation of Interstate Alliances – A Reconsideration," *International Interactions* 16, #4 (1991): 335–354, esp. pp. 347–349.

against them.² Because the members of these alliances viewed today's allies as tomorrow's enemies, they sought to limit each other's gains, thwart each other's ambitions, and frustrate each other's plans.³ They also maneuvered tirelessly to keep open lines of communication to their current enemies in order to be in a position to obtain a separate peace or even execute a reversal of alliances if doing so appeared advantageous. The combination of insecurity and an insatiable appetite for territorial gains served as a kind of invisible hand that impelled statesmen to compete vigorously for allies yet respond instinctively in ways obstructive of common action whenever it appeared as if an ally's gains might exceed their own.⁴

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the industrial revolution greatly increased both the productivity of national economies and the share of national resources that could be devoted to military purposes. At the same time, the perfection of mobilization systems meant that a state's manpower resources were more readily convertible into military power than in the past. The greater speed with which events moved in wartime was made plain for all to see by the Prussian victories over the Austrians in 1866 and the French in 1870. As statesmen grew more fearful of isolation, they tried harder than in the pre-1870 era to establish and maintain alliances in peacetime and to draw up plans for simultaneous military action in a future war. But old habits died hard; statesmen still sought to retain a free hand for themselves even as they worked to wrap their allies in a web of commitments that would leave the latter no choice but to carry out their promises in the event of war. Alliances grew more durable, but the slyness and duplicity that characterized the alliance policies of the leading states between the Franco-Prussian War and the outbreak of the Second World War continued to limit their effectiveness as instruments for coordinating the actions of their members.

By 1939, national resources were available for mobilization and conversion into military power to an extent never before achieved, which World War II made plain for all to see. More important, the bipolar power structure that emerged after the Second World War and the ideological divide separating the

² On this point, see also R. Harrison Wagner, "The Theory of Games and the Balance of Power," *World Politics* 38 (July 1986): 547–576; and Emerson Niou and Peter Ordeshook, "A Theory of the Balance of Power in International Systems," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 30 (December 1986): 685–715. Both articles show that if one actor in a multipolar system can obtain more than half of the total resources in the system, the consequence is the elimination of all of the other actors. Wagner's article also shows that, in certain kinds of systems, even small deviations from equality among the actors involved can lead to the elimination of one or more of them.

³ Austria allied with Prussia in 1863 because it hoped to prevent Prussia from annexing the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein after a military victory over Denmark. Three years later, Austria and Prussia were at war with each other (suggested by Eric Labs, "Do Weak States Bandwagon?" *Security Studies* 1 [Spring 1992]: 397).

⁴ Walter Dorn, *Competition for Empire, 1740–1763* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), pp. 144–145. See also Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1979), p. 105.

Soviet Union from the West deprived statesmen of the flexibility they previously enjoyed in the selection of alliance partners. For the states of Western Europe, only the United States could fill the role of protector against the Soviet Union; no other state or group of states could take its place in this regard. The immense destructiveness of the Second World War and the presence of Soviet forces deep in central Europe helped nourish the conviction on both sides of the Atlantic that only by pooling resources in defense of a common Western civilization could the Atlantic Alliance inspire the confidence needed for economic recovery to proceed in Western Europe despite Soviet attempts at intimidation and coercion.

As a result of these changes, the alliances that formed in Europe after the Second World War were more durable, more integrated, and broader in scope than any that had previously existed.⁵ After 1945, the cost of abandoning an ally was very high and the availability of new allies very low. The five-power Brussels Union formed in 1948 (Great Britain, France, and the Benelux states) and its successor, the Atlantic Alliance, were each intended to remain in existence for a very long time – fifty years in the case of the former, indefinitely in the case of the latter. If, however, these alliances were to endure for decades in a posture of watchful waiting, their members would have to be more solicitous of each other's interests than was the case for previous alliances. The changes in this regard are particularly apparent in the way in which alliance maintenance superseded alliance formation as perhaps the foremost concern of statesmen. Once again, the changing patterns of alliance relationships can best be illustrated by comparing and contrasting the three periods discussed above.

Prior to 1870, the alliance policies of the leading states were oriented almost entirely toward the formation of new temporary alliances. The absence of divisive ideological issues meant that every other great power could be considered a potential ally, while the near-equality in power among the leading states meant that no one of them had a decisive advantage over the others as a prospective partner. The all-against-all nature of the struggle for primacy together with the near-equality in power of the leading states meant that alliance policies were very flexible. Statesmen pursued advantages whenever and wherever they could find them, in the hope that a succession of small gains would cumulate into a decisive edge over the others. The most important subjects for discussion between potential allies were the territorial gains sought by each, the size of the armed forces or the financial subsidy that each would contribute, and the campaigns that each would wage. If an ally's performance fell below expectations, or if its demands became excessive, the usual response was to break off the alliance and replace it with a new one. The flexibility that characterized the alliance policies of all of the leading states prior to the Franco-Prussian War made it feasible to abandon unruly or obstreperous allies rather

⁵ For more on the contrast between the Atlantic Alliance and previous alliances, see Ernst Haas and Allen Whiting, *Dynamics of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), pp. 177–178; Robert Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), p. 50.

than accommodate them because new allies were almost always readily available. Pre-1870, the principal task of diplomacy was to create alliances, not maintain them. As new challenges arose, new ad hoc arrangements were stitched together to meet them. Alliance maintenance, in contrast, would never be more than a distant second in a milieu in which all of the leading states saw themselves as rivals in a long-term struggle for supremacy and in which foreign policy consisted of an endless quest for advantages that would strengthen one's position against allies and enemies alike.

After 1870, the growth of armaments and the accelerating pace of events in wartime meant that isolation was more dangerous than before, thereby depriving the alliance policies of the great powers of some of their former flexibility. The speed with the Prussians had overwhelmed first the Austrians and then French suggested that allies could no longer be treated as cavalierly as before, because a state that did so might be caught alone and vulnerable at the start of the next war.⁶ Hence alliance policies between 1870 and 1939 looked inward as well as outward. Alliance construction was still very important, since states continued to compete for allies as a means of augmenting national power.⁷ But the greater speed with which events moved in wartime made it essential to have allies lined up *before* the next war *and* to reach agreement in advance on how they would use their forces once war began. Because they were more dependent on support from their partners in the event of war, alliance members became more solicitous of their partners' concerns and more willing to offer support or make concessions for the sake of alliance solidarity.

Solicitude for the concerns of one's allies, however, did not easily translate into effective military coordination. Post-1871, statesmen badgered their allies to increase the size of their armed forces and to speed up their mobilization plans as a way of forcing potential enemies to divide their forces, thereby deflecting part of an opponent's initial blow away from themselves and increasing the likelihood that their own offensive would be successful. Toward this end, military staff talks were held prior to the First World War by the members of both the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, but the degree of military coordination achieved during the war itself remained rudimentary. Once the war had begun, both sides created unified commands, but only after protracted political struggles had made plain the reluctance with which these arrangements were accepted. Agreement on a unified command structure came more easily to the Western allies during the Second World War, but these arrangements worked well only in those parts of the European theater where British and American forces fought side by side and were of limited effectiveness everywhere else.

⁶ For more on the Franco-Prussian War as a turning point in the evolution of alliance politics, see Thies, "Randomness, Contagion and Heterogeneity," pp. 350–351.

⁷ See, for example, the data on the rate of alliance formation presented by Patrick McGowan and Robert Rood, "Alliance Behavior in Balance-of-Power Systems: Applying a Poisson Model to Nineteenth-Century Europe," *American Political Science Review* 69 (September 1975): 859–870. See also Thies, "Randomness, Contagion, and Heterogeneity," p. 342.

After 1945, the emergence of a bipolar power structure meant that most of the former great powers could no longer compete for supremacy with the United States and the Soviet Union. The ideological cleavage that characterized the early Cold War meant that the democratic states were more conscious of ideals and goals held in common than ever before,⁸ while the political popularity of the welfare state provided their leaders with powerful incentives to organize new forms of cooperation that would free up resources that might otherwise be spent on defense for more politically appealing uses. Since they no longer viewed each other as rivals in a struggle for preeminence, the members of what became the Atlantic Alliance sought to encourage rather than frustrate each other's plans to regain their military strength, to increase rather than restrict the power of their allies, and to push each other forward rather than hold each other back. They also urged each other to dedicate whatever additional increments of strength they were able to acquire to a collective effort aimed at an integrated defense of the North Atlantic area, as opposed to pursuit of separate national goals, like clinging to colonial empires. In effect, bipolarity and the ideological split between east and west transformed NATO members from long-term rivals who formerly had sought to limit each other's power and thwart each other's schemes into long-term partners who now encouraged each other to do more for the collective effort. Allies still tried to use each other, but the reasons why and the manner in which they did so changed profoundly over time.

To be sure, the transition from traditional to modern alliance practices was neither as smooth nor as complete as the review presented above might suggest. For one thing, the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), while integrated and relatively durable (at least when compared to pre-1939 alliances), was never more than a pale imitation of NATO. NATO members achieved an unprecedented degree of integration and durability because, as liberal democracies, they instinctively sought the cooperation and approval of other liberal democratic states. The WTO held together only as long as the Soviet Union was able to compel its East European "allies" to adopt certain practices. When the element of compulsion was removed, the WTO promptly collapsed.⁹

Outside Europe, there were attempts to emulate the durable, integrated, and open-ended alliances that formed in Europe after the Second World War, but these achieved only modest successes, in large part because the conditions that made such alliances both necessary and feasible in Europe were not present elsewhere. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), created by the Manila Treaty (1954), and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), created by the Baghdad Pact (1955), were endowed with some of the

⁸ On this point, see Brian Lai and Dan Reiter, "Democracy, Political Similarity, and International Alliances, 1816–1992," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44 (April 2000): 203–227, who found that "states with similar regime types are more likely to ally with each other but only after 1945" (p. 223).

⁹ For more on the differences between NATO and the WTO, see Wallace Thies and Monica Podbielski, "What Makes an Alliance Strong? NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization in Retrospect," *Military Review* 77 (July–August 1997): 130–135.

organizational forms pioneered by the Atlantic Alliance – namely, a consultative council and an international secretariat – but in neither case were the parties prepared to integrate their forces under unified military commands. Neither SEATO nor CENTO attempted to address the range of issues considered jointly by NATO members, nor were they able to demonstrate the resilience and durability characteristic of alliances in Europe after the Second World War. Both were essentially instruments for the projection of American power into their respective domains, and both collapsed when the United States turned to other means to look after its interests in those regions in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.¹⁰

The ANZUS alliance (Australia, New Zealand, and United States) was intended to be both durable and open-ended but not integrated. ANZUS was endowed with a political council that allowed its members to consult regularly on matters of mutual concern, but American officials resisted pressures from their counterparts in Australia and New Zealand for a Pacific military command on the grounds that there was no imminent danger that required such a step.¹¹ An integrated command was established on the Korean peninsula to coordinate the actions of American and South Korean forces in response to a clear and present danger from the north, but at no time did the aspirations of the parties, in terms of the range of issues to be addressed, approach those of the Atlantic Alliance.¹² The U.S.–Japan alliance proved to be very durable but did not attempt any military integration. The Sino-Soviet alliance was in many respects a throwback to the alliances formed by the great powers of nineteenth-century Europe – an agreement to “cooperate” by states that neither liked nor trusted each other, that sought to use each other while avoiding being used by the other, and that ultimately collapsed due in part to territorial rivalry, followed by a defection to the other side.¹³ The unstable and

¹⁰ Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy*, pp. 80–81, 115–116; Roger Hilsman, “Coalitions and Alliances,” in *Military Policy and National Security* ed. William Kaufmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 172–174. See also Christopher Hemmer and Peter Katzenstein, “Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism,” *International Organization* 56 (Summer 2002): 575–607.

¹¹ Wallace Thies and James Harris, “An Alliance Unravels: The United States and ANZUS,” *Naval War College Review* 46 (Summer 1993): 98–126. See also Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: New American Library, 1970), pp. 813–814, 874–878; J. D. B. Miller, *Britain and the Old Dominions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), pp. 166–187; Dean McHenry and Richard Rosecrance, “The ‘Exclusion’ of the United Kingdom from the ANZUS Pact,” *International Organization* 12 (Summer 1958): 320–329.

¹² The difficulties that the United States and the Republic of Korea encountered in trying to coordinate their policies toward North Korea figure prominently in Leon Sigal, *Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

¹³ See, for example, Donald Zagoria, “The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the West,” *Foreign Affairs* 41 (October 1962): 171–190; C. P. Fitzgerald, “Tension on the Sino-Soviet Border,” *Foreign Affairs* 45 (July 1967): 683–693; Richard Lowenthal, “Russia and China: Controlled Conflict,” *Foreign Affairs* 49 (April 1971): 507–518; Thomas Robinson, “The Sino-Soviet Border Dispute: Background, Development, and the March 1969 Clashes,” *American Political Science Review* 66 (December 1972): 1175–1202.

short-lived coalitions formed by the Arab states bear a marked resemblance to the temporary, ad hoc alliances formed by the states of eighteenth-century Europe, who deserted each other whenever it seemed advantageous to do so.¹⁴

Even within the Atlantic Alliance, pressures for greater integration of the members' armed forces and desires to deflect burdens onto others by encouraging them to do more were occasionally pushed into the background by attitudes and fears representing a carryover of pre-World War II practices. French fears of German rearmament and Greek fears of Turkey are important and obvious exceptions to the general tendency of NATO members to revel in the strength of their allies – because the stronger their allies, the greater their own freedom to transfer resources from defense to other uses, like health, welfare, housing, and the like. Without denying the significance of these two cases, the political relationships that took hold among NATO members still stand out as distinctively different from those that predominated prior to the Second World War. French fears of Germany did not lead the French to strive to strengthen their position relative to allies and enemies alike (as was typical in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). Those fears led instead to determined French efforts to entangle the United States and Great Britain permanently in the defense of *all* of Western Europe, including western Germany, in order to free French resources for other uses, like economic recovery and defense of France's colonial empire. Greek protests regarding aid to Turkey by the United States and other NATO members were aimed not at weakening Turkey to the point that it might succumb to Soviet threats and intimidation but rather at gaining more favorable treatment for Greece itself.

In summary, three factors explain why alliances that were both durable and integrated took hold in Europe, and only in Europe, after the Second World War. Bipolarity and ideological conflict made an integrated approach possible, by ending the struggle for supremacy among many of the former great powers and by devaluing the worth of territorial gains formerly pursued through periodic realignments. At the same time, the heightened speed and destructiveness of warfare made an integrated approach seem essential, because only forces in being backed by plans for joint action worked out in advance could hope to be militarily effective. Military integration was thus seen on both sides of the Atlantic as the prerequisite for defense arrangements that would be effective yet tolerable to electorates grown weary of the burdens entailed by great power rivalry. American officials in particular favored an integrated approach because it offered the promise of combining the relatively small armed forces of the European allies within a larger collective effort that would make more efficient use of the Europeans' resources but without jeopardizing economic

¹⁴ Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987). See also Christopher Dickey, "Assad and His Allies: Irreconcilable Differences?" *Foreign Affairs* 66 (Fall 1987): 58–76; Michael Barnett and Jack Levy, "Domestic Sources of Alliances and Alignments: The Case of Egypt, 1962–1973," *International Organization* 45 (Summer 1991): 369–395.

recovery in Europe. The Europeans welcomed an integrated approach because it offered the prospect of a permanent claim on American resources, without which they considered the defense of Western Europe a lost cause.

WHY NATO IS DIFFERENT (I): THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF MILITARY INTEGRATION

Prior to 1870, the armed forces of allies were not readily substitutable for each other. Armies had to make their way on foot, which limited the ability of most states (with the exception of Britain, which had the largest navy but also the smallest army of all the leading states), to project military power far from their territory. Allies typically fought separate wars against the same foe, which meant that even if an ally's campaign went well, the only way to achieve one's own territorial goals was by fighting for them. More important, the competition for primacy among the great powers meant that all of them feared gains by their allies as well as by their enemies. Hence, even though the members of these alliances frequently exhorted each other to do more to bring about the defeat of today's foe, an increased effort by one ally generally did not lead to a reduced effort by another, because states that feared their allies as well as their enemies could hardly afford to relax their efforts as their allies grew stronger.¹⁵

After 1870, the increased destructiveness of wars and the greater speed with which events moved in wartime put a premium on alliance arrangements worked out in advance of the next war. The members of the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente both sought to reach agreement on the military moves that each would make in the event of war; they also exhorted their partners to increase the size and striking power of their armies to improve the chances that their initial offensives would be successful. Rail networks improved the ability of states to deploy armies along the frontier, but those armies still had to advance on foot once they crossed into an opponent's territory, which meant that substitution possibilities remained limited. Because allies did not station troops on each other's territory and because reinforcements could not be moved quickly to protect an ally threatened with an attack, an increased effort by one ally contributed only indirectly to the defense of another and thus was not generally regarded as an effective substitute for indigenous forces and defenses. France and Russia prior to the First World War could not shield each other from a German attack; they could only promise to attack Germany if Germany attacked one of them first. An increased effort by either one contributed to the defense of the other only in its effect on the disposition of German forces. As a result, while allies often urged one another to do more, especially between 1890 and 1914, they almost never relaxed their own efforts even when their partners did what they asked.¹⁶

¹⁵ For example, Metternich's fears of the growing strength of Prussia and Russia in the aftermath of Napoleon's retreat from Russia, discussed in [Chapter 2](#).

¹⁶ This point is developed more fully in Wallace Thies, "Alliances and Collective Goods – A Reappraisal," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 31 (June 1987): 307–325.

By the mid twentieth century, substitution possibilities were much greater. The nuclear revolution – atomic bombs carried initially by strategic bombers and then by unstoppable ballistic missiles – meant that it was no longer necessary to fight one’s way through an opponent’s armed forces before inflicting terrible destruction upon it.¹⁷ Improvements to amphibious and airborne forces and the increased striking power of naval task forces organized around aircraft carriers all combined to greatly improve the ability of states – especially the United States – to project military power far from their borders. The Atlantic Alliance’s unified command structure, the geographical contiguity of its European members, and the highly developed road and rail networks in Europe all facilitated the movement of NATO members’ armed forces from the territory of one ally to that of another.¹⁸

As a result, NATO members were continually tempted by the hope that, if their allies could be persuaded to do more, they themselves – unlike the members of pre-1939 alliances – could do less, thereby freeing resources for more politically appealing, in the sense of vote winning, activities at home. Almost from the moment that talks on new security arrangements for the North Atlantic area began, in the form of the British initiative in December 1947, it was taken as a given by the parties that there would be some kind of pooling of resources by the democratic states, following the example set by the Americans and the British during the Second World War. The more contentious issue was who would contribute how much to such a collective effort. The Europeans believed the United States should do most of the work so they could concentrate on economic recovery. The Truman administration believed the Europeans should do most of the work because the United States was already heavily burdened to a degree that could not be sustained indefinitely. Burden shifting grew more enticing once the members agreed to form an integrated coalition force because the larger the forces contributed by the United States, the less that would be required of the European members and vice versa. The institutionalization of an annual review of NATO force goals and member contributions made explicit the possibilities for burden shifting because the more that one member could be persuaded to contribute the less that would be required of the rest to meet a given set of force goals.¹⁹

Confirmation of the role of military integration in enhancing both the substitutability of allies’ forces and thus their concern to shift burdens from themselves to others can be found in the experience of the WTO. Article 5 of the Warsaw Treaty, which was signed in 1955 by the Soviet Union and the communist states of Eastern Europe (except Yugoslavia) as a riposte to the entry of West Germany into the Atlantic Alliance, provided for a joint military command

¹⁷ Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966).

¹⁸ Thies, “Alliances and Collective Goods,” pp. 319–320. See also Wallace Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), Chapter 1.

¹⁹ The creation of the NATO Annual Review is discussed more fully in Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, Chapter 3.

that was duly established in 1956 with its headquarters in Moscow. For the first five years of the WTO's existence, the Soviets made little effort to pursue integration of its members' armed forces, with the result that the WTO's various councils and military commands remained largely a "paper organization."²⁰ After 1960, however, coinciding with Khrushchev's efforts to shift Soviet military planning away from reliance on massed ground forces in favor of the strategic rocket forces, the Soviets paid greater attention to the advantages of utilizing East European manpower within the framework of an integrated alliance. "[Khrushchev] apparently felt he could justify – at least partially – the cutbacks he planned in Soviet ground forces by getting East European military forces to assume a larger role in pact strategy."²¹ In line with this approach, a major effort was undertaken early in the 1960s to upgrade the armed forces of the non-Soviet members and a new doctrine of coalition warfare was promulgated to guide the collective effort. "This doctrine assigned the East Europeans a key role in any East-West conflict. In such a conflict, they would be expected to participate jointly with Soviet forces in rapid offensive military operations against NATO." To make the new doctrine workable, the military equipment used by the East European members was upgraded, multilateral training exercises were held regularly, and increased attention was given to the WTO's high-level military and political organs.²²

But for every benefit offered by military integration, there was also a corresponding cost. On one hand, a permanent, integrated alliance complete with a unified command structure and regularized procedures for decision making within which allies could be held accountable for what they were and were not doing offered NATO members more security at less cost than was available to the members of any previous alliance. On the other hand, NATO members had to weigh the advantages of membership in such an alliance against two sets of more or less permanent irritants. First, membership in a permanent, militarily integrated alliance meant that each member's fate was in part hostage to the policies of the other members – reckless allies could provoke an unwanted war; feckless allies would not be much help when needed.²³ A second set of irritants took the form of demands from one's partners for a larger contribution to the collective effort even as the latter sought to skimp on their own contributions. The greater the irritations caused by the need to get along with this set of allies more or less indefinitely, the more tempting the options of noncooperation and maybe even withdrawal into neutralism to governments and publics in the NATO countries.

²⁰ Dale Herspring, "The Soviet Union and the East European Militaries: The Diminishing Asset," in *The Soviet Calculus of Nuclear War* ed. Roman Kolkowicz and Ellen Mickiewicz (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1986), p. 247. See also Thomas Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945–1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), p. 148.

²¹ Herspring, "The Soviet Union and the East European Militaries," p. 248.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 248–249.

²³ This is the "alliance security dilemma" – entrapment versus abandonment. See especially Glenn Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36 (July 1984): 461–495.

These latter options grew more alluring as the subjective probability of war in Europe decreased in response to growing awareness of the destructiveness of a war that might escalate across the nuclear threshold. Between 1871 and 1939, the increased destructiveness of warfare compelled a certain fidelity to alliance commitments, even by states that yearned for the flexibility of the pre-1870 era, in order to ensure that allies would be available when needed most. After 1945, the belief that war between nuclear-armed states had become potentially so destructive that it was unlikely to occur offered new opportunities for evading alliance responsibilities.²⁴ In addition, the muting of the ideological conflict between East and West and the emergence of détente in Europe during the mid 1960s suggested to some that the European members of NATO might be able to recapture some of the freedom to maneuver that they had enjoyed prior to the Second World War.²⁵ Hence the recurrence of the so-called crises within the Alliance, owing to disagreements among the parties over the distribution of burdens, benefits, and risks within an ongoing collective effort.

But while NATO crises have been frequent – indeed, almost an annual event – what has often been lost sight of are the things that *didn't* happen either during these crises or as a result of them. Unlike the members of pre-1939 alliances, who often needed only the flimsiest of pretexts to break up an alliance, NATO members do not push issues to the breaking point, do not deliberately provoke their partners in the hope that the latter could be saddled with the blame for the breakup, and do not conspire with outsiders to bring about a reversal of alliances.²⁶ Why this is so is the subject of the next section.

WHY NATO IS DIFFERENT (II): THE CHOICES ALLIES FACE

When the members of pre-1939 alliances faced a choice between pleasing an ally and confronting it, they often considered the former more dangerous than the latter.²⁷ In a world in which today's ally could be, and often was, tomorrow's foe, anything that made an ally stronger was a danger and thus something to be

²⁴ Herbert Dinerstein, "The Transformation of Alliance Systems," *American Political Science Review* 59 (September 1965): 589–590, 593; Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy*, p. 59.

²⁵ Robert Kleiman, *Atlantic Crisis: American Diplomacy Confronts a Resurgent Europe* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964); Ronald Steel, *The End of Alliance: America and the Future of Europe* (New York: Viking Press, 1964).

²⁶ U.S. Deputy Secretary of State George Ball wanted to retaliate against the French for their withdrawal from the NATO integrated command structure in 1966, but his suggestions in this regard went unheeded (Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* [Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004], p. 33).

²⁷ During the July 1914 crisis, the permanent undersecretary of the foreign office in London added this comment to an incoming cable describing Russia's position: "Russia is a formidable Power and will become increasingly strong. Let us hope our relations with her continue to be friendly" (quoted in Robert Jervis, *System Effects* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997], p. 114).

avoided, even if it meant breaking the alliance. Breaking up, moreover, was relatively easy – alliances were established based on a small number of issues, prospective allies were generally plentiful rather than scarce, hence new arrangements could be and often were cobbled together swiftly. The members of these alliances thus schemed and plotted against each other and if need be deserted each other, preferring the risks of temporary isolation to the risk that pleasing an ally might allow it to become so powerful that standing up to it might no longer be possible.

Post-1945, the shift to bipolarity and the ideological split between East and West meant that prospective allies were no longer readily available as before. More important, in a multimember alliance of democracies, the choice between pleasing an ally and confronting it is less hazardous and, indeed, less obvious than before. The democracies that formed the Atlantic Alliance had so much in common that the British, for example, were encouraged rather than dismayed when the Americans finally realized “that no time must be lost in plucking the torch of world leadership from our chilling hands.”²⁸ Membership in an alliance of democracies, moreover, offered statesmen options that were not available to their pre-1939 counterparts, such as appeals to shared democratic values, trading off one issue against another, stalling for time, waiting for the next election, or lobbying for support from the other members.²⁹ If all else failed, there was always simple persuasion – a development foreshadowed by the way the British and the Americans worked together during the Second World War. Speaking of their American ally, a British foreign office paper in 1944 made the point that

Fortunately, we are not confronted with the alternatives of pleasing them or standing up to them; we also have the opportunity and the capacity to guide and influence them The transmutation of their power into useful forms, and its direction into advantageous channels, is our concern.

It must be our purpose not to balance our power against that of America, but to make use of American power for purposes which we regard as good.

If we go about our business in the right way we can help steer this great unwieldy barge, the United States of America, into the right harbor. If we don't, it is likely to continue to wallow in the ocean, an isolated menace to navigation.³⁰

²⁸ F. B. A. Rundall minute, March 10, 1947, quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 55.

²⁹ See, for example, Lawrence Kaplan's account of the 1956 “crisis” over Iceland's demand for a withdrawal of U.S. armed forces stationed there, which suggests that deadlines were avoided, delaying tactics were used to avoid unpleasant choices, and decisions were stalled in order to give the Icelandic government more time to change its stance (*NATO Divided, NATO United*, pp. 25–27).

³⁰ Foreign Office (London), “Essentials of an American Policy,” March 1944, reprinted in John Baylis (ed.), *Anglo-American Relations since 1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 35–36. See also British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin's suggestion, made on December 17, 1947 to French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault, that it would be necessary for the French and the British to advise the Americans “while letting the Americans say and think that it was they who were acting” (quoted in John Baylis, “Britain, the Brussels Pact and the Continental Commitment,” *International Affairs* 60 [Autumn 1984]: 620, note 24).

In effect, NATO members had so much in common and agreed with each other on so many important issues that they didn't face the choice between pleasing an ally and confronting it in the same way as did the members of most pre-1939 alliances.³¹ Because democracies don't fear one another, NATO members do not react the way that members of pre-1939 alliances did when it appeared that an ally was growing stronger. Unlike the British in 1914, who worried about the dangers inherent in supporting a Russia that was becoming stronger with each passing year,³² the British in 1947 took the position that "what the United States most requires from candid observers abroad are not reproofs that it is abusing its giant power, but commendation for such wisdom and generosity as it has thus far displayed, along with encouragement bravely to persevere in the employment of its vast resources for its own and the general welfare."³³ Pre-1939, statesmen often feared that if an ally became stronger, it might turn on its current partner(s). Post-1945, the British and other prospective members of the Atlantic Alliance feared not that the United States would turn on them but that it would ignore them. They *wanted* the United States to use its vast resources for the general welfare, especially when the welfare in question was theirs. The Americans, for their part, were convinced that "To achieve our foreign policy objectives we must have the cooperation of allies and friends." Hence they were more solicitous of allies, especially the British, than was the case for most pre-1939 alliances: "We cannot afford to permit a deterioration in our relationship with the British. We must strive to get agreement on the identity of our objectives and reaffirm the fundamental identity of our interests."³⁴ Unlike the members of most pre-1939 alliances, NATO members were relieved or even heartened when their allies grew stronger; hence, they urged their allies on rather than conspire against them. This, in turn, allowed them to work together much more effectively and hold together much longer than the members of pre-1939 alliances.

This is not to say that there were no rivalries among NATO members, only that those rivalries took different forms and thus were played out differently than in the case of pre-1939 alliances. From the start, the Atlantic Alliance included states that were differently positioned internationally (one superpower, several

³¹ In the words of a 1958 British policy paper, "there is relatively little danger of a situation arising in which we have to choose between breaking away and becoming an American satellite" (Steering Committee, "Planning Paper on Interdependence," 27 January 1958, reprinted in Baylis [ed.], *Anglo-American Relations since 1939*, pp. 96-104) (the quoted excerpt is from p. 102).

³² On this point, see the comment by the British Ambassador to Russia, quoted in Jervis, *System Effects*, p. 114. See also note 27 in this chapter.

³³ The British ambassador in Washington, Lord Inverchapel, to Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, May 22, 1947, quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 61. British views of U.S. foreign policy are discussed more fully in Peter Boyle, "Britain, America and the Transition from Economic to Military Assistance, 1948-1951," *Journal of Contemporary History* 22 (July 1987): 521-538.

³⁴ Paper prepared in the Department of State, April 19, 1950, reprinted in Baylis, *Anglo-American Relations since 1939*, pp. 58-62 (the quoted excerpts are from p. 61).

middle powers, and several small powers) and thus likely to have different views regarding what was possible and/or desirable. NATO members could and did become intensely annoyed with one another,³⁵ in no small part because bipolarity and the ideological divide between East and West left them stuck with each other, and they knew it. Unlike pre-1939 allies, they could not just dump each other and seek new arrangements with other partners. So they had to put up with each other, which was not always an easy thing to do. Yet to say, as Giauque does, that in 1955 the Europeans “resumed the traditional European contest for power and influence, but with new rules, new language, and a new forcefulness” suggests a lack of understanding of the ways that relations among allies had changed as a result of changes in the scope and pace of warfare, in the distribution of power internationally, and the ideological divide between East and West.³⁶ Pre-1939, when faced with the prospect that an ally’s schemes might succeed, thereby adding to its strength, the participants in the traditional European contest for power and influence typically responded either by attempting to sabotage the scheme in question or by deserting said ally and seeking new friends elsewhere. Post-1949, NATO members repeatedly encouraged one another to increase defense spending, to enlarge and/or improve their armed forces, to grow stronger rather than weaker, so that they could do more for the collective effort. Even at their angriest, NATO members did not try to break the alliance among them; instead, they sought to mobilize support for their own view among the other members in order to bring pressure for change on the member with which they were annoyed. To say that certain NATO members resumed the pre-1939 struggle for power and empire is about as insightful as saying that some retired major league ballplayers – former members of the Yankees and the Red Sox – resumed their traditional rivalry by joining a slow-pitch softball league. There were and are rivalries between NATO members, but those rivalries are conducted in ways strikingly different from those of the pre-1939 great powers.

Interestingly, the opposite error – judging other alliances by standards appropriate for NATO and only for NATO – is also fairly common.³⁷ Don Cook, for example, labels the U.S.–Soviet relationship during the Second World War an

³⁵ See, for example, the comment by the British ambassador to France, Sir Pierson Dixon, in January 1963: “DeGaulle is our adversary and we should therefore take him on and try to do him down” (quoted in Jeffrey Glen Giauque, *Grand Designs and Visions of Unity: The Atlantic Powers and the Reorganization of Western Europe, 1955–1963* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002], p. 152).

³⁶ Giauque, *Grand Designs and Visions of Unity*, p. 4. Elizabeth Pond likewise detected “the specter of a European slide back to the nineteenth-century balance of power of unstable and ad hoc coalitions of the willing” in the “crisis” preceding the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, *Friendly Fire: The Near-Death of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2004), p. 70.

³⁷ Suggested by Edwin Fedder, *NATO: The Dynamics of Alliance in the Postwar World* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1973), p. 22, who notes that “The net effect of so much attention [to NATO] . . . [is that] officials and commentators have tended to assume that a highly structured alliance is normal in international relations.”

“unnatural alliance,” because of the obvious difficulties the parties encountered in working together.³⁸ Yet if ease or difficulty of working together is the standard by which an alliance is to be judged, are there *any* pre-1939 alliances that would qualify as “natural,” with the possible exception of Britain and France before and during the two world wars?³⁹ In similar fashion, David Mayers writes that Anglo-American development of the atomic bomb without Soviet knowledge or consultation “must subsequently have struck Stalin as indicative of western bad faith. Such unilateral conduct, in any case, was contrary to the most elementary rule of diplomacy: allies, if they are to remain allies, confer with each other over significant issues of mutual concern.”⁴⁰ There is no small irony in an American scholar suggesting that Stalin might be offended by “unilateral conduct” on the part of an ally. This is, after all, the same Stalin who approved the Nazi-Soviet Pact, aimed at the partition of Poland, at a time when the Soviet Union was nominally allied with Poland.⁴¹ Stalin may have been a mid-twentieth-century autocrat, but his conduct of Soviet foreign policy was firmly rooted in habits and practices that were widespread in pre-World War I Europe.⁴²

WHY NATO IS DIFFERENT (III): INTERESTS AND OUTCOMES

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, states competed for allies by offering a better division of the spoils of war than that offered by rivals. It was the prospect of gain that held alliances together rather than shared ideals or common goals. Indeed, it would be more accurate to say that the European great powers had occasionally overlapping interests rather than truly common interests. Austria and England, for example, both had an interest in preventing the Russians from seizing Constantinople and the straits linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, and this served as the basis for occasional, temporary cooperation between them. But their reasons for wanting to keep the Russians out of Constantinople were very different, which is why sporadic cooperation was *all* that was possible.⁴³ Alliance

³⁸ Don Cook, *Forging the Alliance: NATO, 1945–1950* (New York: William Morrow, 1989) p. 3.

³⁹ Even this case is not as obvious as it might appear at first glance. Arnold Wolfers argues convincingly that Britain and France worked at cross purposes for much of the 1920s and the 1930s, in effect thwarting and defeating each other’s attempts to deal with Germany (*Britain and France Between Two Wars* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1940]).

⁴⁰ David Mayers, “Soviet War Aims and the Grand Alliance: George Kennan’s Views, 1944–1946,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 21 (1986): 58.

⁴¹ See the discussion of alliances during the inter-war period in [Chapter 2](#).

⁴² Suggested by Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 19.

⁴³ Austria wanted to thwart Russian attempts to expand so as to preserve her own options for expansion in the Balkans and to prevent the creation of a “big” Slavic state there under Russian tutelage, which would be a mortal danger for the Austrian empire. The British, on the other hand, wanted to keep the Russians out to prevent a threat to their line of communication to India (William L. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871–1890*, 2nd ed. [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962], pp. 366–367).

formation was essentially a bidding contest; states sought to split rival coalitions by offering a better deal to one or more of their members. Defections were frequent and alliance policies flexible, as statesmen sought to keep open lines of communication to the members of rival alliances. It was not uncommon for enemies to become allies and allies to become enemies. Alliances were brittle and short-lived⁴⁴; frequent defections fostered a climate of mistrust that rendered arrangements for integrated forces and centralized command virtually nonexistent. Alliances were often ad hoc affairs created to launch an attack or repel one. All of this, in turn, devalued the worth of any one alliance: the cost of abandoning an ally was generally low since not much was lost by doing so and new allies were usually readily available. A few alliances during this period reflected a community of interests, but the community was almost always narrowly conceived. As Bismarck himself pointed out during the Reichstag debate on the German military bill on January 11, 1887, the Austro-German alliance should not be misinterpreted. While each of the contracting powers had an interest in the continued existence of its partner as a great power, each also had interests for which the other could not be expected to risk war.⁴⁵

NATO members, in contrast, had an obvious common interest in upholding, essentially indefinitely, the territorial status quo in Europe after the Second World War because the loss of any one of them to the Soviet Union would have weakened the position of all the rest. To avoid that, they created an alliance that was intended to be permanent rather than temporary, that covered a much wider range of issues than any previous peacetime alliance and included an extensive set of political and military organizations as the means through which differences among the members could be addressed and effective collective action in defense of common Western interests would be fostered. Seen this way, post-World War II Europe was not “a large-scale edition of the post-Napoleonic settlement, with the U.S. substituted for Britain, and the USSR for Tsarist Russia.”⁴⁶ The great powers of post-1815 Europe maneuvered tirelessly in pursuit of an advantage over all of the others, including whomever they happened to be allied with at the moment. The states of post-1945 Europe (the Soviet Union aside) quickly shed whatever illusions they still had in this regard. The great powers of post-1815 Europe did not pool their armed forces, in no small part to keep open the option of selling themselves to a higher bidder. NATO members, in contrast, not only pooled their resources within the framework of NATO’s unified military commands, they encouraged their allies to grow stronger so they could do more for the common good. The great powers

⁴⁴ See, for example, the data on alliance termination and renewal assembled by Ole Holsti, P. Terrence Hopmann, and John Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative Studies* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973), pp. 70–71, 80–84. See also Bruce Bueno De Mesquita and J. David Singer, “Alliances, Capabilities and War: A Review and Synthesis,” in *Political Science Annual*, v. 4, 1973 ed. Cornelius Cotter (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), pp. 243, 247, 266–267.

⁴⁵ Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, p. 381.

⁴⁶ George Lichtheim, “The View from Europe,” *Commentary* 42 (July 1966): 52.

of post-1815 Europe wrangled endlessly about how the territorial spoils from the wars of mid century should be divided among themselves.⁴⁷ The signers of the North Atlantic Treaty wrangled endlessly about how the burdens of an integrated defense should be shared among them.

The creation of an integrated coalition force in peacetime was an unprecedented accomplishment, but it also created unanticipated problems particularly with respect to evading the burdens and responsibilities of membership. The various NATO councils, committees, and planning groups authorized to gather information on the actual and planned contributions of the members and to make suggestions on how national programs could better support the strategy and force levels agreed on collectively provided incentives to the members to adopt policies that differed considerably both from the policies of the members of pre-1939 alliances and from the expectations of more or less spontaneous collective action in defense of a common civilization that had been fostered by the negotiations that resulted in the North Atlantic Treaty.

Pre-1939, discussions of war plans and supporting programs were almost always conducted bilaterally, even within alliances with more than two members.⁴⁸ More important, the flexibility so prized by statesmen prior to the Second World War encouraged them to be reticent and to reveal as little as possible about the strength of their armed forces and their future plans and intentions, even to their allies (who might someday be their enemies).⁴⁹ The NATO integrated structure, in contrast, offered unprecedented opportunities to the members to use the machinery of the Alliance to amass information on their partners' armed forces and financial capabilities and on the latter's plans for improving the size and/or quality of their forces.⁵⁰ Unlike the members of most pre-1939 alliances, NATO members were heartened rather than frightened when their allies grew stronger. Where NATO members' interests diverged was on how to divide among themselves the costs of providing the armed forces needed to reassure the peoples of Western Europe that they could survive and prosper in the face of Soviet attempts to intimidate and demoralize them. The task of reaching agreement on this issue was complicated by attitudes that were firmly rooted on both sides of the Atlantic.

⁴⁷ These were France and England against Russia (the Crimean War), 1852–1854; France and Sardinia against Austria (1859), Prussia and Austria against Denmark (1862), the Austro-Prussian War (1866), the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), and the Russo-Turkish War (1878).

⁴⁸ For example, military staff talks between the members of the Triple Entente were conducted on a bilateral basis – Franco-Russian and Franco-British. Military arrangements between the members of the Triple Alliance were also worked out bilaterally – Austro-German and German-Italian. On this, see Bernadotte Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente* (New York: Henry Holt, 1934), pp. 93–99, 100–101.

⁴⁹ In the case of the Triple Alliance, as was explained in [Chapter 2](#), Austria–Hungary and Italy were enemies, while the Germans were contemptuous of the Austrian armed forces and thus revealed very little about German war plans.

⁵⁰ See, for example, the discussion of how American officials planned to use the NATO machinery to prod the Europeans to do more, in Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, [Chapter 3](#) (Bargaining Channels).

The attitudes of American officials were a curious mix of optimism and pessimism. The United States was by far the most powerful member of the Alliance, but the Truman administration was concerned above all with the limits of American power and thus the need to reduce the burdens upon the United States, which it felt were unsustainable over the long term. Conversely, American officials were optimistic about the ability of the European members to do more and ultimately to bear most of the burden of taking care of themselves once economic recovery had been achieved.

The attitudes of American officials were also influenced by memories of the Second World War, when American and British officers had worked together as part of a unified command to plan and execute the invasion and liberation of Western Europe.⁵¹ American officials recognized that the Europeans would be unable to rebuild their armed forces without considerable aid from the United States, but they were prepared to supply that aid only in the context of alliance arrangements that promised eventually to reduce the burdens upon the United States. To American officials, a collective effort whereby each member contributed what it was best suited to provide and refrained from duplicating the efforts of the others seemed the only way to restore the military strength and the self-confidence of the European members without overstraining American resources in the process. Hence from the outset, American officials defined their role in the Alliance as one of coaxing the Europeans to pool their resources and do everything they possibly could for themselves before the United States stepped in to supplement their efforts. In January and February 1948, a promise of future consultations was used by Secretary of State Marshall and his deputy, Robert Lovett, to prod the Europeans to establish the Brussels Union and to organize an international command that could direct the forces of member countries to where they could do the most good in the unlikely event of war in Europe.⁵² The U.S.-funded Mutual Defense Assistance Program was intended to encourage the Europeans to accept what George Kennan called “realistic arrangements in which their own roles . . . must necessarily be limited,” in the form of an international division of labor leading to balanced collective forces for the Alliance as a whole.⁵³ The American offer, made shortly after the start of the Korean War, to station additional U.S. forces in Europe and to appoint an American as Supreme Allied Commander was

⁵¹ See, for example, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s comments on the need to return to the command arrangements used during the Second World War, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950* (hereafter FRUS), vol. 3, p. 183.

⁵² The story of how they did so is told in more detail in Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, Chapter 2 (An Argument Even Older Than the Alliance Itself). See also Baylis, “Britain, the Brussels Pact and the Continental Commitment.”

⁵³ FRUS, 1949, vol. 4, p. 301. Louis Johnson, who was Secretary of Defense at the time the military assistance program was passed into law, saw the purpose of the program as being collective military security in Europe, to the point where the United States could begin reducing its arms programs and cutting taxes. On this point, see Lawrence Kaplan, *A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program, 1948–1952* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, 1980), p. 42. For more on the military assistance program, see Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, Chapter 3.

intended as a way of tapping German resources and inducing the other European allies to make additional contributions to the collective effort.

The Europeans, in contrast, were reluctant even to contemplate the exertions required to restore a rough balance of forces in being on the continent. The devastation inflicted on Europe during the Second World War had given rise to a yearning to be free of military concerns and to devote national resources mostly to building a new and better Europe in which the horrors of the past would not be repeated.⁵⁴ Proximity to Soviet power and awareness of the ways it might be used against them compelled the Europeans to devote considerable time and attention to security issues, but their wartime experiences led them to think of security primarily in terms of finding ways to commit the United States more firmly to their defense. For the Europeans, armed forces were essentially the price of admission to a collective effort that they hoped would be paid for mostly by the United States. Their goal was to do enough to remain members in good standing, but no more than that.⁵⁵

In effect, within NATO decision making on issues having to do with strategy and force planning quickly took on the character of an adversary process, with each member arguing that it was already doing as much as it could but that other members could and should do more. If all members of an alliance seek to shift the burden of collective defense to their partners, will the outcomes produced by their actions bear much resemblance to what any of them intended? Even more striking in retrospect than the determination with which NATO members set out to shift burdens to their partners is the way in which the process of forging a collective effort to provide deterrence and defense both within Europe and outside it took on a momentum of its own, with consequences that differed from what the members intended when the process was set in motion.

At the time the Atlantic Alliance was formed, the goal of American officials was to hold the United States aloof from entangling commitments and to offer only the minimum necessary in pledges of support, financial aid, and grants of equipment to stimulate the Europeans to make the exertions necessary to restore a *European* balance of power, leaving the United States free to use its resources on behalf of strictly American interests, which were worldwide in scope and not always coincident with those of the Europeans.⁵⁶ The Americans, however, were not the only ones intent on persuading their partners to do more. European resistance to American notions about the form the NATO collective effort should take in combination with the heightened urgency stemming from the Korean War produced outcomes that were neither intended nor foreseen by American officials. In 1948, American officials had been determined to limit the American commitment largely to symbolic gestures, such as consultations on security

⁵⁴ Richard Mayne, *The Recovery of Europe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 82–83.

⁵⁵ The “price of admission” concept is discussed more fully in Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, pp. 11–12.

⁵⁶ Note in this regard the description of U.S. policy in Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, p. 58. See also Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, Chapter 2.

matters and a pledge of aid in the event of an attack, backed by a modest military aid program. By 1952, the United States had tripled the number of American military personnel stationed in Western Europe, agreed to the appointment of an American officer as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and provided billions of dollars of military aid to the European allies, with more on the way.

The Americans were not the only ones who had to revise their expectations concerning how the process of forging a collective Western response would develop. British officials had hoped for an alliance modeled on the World War II partnership between the United States and Great Britain, with the two of them providing strategic direction and pledges of support to the continental members while remaining largely free to use their resources to look after their interests elsewhere in the world.⁵⁷ Yet by 1954 not only were the British committed to maintaining a permanent military presence on the continent but the notion of an Anglo-American inner circle had been superseded by an American commitment to use the organizational machinery of the Alliance to upgrade the American-led NATO integrated force, to which the British were merely one of several contributors. The French had hoped to use the Alliance as a means of gaining access to American money and equipment with which to rebuild their armed forces and sustain their colonial empire. Yet by the early 1950s, French policy was little more than a series of delaying actions – in Europe, against German rearmament; in Asia, against Vietnamese insurgents; in Africa, against Algerian nationalists – for which they received aid but little sympathy from the Americans.

WHY THESE DIFFERENCES MATTER

The foregoing suggests that just as the rivalry among the leading states during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries served as a kind of invisible hand that limited their ability to cooperate and rendered their alliances short-lived and ineffective, so too did the desire of NATO members to shift burdens to their partners serve to channel their actions in directions that produced outcomes that were often unforeseen and unintended by any one of them. In effect, NATO members who shaped their policies with an eye toward freeing their own resources to pursue important national goals gradually found themselves enmeshed in a collective effort requiring an unprecedented degree of strategic collaboration in peacetime and an unprecedented degree of intrusiveness by various NATO committees and planning groups into national policies and plans. The stresses and strains imposed on the members in this fashion produced an alliance that was vulnerable to periodic blow-ups, which quickly came to be labeled “crises.” But unlike the generally short-lived and ineffective alliances of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, NATO proved to be not only the longest-lived great power alliance but also the most successful. Why this is so is the subject of the next three chapters.

⁵⁷ See, for example, the description of British views in Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), pp. 771–772.

NATO and the Military Balance

I suggested in Chapter 1 that a crisis within an alliance can be thought of as a turning point – specifically, a stage in the life cycle of an alliance during which cooperation becomes noticeably more difficult because one or more members is thinking of leaving, thereby antagonizing the others and compelling them to consider their options should the alliance come apart. Put differently, an alliance is in crisis when one or more members is indifferent between (1) making an effort to repair whatever rifts have developed within it and (2) leaving the alliance in search of alternative security arrangements. As one or more members cross the crisis threshold, the others too must face the choice between staying and leaving. The longer this goes on, the greater the risk of a self-fulfilling prophecy, as each member aims to get out first rather than last.

This approach raises three sets of questions that are the subject of Chapters 5, 6, and 7. First, has the crisis threshold as defined previously *ever* been breached within the Atlantic Alliance? The NATO-in-crisis literature considers the Alliance to be in crisis whenever officials in various NATO capitals disagree on an important issue, become angry with each other, and so on. But this is a thoroughly unsatisfactory approach, the reason being that it is hardly surprising that NATO members might disagree – heatedly, even – concerning military strategy and tactics and that these disagreements then spill into the open. Defense and military preparedness are among the most sensitive and difficult issues that states must face. The intrinsic difficulty of these issues will likely be magnified within an alliance of democracies that pool their resources for the sake of interests held in common. The strongest member has an obvious incentive to urge its smaller partners to do more in order to ease the burden on itself, since collectively the smaller members may provide a considerable fraction of the alliance's resource pool. Smaller members will likely question whether marginal increases on their part will significantly change for the better their own position or that of the group. Questions of strategy and the level of effort to be made by each member will thus be matters for bargaining among member states. In an alliance of democracies, opposition parties will likely try to parlay the outcome of this bargaining into electoral success, by charging the governing party with doing either too much or

too little. In an alliance like NATO, it would be remarkable if there were *no* heated disputes among the members and these did *not* spill into public view.

Second, what actually happens during the so-called NATO crises? As explained in Chapter 1, the concept of an international crisis has proven very useful because it directs attention to distinctive behaviors, processes, and outcomes found in situations characterized by high threat, short decision time, and surprise; alternatively, situations in which events move at a faster than normal pace, the intensity of government interactions is heightened, and the danger of war seems greater than usual. Because international crises constitute a class of situations carefully defined to set them apart from noncrisis events, it is possible to learn something about most such crises by studying intensively one or a few. Is there an analogous class of NATO crises that exhibit distinctive behaviors, processes, and outcomes? Do NATO crises have enough in common that it is possible to learn something about many of them by studying intensively one or a few?

Third, what, if any, is the relationship between NATO crises and the ability of NATO members to work together effectively? The Atlantic Alliance, as explained in Chapter 3, was intended to be permanent, which meant that as Soviet capabilities changed, the strategies and policies agreed to by Alliance members would likely have to change too. Put differently, NATO members would have to *cooperate* in response to changes in the threat that they faced, and not just once but again and again. Cooperation, Robert Keohane explains, “occurs when actors adjust their behavior to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination.” Intergovernmental cooperation “takes place when the policies actually followed by one government are regarded by its partners as facilitating realization of their own objectives.”¹ Discord, in contrast, is “a situation in which governments regard each others’ policies as hindering the attainment of their goals, and hold each other responsible for these constraints.”²

When discord arises among allies, they can (1) attempt to persuade each other to change their policies (bargaining, negotiation, and compromise), (2) adapt to what others are doing to reduce the harmful consequences of discord, (3) continue their own preferred policy, even if doing so causes an ally harm, or (4) leave the alliance in favor of neutrality or joining another alliance. The members of pre-1939 alliances, as we saw in Chapter 2, almost always opted for the third or the fourth of these. Have NATO members behaved differently in this regard? The clear implication of the NATO-in-crisis literature is that crises occur when NATO members fail to act the way “real” allies should.³ What exactly would a real ally

¹ Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 51–52. Charles Kupchan takes a similar approach in “NATO and the Persian Gulf: Examining Intra-Alliance Behavior,” *International Organization* 42 (Spring 1988): 323.

² Keohane, *After Hegemony*, p. 52.

³ Concerning how a “real” ally should behave, see Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 225. For a more recent example, see Council on Foreign Relations, *Renewing the Atlantic Partnership: Report of an Independent Task Force Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations* (New York: 2004), p. 10.

look like? Which NATO members have failed to meet this standard? More broadly, have NATO members repeatedly lost the ability to work together effectively? If so, how did they manage to be on the winning side of the Cold War?

To investigate these questions, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 explore what actually happens during alleged NATO crises. Chapter 5 looks at the ability of NATO members to cooperate militarily during two allegedly divisive crises – the crisis caused by the Soviet Union’s successful launch of an ICBM in August 1957 and then the two *Sputnik* satellites a few months later, and the crisis over sending new intermediate-range nuclear missiles to Europe during the 1980s.⁴ Chapter 6 considers how NATO members have responded to crises touched off by developments outside Europe – specifically, the 1956 Suez crisis (which was both an international crisis and a NATO crisis), and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of the 1970s.⁵ Chapter 7 looks at two NATO crises sparked by nonmilitary issues: the Siberian natural gas pipeline at the start of the 1980s, and the question of economic and military sanctions in response to the disintegration of Yugoslavia at the start of the 1990s.⁶

NATO DURING THE 1950S: THE CRISIS OVER SOVIET BALLISTIC MISSILES

Background

At first glance, the claim that NATO was roiled by a “profound crisis,”⁷ a “deepening crisis,”⁸ or what Henry Kissinger writing in 1959 called the “current crisis,”⁹ caused by Soviet advances in ballistic missile technology, would seem an easy one to sustain. As explained in Chapter 3, even before the North Atlantic Treaty had been signed, the United States let it be known that its

⁴ I picked those two because they are considered in retrospect to have posed especially tough challenges to the Alliance. Michael Howard, for example, cites two periods when “simmering tensions” within the Alliance “seemed to reach boiling point: 1958–1963 and again twenty years later, 1979–1984, “A Successful Unhappy Marriage,” *Foreign Affairs* 78 (May/June 1999): 168. Alastair Buchan likewise cites a “cycle of American-European argument” that opened in 1957–1958 and came to a close at the end of 1964, “The Changed Setting of the Atlantic Debate,” *Foreign Affairs*, 43 (July 1965): 574. Cees Wiebes and Bert Zeeman describe the period since 1977, including the 1979 decision to modernize NATO’s medium-range nuclear forces, as “one of the most critical in NATO’s existence,” “‘I Don’t Need Your Handkerchiefs’: Holland’s Experience of Crisis Consultation in NATO,” *International Affairs* 66 (January 1990): 108.

⁵ At the time they occurred, each of these was widely thought to be the Alliance’s worst crisis ever. See the citations listed in Chapters 1 and 6.

⁶ Both of these were likewise proclaimed NATO’s worst crisis ever. See the citations in Chapters 1 and 7.

⁷ Klaus Knorr, “The Strained Alliance,” in *NATO and American Security* ed. Klaus Knorr (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 3.

⁸ Roger Hilsman, “NATO: The Developing Strategic Context,” in *NATO and American Security* ed. Klaus Knorr, p. 11.

⁹ Henry Kissinger, “The Search for Stability,” *Foreign Affairs* 37 (July 1959): 550–551.

contribution to the collective effort, aside from the continued presence of American occupation forces in western Germany and a modest military aid program, would be a promise to launch a strategic air offensive against the Soviet Union, using both nuclear and conventional bombs, in the unlikely event of a Soviet attack on Western Europe. This promise was made in part to forestall arguments by the European allies that the United States should station additional forces in Western Europe, and in part to strengthen the U.S. claim to a monopoly within the Alliance on both nuclear weapons and the strategic bombing mission. The Europeans accepted this promise because it relieved them of much of the responsibility for restoring a European balance of power, thereby allowing them to devote more of their resources to economic recovery and the welfare state.

Because the United States and its European allies both found it convenient to rely on this American promise to cross the nuclear threshold first in a future European war, the pace of rearmament during the Alliance's first year was sluggish at best. Military planning within the Alliance was based on the assumption that the Soviet Union did not want war, and thus was not a threat to attack Western Europe, even though Western intelligence services estimated that Soviet forces in Eastern Europe and the western Soviet Union greatly outnumbered those available to Alliance members in Western Europe.¹⁰ Even the alarmist view presented in the U.S. policy paper NSC-68 suggested that the threat from the east was not an immediate one. Not until 1954, the authors of NSC-68 wrote, would the Soviet Union have a sizable stockpile of atomic bombs and long-range aircraft with which to deliver them, and until then a Soviet attack on Western Europe was judged unlikely.¹¹

The defense strategy developed under the supervision of the Alliance's Defense and Military Committees between September 1949 and April 1950 was thus based on the twin principles of an integrated defense of the North Atlantic area and a division of labor within the Alliance leading to "balanced collective forces" for the Alliance as a whole.¹² A four-year defense plan, approved by the Defense Committee on April 1, 1950, envisaged the redeployment of the forces then available to Alliance members in Western Europe to positions from which they could fight a delaying action if war should occur before the balance of forces on the continent could be restored by the

¹⁰ Phillip Karber and Jerald Combs, "The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe: Military Estimates and Policy Options, 1945-1963," *Diplomatic History*, 22 (Summer 1998): 399-429, esp. pp. 404-415. See also Lord Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years* (Paris: 1954), pp. 29, 102; Samuel Huntington, *The Common Defense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 314; Alain Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 118.

¹¹ NSC-68 is reprinted in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, vol. 1, pp. 235-292. See also Samuel Wells, Jr., "Sounding the Tocsin: NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat," *International Security* 4 (Fall 1979): 116-158; Huntington, *The Common Defense*, pp. 47-63; Paul Hammond, "NSC 68: Prologue to Rearmament," in Warner Schilling, Paul Hammond and Glenn Snyder, *Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 273-378.

¹² Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, pp. 27-29.

long-term military build-up that would coincide with economic recovery.¹³ Over the longer term, the Alliance's military planners estimated that a force of about one-hundred divisions (active-duty and reserves) would be required to defend along the central front in Germany, in Scandinavia, and the Brenner-Trieste area in Italy. Of these, between thirty-five and forty divisions would be at full strength and thus immediately available; the rest were to be available by D+30.¹⁴

The defense plans developed by the Alliance's military authorities during 1949 and 1950 envisaged armed forces much larger than the member countries were prepared to provide, and their implementation was hampered by a distinct lack of urgency, which is not surprising considering that war was believed very unlikely. Between December 1949 and May 1950, the number of full-strength divisions available to Alliance members in Western Europe increased by only two, from twelve to fourteen. Even Lord Ismay, the first NATO secretary general, was at a loss to find something positive here: "Clearly the NATO countries intended to take their time about rebuilding their armed strength; and each of them, before deciding on costly and somewhat unpopular measures, had a tendency to 'wait and see what the other fellow was doing.'" ¹⁵

The North Korean invasion of South Korea resulted in an abrupt change in the Alliance's time perspective and policy plans. The war in Korea suggested that prudent planning could no longer be based on the assumption that a Soviet attack on Western Europe was unlikely until the Soviets had acquired a sizable nuclear arsenal.¹⁶ The North Atlantic Council, meeting in New York on September 15-18, 1950, endorsed a "forward strategy" for defense in Europe, whereby an attack would be met as far to the east as possible. It agreed that (1) "existing forces were wholly inadequate to give effect to that strategy," (2) "member countries should take urgent measures to increase their military strength," and (3) an "integrated force under centralized command" should be created.¹⁷ At U.S. insistence, the Council also took under consideration a proposal for rearming West Germany.¹⁸

The sense of urgency caused by the attack on South Korea can be seen in the quickened pace of rearmament during 1951. The December 1950 meeting of

¹³ Ibid., p. 28; Roger Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," pp. 14-16; Huntington, *The Common Defense*, p. 315; Coral Bell, *Negotiation from Strength* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), pp. 44-46.

¹⁴ Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," pp. 15-16, 21-22; Bell, *Negotiation from Strength*, pp. 45-46.

¹⁵ Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, p. 29. See also Denis Healey, "Britain and NATO," in *NATO and American Security* ed. Klaus Knorr, p. 210; Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," p. 17.

¹⁶ Huntington, *The Common Defense*, pp. 316-317; Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, p. 31; Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," p. 18; Bell, *Negotiation from Strength*, p. 41.

¹⁷ Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, p. 32. See also Huntington, *The Common Defense*, p. 318; Bell, *Negotiation from Strength*, p. 49.

¹⁸ Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, p. 32.

the North Atlantic Council agreed that General Dwight Eisenhower should be the first Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. Eisenhower's headquarters – Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) – was activated in Paris in January 1951. Between May and December 1951, four U.S. Army divisions moved to Europe to join the two already there; Canada sent one brigade and eleven fighter squadrons.¹⁹ Overall, NATO forces in Western Europe increased from fifteen divisions and fewer than 1,000 aircraft in April 1951 to approximately thirty-five divisions (active-duty and reserve), and slightly fewer than three thousand aircraft by December 1951.²⁰

However impressive the rearmament effort, its burdens conflicted with the still-unfinished work of economic recovery. The budget estimates prepared as part of the rearmament effort, moreover, were rendered largely inaccurate by the inflationary burst that accompanied the Korean War.²¹ At the September 1951 meeting of the North Atlantic Council, the Military Committee reported that contributions by member states fell short of what was considered essential, and it pressed for increases to fill the gap. The Financial and Economic Board, however, “urged that any final decision about the size of the defense burdens should await a careful appraisal of the economic risks involved in undertaking increases against the military risks of *not* doing so.”²²

Squaring this circle was the task assigned an ad hoc group known as the Temporary Council Committee (TCC), which delegated most of its work to a three-member executive board: Averill Harriman (United States), Jean Monnet (France), and Sir Edwin Plowden (United Kingdom). The TCC produced a three-year defense plan based on the premise that all members could do more.²³ On the basis of the TCC's report, the North Atlantic Council agreed in Lisbon in February 1952 to a firm goal of fifty divisions (twenty-five full-strength), four thousand aircraft, and strong naval forces by the end of 1952, and a provisional goal of ninety-six divisions (thirty-five to forty full-strength) by the end of 1954.²⁴

Even though the plan proposed by the TCC received unanimous support at Lisbon, the idea of three more years of rearmament was greeted with something less than enthusiasm within the Alliance. Ismay noted laconically that “not all member countries were happy about the TCC conclusions and . . . there was a feeling, among some governments, that the defense capabilities of the larger

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 102. These totals do not include Greek and Turkish forces, which came under NATO command in 1952.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44 (emphasis in original).

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 44–47.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 47–103. See also James E. King, Jr., “NATO: Genesis, Progress, Problems,” in *National Security in the Nuclear Age* ed. Gordon Turner and Richard Challenger (New York: Praeger, 1960), p. 154. For a more detailed account of the work of the TCC, see Wallace Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), pp. 71, 96–101. The Lisbon goals did not include Greek and Turkish forces.

members of the Alliance had not been explored with sufficient thoroughness.”²⁵ The goals set for 1952 – the first year of what the TCC expected would be a three-year push to acquire the forces needed for a robust, nonnuclear defense of Western Europe – were for the most part achieved on schedule, but at the cost of a defense burden that loomed so large as to be politically unsustainable for the remaining two years of the Lisbon program.²⁶ By the end of 1952, retrenchment was very much on the minds of leaders on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁷ Efforts to scale back the Lisbon force goals received official sanction at the December 1952 meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Paris. The Council agreed that “while there was a continuing need for progressively increasing the number of NATO forces, the emphasis during 1953 should be on improving combat efficiency.”²⁸

The failure to complete the full three-year program agreed on in Lisbon in February 1952 and the subsequent scaling back of force goals in the face of pleas of financial hardship had the effect of saddling the Alliance with a lingering sense that Western armies were and always would be inadequate because democracies could not match dictatorships when it came to mobilizing manpower for military purposes. “No single country,” Eisenhower’s secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, told an NSC meeting in August 1954, “not even the United States, could, out of its own resources, adequately match the strength of a powerful totalitarian state. We were in no position to extract from our people what tyrannical rulers could extract from their people. The attempt to do so would ‘bust us.’”²⁹ Even proponents of the Lisbon program conceded that it would not produce a force capable of winning a prolonged conventional war. The force envisaged at Lisbon was expected to be numerically inferior to that of the Soviet Union and its satellites but large enough to create doubts in Moscow about the wisdom of attacking, and if need be hold a defensive line long enough to permit mobilization of additional Western manpower and a strategic air offensive intended to destroy the Soviet Union’s ability to make war.³⁰

²⁵ Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, p. 47.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 103. See also Wallace Thies, “Learning in U.S. Policy toward Europe,” in *Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy* ed. George Breslauer and Philip Tetlock (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 165–169.

²⁷ Pressures to retrench are discussed more fully in Ronald Ritchie, *NATO: The Economics of an Alliance* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1956), pp. 52–61; Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: New American Library, 1970), pp. 902–904.

²⁸ Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, p. 104. See also Charles J. V. Murphy, “A New Strategy for NATO,” *Fortune*, January 1953, pp. 80–81; Huntington, *The Common Defense*, pp. 63–64; Bell, *Negotiation from Strength*, pp. 138, 143; Hilsman, “NATO: The Developing Strategic Context,” p. 26.

²⁹ Quoted in Marc Trachtenberg, “A ‘Wasting Asset’: American Strategy and the Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949–1954,” *International Security* 13 (Winter 1988–1989): 83. See also Robert Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 20, 39–40, 64; Enthoven and Smith, *How Much Is Enough?*, pp. 118–121, 138–141.

³⁰ See, for example, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s comment to British Prime Minister Churchill in January 1952, quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 123–124. See also David McLellan, *Dean Acheson: The State Department Years* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1976), pp. 344–345.

Soviet conventional superiority was thus accepted as a fact of life during the 1950s and for many years thereafter. “The present NATO forces,” a prominent journalist wrote in 1953, “are probably capable at most of one hard battle. A month’s action would probably see them driven into the Atlantic.”³¹ Official NATO estimates credited the Soviets alone with an army of 175 divisions, backed by a capability to mobilize as many as 400 divisions in 30 days.³² Facing a force of this size, the twenty or so full-strength divisions available to NATO members along the central front in Germany appeared so greatly outnumbered – “hopelessly inferior,” as Bernard Brodie put it³³ – that the NATO countries had no choice but to rely on early and massive use of nuclear weapons in the event of a Soviet attack. And that is exactly what they planned to do.

As part of NATO’s Korean War rearmament effort, important changes took place within the U.S. Air Force’s Strategic Air Command (SAC), which was not formally committed to NATO but which was the foundation for the U.S. promise to respond to a Soviet attack on Western Europe with a strategic air offensive against the Soviet Union. “In 1950 SAC could not have prevented the Soviets from occupying Western Europe. By 1954, with its fleet of B-47s, its overseas bases, its large stockpile of improved fission bombs, and the increased readiness and competence of its crews, it could have effectively destroyed the Soviet Union with little likelihood of serious reprisal against the United States.”³⁴ “[T]he most harmonious years in NATO,” Walter Hahn subsequently recalled, “came during the short period of the mid-fifties – the period marked by U.S. strategic preeminence and the doctrine of massive retaliation.”³⁵ NATO’s “nuclear golden age,” however, proved very short-lived.³⁶ Soviet missile advances in the mid 1950s portended “diminished credibility [for] America’s capability for massive retaliation.” Here, as Klaus Knorr put it, was “the crux of the [missiles] crisis.”³⁷

³¹ Murphy, “A New Strategy for NATO,” p. 168.

³² Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance*, p. 118; Ben T. Moore, *NATO and the Future of Europe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 70; Enthoven and Smith, *How Much Is Enough?*, pp. 120–121, 133.

³³ Bernard Brodie, “Nuclear Weapons: Strategic or Tactical?” *Foreign Affairs* 32 (January 1954): 228. In Roger Hilsman’s view, the NATO countries were “badly outnumbered on the ground,” “NATO: The Developing Strategic Context,” p. 11.

³⁴ Huntington, *The Common Defense*, p. 65. The transformation of SAC during this period is described more fully in *ibid.*, pp. 298–312. Jerome Kahan likewise cites an “overwhelming [U.S.] strategic advantage over the USSR,” *Security in the Nuclear Age* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1975), p. 48.

³⁵ Walter Hahn, “The U.S.-European Strategic Linkage,” in *Atlantic Community in Crisis* ed. Walter Hahn and Robert Pfaltzgraff, Jr. (New York: Pergamon, 1979), p. 74.

³⁶ Richard Betts “A Nuclear Golden Age? The Balance Before Parity,” *International Security* 11 (Winter 1986–87): 3–32.

³⁷ Knorr, “The Strained Alliance,” p. 6. See also Alfred Grosser, *The Western Alliance* (New York: Continuum, 1980), pp. 166–167.

Why the Missiles Issue was Thought to be a NATO Crisis

Claims that Soviet missile advances had caused a grave crisis within the Alliance generally rested on two sets of arguments, each of which encompassed several points: first, that the strategic balance was changing rapidly in favor of the Soviet Union; second, that this change was enough to call into question the future of the Alliance unless the members made changes of their own, and made them sooner rather than later.

Concerning the first of these, it was Klaus Knorr's view that "This crisis . . . is the direct result of Russia's swift gain in strategic nuclear capability, and more recently, of her lead in the development of ballistic missiles." Even though the Soviets were years from deploying an operational intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force, Knorr judged that Western Europe was "no longer protected by the umbrella of SAC's superior thermonuclear power." Instead, there was now "a strategic standoff between the two big antagonists [which] has cast doubt on America's ability to protect its allies by the threat of massive retaliation, which is now viewed as a threat to commit national suicide."³⁸ Knorr was likewise pessimistic about the ability of the NATO countries to remedy this situation, for two reasons. First, even though "the military power of Soviet Russia has been menacingly great and growing rapidly, the military effort of the NATO allies as a whole has tended to be parsimonious." Second, "it is inevitably difficult for a large group of countries to develop a common and efficient strategy and balanced military forces."³⁹ Henry Kissinger agreed: "nowhere in the Western world are there sufficient conventional forces to resist the Soviet preponderance in conventional strength; and nowhere is there any immediate prospect of developing them." As long as the Alliance's defensive effort remains "polarized between inadequate conventional forces and nuclear weapons of enormous destructiveness, the Soviet bloc will be able to pose the dilemma of suicide or surrender in a variety of forms."⁴⁰

The second set of arguments took the form of predictions of dire consequences to follow if the West did not respond quickly and effectively to the Soviet challenge. Four in particular figured prominently in analyses of the missiles crisis.

First, the "greater the disparity in strength between Europe and the USSR and the greater the vulnerability of the United States, the bolder Soviet policy toward our allies is likely to become."⁴¹ The threat of all-out war "will deter an ever smaller range of possible challenges. Its credibility will constantly

³⁸ Knorr, "The Strained Alliance," p. 6. See also Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," p. 11; King, "NATO: Genesis, Progress, Problems," p. 162.

³⁹ Knorr, "The Strained Alliance," p. 5.

⁴⁰ Henry Kissinger, "Nuclear Testing and the Problem of Peace," *Foreign Affairs* 37 (October 1958): 7, 10. See also Kissinger, "The Search for Stability," p. 546; Knorr, "The Strained Alliance," pp. 6-7.

⁴¹ Henry Kissinger, "Missiles and the Western Alliance," *Foreign Affairs* 36 (April 1958): 389-390.

decline . . . Soviet advances in missiles have to a great extent neutralized our strategic striking power, and the vast Soviet ground strength has thus been freed for pressure or blackmail."⁴²

Second, Western resistance to Soviet pressure/blackmail would become increasingly difficult and ultimately impossible. How, it was often asked, could an American president continue threatening to cross the nuclear threshold first knowing that doing so could bring Soviet nuclear retaliation against the United States?⁴³ "Without a nuclear capability of its own," Kissinger argued, "Europe will find it impossible to resist the increasingly bold Soviet threats of nuclear warfare," especially since "the Soviet leaders may well calculate that the United States would be reluctant to invoke its own destruction for the defense of Europe."⁴⁴ In Roger Hilsman's view, a Europe that remained dependent on U.S. nuclear striking power in the face of growing Soviet strength would be one in which "the doubts of Europeans about whether the United States will actually come to their defense can . . . be expected to grow." As these doubts grew, the pressure on European governments to cut separate deals with the Soviets would become "very strong."⁴⁵

Third, a further consequence of the Europeans' loss of confidence in the United States would be a growing rift between America and Europe. Hilsman predicted a revival of isolationist sentiment in the United States and/or diminished support for keeping American troops in Europe, as missiles replaced bombers and Europe became less important to the defense of the United States.⁴⁶ The Europeans, in Kissinger's view, would be all too glad to see American forces leave. "Once the Soviet Union has succeeded in bringing about a divergence between our military establishment and that of our European allies, it may hope that our NATO partners will be paralyzed by their impotence and we by our unwillingness to risk all-out war." Once such a divergence had occurred, "our expulsion from Europe is almost inevitable."⁴⁷

The fourth and final consequence followed ineluctably from the first three: without American forces (and their nuclear weapons) in Europe, "Western Europe would then be impotent, at the mercy of Soviet Russia. NATO would cease to have meaning."⁴⁸

What Actually Happened?

Edgar Furniss, Jr., writing in mid 1956, thought it obvious to "even the most cursory reader of the daily press that NATO has of late been undergoing what

⁴² Kissinger, "The Search for Stability," p. 546. See also Knorr, "The Strained Alliance," pp. 6–7; Kissinger, "Nuclear Testing and the Problem of Peace," pp. 7, 10.

⁴³ See, for example, Knorr, "The Strained Alliance," p. 6. See also George Rathjens, Jr., "NATO Strategy: Total War," in Knorr (ed.), *NATO and American Security*, p. 65.

⁴⁴ Kissinger, "Nuclear Testing and the Problem of Peace," pp. 11, 12.

⁴⁵ Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," p. 12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

⁴⁷ Kissinger, "Nuclear Testing and the Problem of Peace," p. 12.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

is commonly referred to as a ‘crisis.’”⁴⁹ Klaus Knorr took a similar view: “Little seemed to be amiss according to official announcements . . . Nor did the general public in the NATO countries show much concern. But parliamentary records, newspaper reports, articles, books, lectures, and conversations told a different story. Increasingly the question was put: Can NATO, with its present forces and strategy, still be expected to defend the West against possible aggression and aggressive threats – indeed, to deter military aggression? Is the alliance still able to fulfill its critical function?”⁵⁰ James E. King, Jr., likewise believed the Alliance’s problems “seriously endangered NATO’s survival.”⁵¹ Retrospective accounts echoed these contemporary views: Rosecrance and Dawson called this episode a “credibility crisis”; Robert Osgood labeled it a “crisis of confidence.”⁵² Furniss thought the crisis began in 1956 (before Suez); Knorr dated it to 1958, while Rosecrance and Dawson split the difference by dating it to 1957.

One way to investigate the validity of these claims is to examine the deductions derived from them. As was explained in the previous section, observers such as Klaus Knorr, Roger Hilsman, and Henry Kissinger advanced two sets of arguments regarding the missiles crisis: first, that the strategic balance was changing to the detriment of the United States and its NATO allies; second, that the Alliance was in danger of being rendered irrelevant, or even collapsing, unless corrective action was taken soon. In retrospect, both of these appear to have been largely wrong. To understand why, I focus on several of the various conclusions/predictions offered in support of claims that the Alliance was in crisis and even on the brink of collapse.

The Strategic Balance and Extended Deterrence

The “existence of a strategic standoff,” Klaus Knorr wrote, “has cast doubt on America’s ability to protect its allies.”⁵³ Arnold Wolfers agreed: “Since 1957 this [American] strategic guarantee has ceased to be as convincing as it was before.” After *Sputnik*, Wolfers continued, “it suddenly dawned on Europe that the U.S. had become vulnerable to Soviet thermonuclear attack, [and] the previously firm conviction that any Soviet attack on Europe would bring the [nuclear] Sword into action was badly shaken.”⁵⁴ In these circumstances, Roger Hilsman predicted, “the doubts of Europeans about whether the United States

⁴⁹ Edgar Furniss, Jr., “France, NATO, and European Security,” *International Organization* 10 (November 1956): 544.

⁵⁰ Knorr, “The Strained Alliance,” p. 3.

⁵¹ King, “NATO: Genesis, Progress, Problems,” p. 157.

⁵² Richard Rosecrance and Raymond Dawson, “Theory and Reality in the Anglo-American Alliance,” *World Politics* 19 (October 1966): 43; Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance*, p. 354. See also Edmond Taylor, “This Long NATO Crisis,” *The Reporter* 24 (April 21, 1966): 16–21.

⁵³ Knorr, “The Strained Alliance,” p. 6.

⁵⁴ Arnold Wolfers, “Europe and the NATO Shield,” *International Organization* 12 (Autumn 1958): 428. See also Kissinger, “The Search for Stability,” p. 546.

will actually come to their defense can . . . be expected to grow.”⁵⁵ NATO strategy would have to be changed, Henry Kissinger argued, because threats of all-out war can be made plausible “only if in a given crisis we act as if we are prepared to throw sober calculation to the wind But such a policy in the long run cannot be maintained by status quo powers with democratic institutions.”⁵⁶ There are, however, at least five reasons for questioning whether the situation was ever as grave as these assessments suggest.

First, the vulnerability problem was foreseen rather than unexpected, which meant that efforts to anticipate and mitigate the problem predated by several years claims that the Alliance was in crisis. As early as 1950, prior to the Korean War, Senator Lyndon Johnson (D-TX), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, “issued an urgent call for a revision of the U.S. guided missiles program. Senator Johnson claimed that the Russians, and possibly other nations, were two or more years ahead of the U.S. in this area.”⁵⁷ In 1951, the RAND Corporation began a series of studies for the Air Staff on “the effectiveness of our strike force under surprise attack.”⁵⁸ By mid 1953, Trevor Gardner, special assistant for research and development to Air Force Secretary Harold Talbott, was “actively seeking estimates of Soviet capabilities and likely directions in the missile field from the various intelligence agencies in Washington.”⁵⁹ In February 1955, the Technological Capabilities Panel (TCP), chaired by James Killian of MIT, estimated that the Soviets already had enough mid-range bombers and bombs of up to one-megaton yield to seriously damage the United States in the event of war. This threat was expected to expand considerably as the Soviets acquired more thermonuclear weapons and long-range bomber aircraft. The TCP “emphasized the importance of maintaining the U.S. technological lead over the Soviet Union, and recommended accelerated development of both land-based ICBMs and land- and sea-based Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs), all armed with megaton warheads.”⁶⁰

In May 1955, a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) put Soviet medium-bomber strength at more than 1,300: 1,100 TU-4 “Bull” (a knock-off of the U.S. B-29), and the rest “Badger” jet bombers roughly comparable to the U.S. B-47. All of these were considered capable of striking the United States on one-way missions. The NIE estimated that the Soviets also had 200 turboprop “Bear” and 20 all-jet “Bison” heavy bombers, and it forecast 700 Soviet heavy

⁵⁵ Hilsman, “NATO: The Developing Strategic Context,” p. 12. See also Knorr, “The Strained Alliance,” p. 6.

⁵⁶ Kissinger, “The Search for Stability,” pp. 546–547. See also Hilsman, “NATO: The Developing Strategic Context,” p. 11.

⁵⁷ Edmund Beard, *Developing the ICBM* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 122.

⁵⁸ Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill,” p. 46. See also Kahan, *Security in the Nuclear Age*, p. 38.

⁵⁹ Beard, *Developing the ICBM*, p. 155.

⁶⁰ Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill,” p. 45. For more on the Killian Committee, see Kahan, *Security in the Nuclear Age*, pp. 36–37; John Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp. 111–112.

bombers by mid 1959, plus 700 “Badger” medium bombers.⁶¹ In 1956, “RAND analysts warned that bombers based in the United States might soon be in danger of air or even missile attack, and recommended improvements in early warning systems and SAC response time, dispersal of the bomber force, and improved airfield defenses.”⁶² In retrospect, these concerns, especially the numbers in the 1955 NIE, appear inflated. But taken together, these estimates and recommendations make clear that “even before the launching of Sputnik in October 1957 dramatized the USSR’s ICBM efforts and highlighted the danger of U.S. force vulnerability, the issue had been identified and the Eisenhower administration had set in motion certain programs to minimize risks.”⁶³

Second, it was no accident that the vulnerability problem was foreseen. In democracies, the legislative and executive branches often share responsibility for national security. The latter includes both civilian-led organizations and the professional military, each of which encompasses multiple, semi-autonomous agencies. New people with new ideas are constantly being brought into all of these bodies, due to elections, executive appointment, or rotation of careerists to new posts. Even if some of those responsible for national security prove complacent or myopic, it is unlikely that all of them will, especially since one prominent path toward career advancement is to find a neglected problem and then run with it. During the early Cold War, much of the professional military in the United States *was* slow to recognize Soviet progress in long-range ballistic missiles. “In October 1948 an article in the *New York Times* stated that a long-range Joint Chiefs of Staff plan had estimated 1977 as the date the Soviet Union would have intercontinental rockets utilizing atomic warheads.”⁶⁴ The infatuation with the manned bomber felt by many in the Air Force provided an opportunity for others, like Air Force General Donald Putt, head of that service’s Research and Development Command, to argue for a different approach. Writing in March 1952, Putt warned of “grave risks of being subjected to an intense bombardment to which we may not be able to retaliate.”⁶⁵ But while many in the Air Force saw the long-range ballistic missile as a “routine, non-urgent research program,”⁶⁶ others – like the very able and energetic Trevor Gardner – saw ICBMs as a problem urgently in need of a solution. In the fall of 1953, Gardner bypassed the Air Force by creating a Strategic Missiles Evaluation Committee, which reported in February 1954 that an ICBM probably could be deployed by 1960, given sufficient funding and a loosening of yield, payload, and accuracy requirements.⁶⁷ Gardner found a receptive audience

⁶¹ Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill,” p. 39.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 46. See also Kahan, *Security in the Nuclear Age*, p. 38; Marc Trachtenberg, “Strategic Thought in America, 1952–1956,” *Political Science Quarterly* 104 (Summer 1989): 301–334, esp. pp. 312–318.

⁶³ Kahan, *Security in the Nuclear Age*, pp. 38–39.

⁶⁴ Beard, *Developing the ICBM*, p. 121.

⁶⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 138.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 149–151.

⁶⁷ Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill,” p. 45; Beard, *Developing the ICBM*, pp. 157–161; Kahan, *Security in the Nuclear Age*, p. 36.

in the Senate, especially among Democrats like Clinton Anderson (NM), Henry Jackson (WA), and Stuart Symington (MO), who questioned whether the U.S. ballistic missiles program was receiving adequate funding.⁶⁸

Third, because the vulnerability problem was foreseen, the Eisenhower administration's responses to it, described more fully later, *preceded* by as much as two years the judgments by Knorr, Kissinger, Hilsman, and others that the Alliance was in crisis. In retrospect, Knorr and the rest were responding not so much to an actual deterioration of the West's position but to steps taken to *head off* any such deterioration. In an alliance of democracies, such steps will almost certainly be controversial, and the fact that they are controversial may make it *seem* as if the Alliance is troubled. Even so, what really matters is not the extent of the controversy but the steps taken as part of it. In the Soviet missiles case, whether the NATO allies did all that was needed and/or correct in every instance is something that reasonable people can dispute. What cannot be disputed is that the policies adopted, especially but not exclusively by the United States, were forward looking in the sense of intended to head off trouble rather than simply alleviate it. In the United States, moreover, at least part of the reason why the policies chosen were forward looking can be traced to partisan politics and institutional rivalry. The vulnerability problem offered Democrats in Congress an issue they could use to embarrass the Republican administration, and they did not hesitate to do so.⁶⁹ Eisenhower's administration was spurred on not just by the need to respond to what the Soviets were doing but also by the need to respond to what their political foes were doing.

Fourth, the prelude to the crisis over Soviet missile advances was a time when U.S. strategic striking power was expanding rather than declining. Truman's Korean War rearmament program envisioned an Air Force of 95 wings by July 1952 (a goal that was met), increasing to 143 wings by mid 1954, later pushed back to December 1955 as part of Truman's decision to stretch out the rearmament effort.⁷⁰ Eisenhower's program reduced the latter goal to 137 wings by June 1957, which meant cutting six troop-carrier and air-transport wings. Eisenhower also changed the mix of forces somewhat: 34 air defense wings versus 29 in Truman's program; 54 wings for SAC versus 57 in Truman's program; and 38 wings for Tactical Air Command, versus 40 in Truman's program.⁷¹ The 137-wing goal was momentarily achieved in mid 1957, but by then U.S. superiority was so overwhelming that the Soviets in effect "abandoned the attempt to create a strategic bombing force equal to that of the

⁶⁸ Beard, *Developing the ICBM*, pp. 187–188, 198. Anderson was the chair of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, Jackson was the Chairman of that committee's military applications subcommittee, and Symington was the chairman of Senate Armed Services Committee's Air Force subcommittee.

⁶⁹ Part of the reason why Congressional Democrats seized on the missiles issue is that Trevor Gardner was feeding them information on the progress of the *Soviet* missile program. On this point, see Beard, *Developing the ICBM*, pp. 187–189.

⁷⁰ Huntington, *The Common Defense*, pp. 60–63, 83.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

United States, substituting a major drive to develop ballistic missiles.”⁷² The fiscal 1958 goal for the Air Force was cut back to 117 wings, but even so SAC continued to prosper. On April 12, 1956, responding to fears of a (nonexistent) bomber gap, the Secretary of the Air Force approved an increase in the B-52 production rate from seventeen to twenty per month. The next day, April 13, President Eisenhower sent to Congress a request for a \$248.5 million defense supplemental appropriation to pay for the expanded production.⁷³ In June 1956, Senate Democrats upped the ante by proposing a \$900 million increase in the Air Force’s appropriation “to maintain our supremacy in airpower.”⁷⁴

In effect, the Soviets turned to ballistic missiles because they could not compete in strategic bomber aircraft. Soviet ballistic missile successes, in turn, may have been unwelcome in Washington but not unexpected. Rosecrance and Dawson note that “months before Sputnik, U.S. planners were beginning to worry about the impact upon NATO of a Soviet missile capability,” as evidenced by Secretary of State Dulles’s July 1957 suggestion that nuclear weapons be stockpiled in Europe under NATO, rather than U.S., control.⁷⁵ Congress’ Joint Committee on Atomic Energy nixed that suggestion, but Dulles kept trying. Dulles, Marc Trachtenberg concludes, “was as forthcoming as any U.S. Secretary of State could possibly have been. The American aim, he told de Gaulle in July 1958, was to create a system where the use of nuclear weapons would not depend on an American decision. Things would be set up in such a way, he said, that the Europeans could have ‘complete confidence’ that the weapons would be used in accordance with NATO plans.”⁷⁶

Meanwhile, back in Washington, the “sudden public prominence of strategic issues forced administration leaders to explain and defend their policies.”⁷⁷ President Eisenhower, Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy, and other administration officials all vigorously defended the administration’s policies, but words alone could not quell the rising chorus of demands from both Congress and the academic community for “an acceleration of U.S. missile programs, an increase in the planned force size, and greater emphasis on making U.S. weapons survivable.” President Eisenhower responded by requesting “over \$1 billion in supplementary funds in early 1958 to speed up the dispersal of SAC aircraft, place a greater fraction of SAC’s bombers on fifteen-minute alert, accelerate and expand ICBM and IRBM programs, commence construction of the

⁷² Ibid., p. 120.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 139; Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill,” p. 41.

⁷⁴ Senator Henry Jackson (D-WA) and Senator Richard Russell (D-GA), quoted in Huntington, *The Common Defense*, p. 100.

⁷⁵ Dawson and Rosecrance, “Theory and Reality in the Anglo-American Alliance,” p. 43. See also Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance*, p. 220; Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy and the Jupiters, 1957–1963* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 14–16; David Schwartz, *NATO’s Nuclear Dilemmas* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1983), pp. 62–81.

⁷⁶ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 226.

⁷⁷ Kahan, *Security in the Nuclear Age*, p. 42.

[ballistic missile early warning] system, and put still higher priority on the Polaris project.”⁷⁸ As in the case of the Air Force appropriation in 1956, Congress did not hesitate to do more when it felt the administration was doing too little. In the summer of 1958, Congress “appropriated more funds than the Administration had requested for the ICBM and Polaris programs.”⁷⁹

These were not inconsequential steps. Soviet missile successes notwithstanding, U.S. strategic forces were much larger and far more capable than those of the Soviet Union, which would likely have a cautionary effect on Soviet decision making. Even so, there was a curiously one-sided quality to assessments of the military balance during these years of so-called crisis for the Alliance. The Soviets got a lot of credit for initiatives – like the *Sputniks* – that hinted at, but by no means guaranteed greater Soviet military strength some years in the future. The United States and its NATO allies, in contrast, got little credit for concrete achievements like the creation of an integrated coalition force and the enlargement and improvement of SAC. The disparity in this regard is surprising because the NATO countries’ accomplishments were quite substantial. At the time the missiles crisis began, the United States already had vast strategic superiority over the Soviet Union; by the time the missiles crisis faded from view that superiority was even greater and still growing. In 1956, SAC had at least 340 operational intercontinental bombers, plus 1,560 medium-range B-47s, most of which were either based within range of the Soviet Union or capable of refueling in flight.⁸⁰ On the Soviet side, both the Bear and Bison heavy bombers developed “technical and operational shortcomings,” which limited their deployment. “By 1960 only 135 were in operation and the total fleet never exceeded 200.”⁸¹ “Defense plans left by the Eisenhower administration called for a total of 250 Atlas and Titan ICBMs and included specific authorization for the procurement of 450 Minuteman missiles and 19 Polaris submarines. When combined with the force of more than 600 B-52s and nearly 1,400 B-47 bombers, the relative strategic position of the United States as it entered the new decade was one of overwhelming dominance.”⁸² The United States was so far ahead that it could afford to retire the entire B-47 fleet (to reduce dependence on bases overseas) and still be vastly superior to what the Soviets had. As of May 1963 U.S. strategic forces included about 650 B-52 bombers, 126 Atlas,

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42. See also Huntington, *The Common Defense*, p. 110.

⁷⁹ Huntington, *The Common Defense*, p. 110. See also Kahan, *Security in the Nuclear Age*, p. 42.

⁸⁰ Wells, “Sounding the Tocsin,” p. 154. As Townsend Hoopes pointed out, the U.S. overseas base system was an effective deterrent in the context of the times. It allowed the all-jet B-47 to replace the B-36; it dispersed U.S. forces to many points around the globe, making it harder for the Soviets to launch a disarming first strike; and it made possible retaliation against the Soviet Union from all points of the compass, thereby complicating the Soviets’ air defense task (“Overseas Bases in American Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 37 [October 1958]: 700).

⁸¹ Wells, “Sounding the Tocsin,” p. 154.

⁸² Kahan, *Security in the Nuclear Age*, p. 47. See also International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Communist Bloc and the Free World: The Military Balance, 1960* (London: 1961), pp. 7–8 (hereafter IISS, *The Military Balance*). The British maintained a force of about 200 nuclear-capable V-bombers that could reach the Soviet Union from bases in the U.K.

54 Titan, and 100 Minuteman ICBMs, and about 160 Polaris missiles on submarines. During 1963, “additional Minuteman missiles [entered] the operational inventory at the rate of one a day, and additional Polaris missiles at the rate of one every two days.”⁸³ During the missile crisis years, Henry Kissinger later conceded, the United States had at its disposal strategic nuclear forces “capable of disarming the Soviet Union.”⁸⁴ Even Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev “acknowledged that during this period the USSR ‘did not possess sufficient means of retaliation.’”⁸⁵

Fifth, because U.S. strategic forces were vastly superior to those of the Soviet Union, continued reliance on threats of massive retaliation despite evidence of Soviet missile advances was not unreasonable. In the United States, “Eisenhower believed that the U.S. was facing a gradual deterioration of strategic advantage . . . but not an immediate crisis Recalling the illusory ‘bomber gap’ dissipated by U-2 reconnaissance, the President was skeptical of the 1958 National Intelligence Estimate which projected that there might be 100 Soviet ICBMs by mid 1959 or 1960, and 500 by 1963, and subsequent NIEs suggested that his doubts were justified.”⁸⁶ For the Europeans, U.S. superiority meant that accepting their dependence on the United States was a rational course of action for them to follow. As Malcolm Hoag put it,

For America’s partners in NATO, placing so great reliance upon retaliatory power alone is uncomfortable, and this is doubly true when the retaliatory power is somebody else’s. They must be sorely troubled by the thought that the credibility of a response by SAC to Soviet provocations declines as the Soviet airpower threat against America grows. On the other hand, the power of SAC grows steadily too, so that the net deterrence effect upon the Russians of a less certain but more powerful response by SAC may decline only a little or not at all.⁸⁷

Nor was there an obvious alternative to dependence on the United States. The principal alternatives to reliance on the United States – neutrality and/or national nuclear forces – both had serious drawbacks associated with them. The neutrality option was thoroughly discredited by the wartime experiences of the Belgians (who broke off their alliance with France in 1937 hoping to escape involvement in a future war), and the Dutch, the Danes, and the Norwegians (all of whom hoped they could remain neutral and uninvolved, as they had during the First World War). “Little strategic air forces,” on the other hand, “can weaken the West’s deterrent power either because they are so vulnerable as

⁸³ Lawrence McQuade, “NATO’s Non-Nuclear Needs,” *International Affairs* 40 (January 1964): 14.

⁸⁴ Henry Kissinger, “NATO: The Next Thirty Years,” *Survival* 21 (November/December 1979): 265. See also the assessments cited by Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 180.

⁸⁵ Kahan, *Security in the Nuclear Age*, p. 49.

⁸⁶ Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill,” p. 48.

⁸⁷ Malcolm Hoag, “NATO: Deterrent or Shield?” *Foreign Affairs* 36 (January 1958): 286. Arnold Wolfers drew a similar conclusion in “Europe and the NATO Shield,” pp. 429–433.

to invite attack, or because their existence weakens the bonds of alliance by making a [U.S.] Strategic Air Command response less likely.”⁸⁸

In effect, a strong case can be made that the cheapest solution available to NATO’s European members – continued reliance on U.S. threats of massive retaliation – was probably the best alternative available to them at the time. “It promises economy, while other feasible military alternatives probably offer at considerable expense little if any reinforcement of the main deterrent and little protection in the event of war. We may lament the failure of our European allies to put forth greater military effort, but we cannot upset the logic of their failure to do so.”⁸⁹

The Conventional Imbalance

This too was not a new issue, having arisen during the drafting of NSC-68 early in 1950. The crux of the issue then was whether a democracy was capable of “a large and long-term program of rearmament designed primarily to meet a danger which would not become real for several years NSC-68 was designed to deter future aggression by launching an immediate arms program. Could a democracy arm to deter or could it only arm to respond?”⁹⁰

Both before and during the missiles crisis, it was widely believed that the answer to that question was the latter. Democracies, the conventional wisdom held, could never match dictatorships when it came to mobilizing manpower for military purposes, unless they were already at war. This meant that NATO would always be outnumbered, in part because democracies were cheap but also because the attempt to substitute firepower for manpower had made things worse. The dependence of America’s continental allies on threats of massive, nuclear retaliation, Henry Kissinger argued, made them “reluctant to make a defense contribution which would give the commitment of U.S. and British troops military value.”⁹¹

There was, however, considerable evidence at the time that the military balance in Europe was nowhere near as unfavorable to the NATO countries as was generally believed. The Soviets were not as formidable, and the NATO countries’ contributions not as puny, as the conventional wisdom suggested. Even before NATO’s Korean War rearmament effort, “Soviet troops were not capable of executing the type of invasion that many Western observers expected during the early postwar period. Soviet forces were severely lacking in many important components of military capability, including transportation, equipment, and troop morale.”⁹² During the Second World War, the transport

⁸⁸ Hoag, “NATO: Deterrent or Shield?” p. 287.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 287. See also Wolfers, “Europe and the NATO Shield,” pp. 429–433.

⁹⁰ Huntington, *The Common Defense*, p. 52.

⁹¹ Kissinger, “The Search for Stability,” p. 545. See also Kissinger, “Missiles and the Western Alliance,” p. 385.

⁹² Matthew Evangelista, “Stalin’s Postwar Army Reappraised,” *International Security* 7 (Winter 1982/1983): 120.

problem had been particularly severe, and known to contemporary observers such as B. H. Liddell Hart:

The quick support of tanks by infantry elements, and mobile combination between the two, was hindered by the lack of any armored carriers or other cross-country vehicles. That meant waiting until infantry brigades or divisions could be brought up in trucks – and these might be stuck far behind when the sandy roads turned into mud The mass of the army was much worse equipped. Even the volume of American [Lend-Lease] supplies did not go far in making up the shortage of trucks, and most of them were needed to carry the infantry parts of the armored corps or for the rear services. The ordinary infantry divisions had to scrape along with a make-shift collection of horse transport – and little of that.⁹³

“In the immediate postwar years,” Evangelista adds, “the transport situation was no better. As late as 1950, half of the transport of the standing army was horse-drawn.”⁹⁴

Nor was the numerical imbalance as great as the conventional wisdom suggested. In the United States, the joint chiefs used inflated estimates of Soviet occupation needs as the basis for their prediction that Soviet forces could easily overrun Western Europe during the early Cold War. When the Soviets demobilized more troops more rapidly than the West expected, the invasion scenarios were not revised to take account of lower Soviet manpower levels.⁹⁵ Looking at the forces actually available for an invasion of Western Europe as of 1947–1948, Evangelista estimated a Soviet invasion force of 700,000 to 800,000. By comparison, Western occupation forces in Germany and Austria plus the home armies of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark totaled more than 800,000. In effect, “an image of rough parity emerges” even before the NATO build-up in response to the Korean War.⁹⁶

These conclusions, moreover, are not merely the product of hindsight; there was information available at the time suggesting the conventional wisdom was wrong. It was known as early as 1951 that the figure of 175 divisions that was accepted in the West as an indicator of Soviet ground strength was very misleading:

Much hysterical nonsense is printed about Russian strength, the most widely published figure being 175 divisions. These “divisions” include artillery divisions, engineer divisions, and low-grade infantry divisions, along with crack guards and armored divisions; and all are smaller than western divisions. By our measure, the

⁹³ B. H. Liddell Hart, “The Red Army: A Searching Analysis of Russian Men and Tactics,” *Ordnance* (July–August 1949): 27, quoted in Evangelista, “Stalin’s Postwar Army Reappraised,” p. 121.

⁹⁴ Evangelista, “Stalin’s Postwar Army Reappraised,” p. 121.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 112–115.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 118–120. See also the discussion of the size and composition of Soviet forces at the time of the Berlin Blockade, in Karber and Combs, “The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe,” pp. 411–415.

Russians may have between 70 and 80 divisions in their standing army, with perhaps twenty-five close to the line that divides Europe.⁹⁷

It was also known by the early 1950s that, while the Soviet army was organized into a larger number of divisions than those fielded by Western armies, only those in Eastern Europe, the westernmost Soviet Union, and the Far East were kept at full strength; the rest were maintained at substantially less than full strength.⁹⁸

Karber and Combs suggest that demobilization brought Soviet forces to a postwar low of about 2.87 million in 1948, after which they were steadily expanded to about 5.76 million by 1955.⁹⁹ The NATO countries did not start their own rearmament effort until mid-1950, but once started the NATO build-up moved faster. Far from leaving the West hopelessly outnumbered, the NATO-wide rearmament effort during the early 1950s regained for the NATO countries rough parity on the ground, despite their failure to complete the full three-year program agreed on at Lisbon in February 1952. The combined armed forces of the NATO countries numbered about 4.2 million in 1950, 5.8 million in 1951, 6.6 million in 1952, and 6.7 million in 1953. By comparison, the combined armed forces of the Soviet Union and its mostly unreliable East European satellites were estimated to be about 6.0 million in 1954.¹⁰⁰ No single measure adequately captures the complexities involved in assessing the relative military capabilities of groups of countries like NATO and its opponents to the east, but the number of active-duty armed forces is revealing of the overall level of effort by each side and of the forces that could be brought to bear relatively quickly in the event of another war.

The armed forces of the NATO countries declined in size after 1953, but this was the result of policy decisions rather than an iron law of political economy. In the United States, the Eisenhower administration took office in 1953 committed to reducing defense expenditures to a level the economy could support

⁹⁷ Theodore H. White, "The Job Eisenhower Faces: The Tangled Skein of NATO," *The Reporter* 4 (February 6, 1951): 12. Karber and Combs report that NATO military planners considered NATO divisions to be superior to Soviet divisions by about a 3:2 margin, "The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe," p. 421. An earlier version of these force comparisons can be found in Thies, "Learning in U.S. Policy toward Europe," pp. 167–169.

⁹⁸ Theodore H. White, *Fire in the Ashes* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1953), p. 293. Evangelista cites a 1957 CIA report that discussed how manpower levels in Soviet divisions varied according to where the division was located, "Stalin's Post-War Army Reappraised," p. 112. Karber and Combs provide an insightful discussion of how the strength of Soviet divisions in Eastern Europe fluctuated during the early Cold War years, "The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe," pp. 406–416.

⁹⁹ Karber and Combs, "The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe," pp. 411–415. See also Welles, "Sounding the Tocsin," p. 156.

¹⁰⁰ Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, pp. 110–112. The American joint chiefs considered Polish and Czech forces too unreliable to participate in an invasion of Western Europe; they made similar assessments of Bulgarian, Romanian, and Hungarian forces (Evangelista, "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised," p. 116; Karber and Combs, "The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe," p. 416).

without undue strain over the long haul. Eliminating the federal budget deficit, Eisenhower and his advisers believed, would require substantial cuts in defense spending, which in turn required cutting the size of the armed forces. U.S. active-duty forces declined from roughly 3.5 million in 1953 to 2.5 million by 1960. Most of the cuts were absorbed by the ground forces: the Army declined from 1.5 million in 1953 to 870,000 in 1960; the Marines from 243,000 in 1954 to 175,000 in 1960.¹⁰¹ The Europeans were only too willing to emulate the example set by the United States. British forces peaked at about 900,000 in 1953, declining to about 520,000 in 1960. A West German army of twelve divisions by 1957 had been envisioned at the time West Germany entered NATO in 1955, but by 1960 only seven divisions had been created.¹⁰²

Despite these reductions, the conventional balance in Europe did not tilt sharply in favor of the Warsaw Pact. Soviet forces were also cut back by the post-Stalin leadership, from a peak of about 5.76 million in 1955 to 3.6 million by 1960. Polish forces declined from about 500,000 in 1950 to about 200,000 in 1960, while the Hungarian army was virtually disbanded after the uprising there in 1956.¹⁰³ As of 1960, the combined armed forces of the NATO countries were roughly one-third again as large as those of the Warsaw Treaty Organization.¹⁰⁴ Figures published by Hanson Baldwin in 1959 show that NATO members had earmarked 2.2 million soldiers to hold a defensive line in Western Europe. Facing them were 1.77 million Soviet troops backed by 1.2 million soldiers from the satellite countries. Even if one assumes that the East Europeans were 100 percent reliable and the Soviets would commit all of their available forces to an attack on Western Europe (leaving none behind for rear-area security, ensuring their hold on Eastern Europe, and so on), the ratio of attacking to defending forces would have been only 1.3 to 1, hardly an overwhelming margin of superiority.¹⁰⁵ Writing in 1963, Lawrence McQuade noted that "NATO has a million-and-a-half more men under arms than the Warsaw Pact The USSR has about two million men in active army units compared to 3.2 million men in the ground forces of the NATO nations, of which 2.2 million are in Europe."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Huntington, *The Common Defense*, pp. 79, 95; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 166; Bell, *Negotiation from Strength*, p. 138; IISS, *The Military Balance, 1960*, pp. 13–14.

¹⁰² IISS, *The Military Balance, 1971–1972*, p. 63; Bell, *Negotiation from Strength*, p. 148.

¹⁰³ For Soviet forces, see Karber and Combs, "The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe," pp. 415–416, 425–426. See also Huntington, *The Common Defense*, p. 119. Reliable data on the armed forces of the Eastern European states during the 1950s are difficult to compile. The figures cited here are from *The Statesman's Yearbook* for 1951, 1957, 1960–1961, 1961–1962; and from IISS, *The Military Balance, 1971–1972*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁴ Wallace Thies, *The Atlantic Alliance, Nuclear Weapons, and European Attitudes: Re-examining the Conventional Wisdom* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, 1982), pp. 48–51. See also Enthoven and Smith, *How Much Is Enough?*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁵ Baldwin's figures are reproduced in Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance*, p. 375, note 22. See also Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," p. 33; General Maxwell Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), pp. 136–139.

¹⁰⁶ McQuade, "NATO's Non-Nuclear Needs," p. 18.

In summary, the NATO countries did much better during the 1950s at balancing the military power of their principal adversary, the Soviet Union, than they are generally given credit for. Democracies, it would seem, can indeed arm to deter as well as to respond, although it took the shock of the Korean War to set rearmament in motion. Conversely, the alleged superiority of dictatorships at mobilizing manpower for military purposes appears to have been largely a myth, albeit one that was widely accepted in the West. Two questions remain: first, why did the NATO countries rely so heavily on nuclear weapons for both deterrence and defense, despite the relatively favorable balance on the ground? Second, how could so many – both within the governments of the NATO countries and outside them – have convinced themselves that NATO was hopelessly outnumbered and thus had no choice but to brandish the nuclear deterrent to hold the Soviets in check?

Concerning the first of these, NATO's dependence on nuclear weapons is particularly puzzling because nuclear dependence was the source of many of the newspaper articles and parliamentary debates that Furniss, Knorr, and Kissinger, among others, cited as evidence of a crisis within the Alliance. The off-the-record comments of NATO military commanders and intelligence officers to journalists like Theodore H. White and Hanson Baldwin presented a picture of rough parity on the ground, even as official NATO estimates credited the Soviets with overwhelming conventional superiority. The basis for the disparity can be traced to the prevailing mood of skepticism concerning the inability of democracies to act responsibly in the realm of military affairs that took root on both sides of the Atlantic as a result of the failure to complete the full rearmament program envisaged at Lisbon in 1952.

[NATO military commanders] know that if they pause for praise, parliaments and peoples will relax instantly, slash budgets, strip down taxes, before the necessary planes and pilots are supplied, before the war reserves are in the warehouses, before the almost finished creation of their devotion receives its capping, final increment of strength. Their duty then, as they see it, is to moan rather than boast, to exhort rather than comfort and to flog reluctant civilians along the path of duty, however great the strain and unwilling the flesh.¹⁰⁷

Civilian leaders on both sides of the Atlantic found it convenient not to challenge their military subordinates regarding the state of the European balance. In the United States, Eisenhower's administration was content to accept the simple division counts that suggested that NATO was hopelessly outnumbered because of its belief that the United States should *not* attempt to maintain larger conventional forces, not even for an area as important as Western Europe. NSC 162/2, approved by Eisenhower in October 1953, in effect

¹⁰⁷ White, *Fire in the Ashes*, pp. 302–303. See also William T. R. Fox and Annette Baker Fox, *NATO and the Range of American Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 37; Ritchie, *NATO: The Economics of an Alliance*, p. 56; Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance*, pp. 39–40.

decreed that planning for future wars should be based on the assumption that it would not be possible to fight a large-scale conflict without resorting to nuclear weapons. The purpose of NSC 162/2 was to provide doctrinal support for Eisenhower's efforts to reduce defense spending by closing off the possibility that one or more of the services might create requirements for manpower and equipment by claiming that resistance with nonnuclear forces was feasible.¹⁰⁸ The Europeans for their part were more than willing to follow the American lead because doing so got them off the hook for meeting the force goals agreed on at Lisbon, which they never liked anyway.

Eisenhower told a press conference on December 15, 1954, that, to preserve the free enterprise system at a level of taxation the American people would support, he preferred to base his military policies on preparations to meet the greatest threat facing the West (all-out war) and to rely on improvisation to handle lesser threats.¹⁰⁹ He was, in effect, determined to avoid a repetition of the economic unpleasantness associated with the Korean War rearmament effort. For the NATO countries as a whole, per capita consumption in 1951 was approximately equal to that of 1950, but some countries – notably the United States, Great Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, and Norway – experienced a decline in living standards, which in turn contributed to Labor's defeat in the British general election in 1951 and the Democrats' loss of the White House in 1952.¹¹⁰ Over the period 1950–1954, however, both the Western European and North American wings of NATO achieved such a substantial rise in production that living standards improved even as defense expenditures were climbing. By 1954, the real increase in production was such that government expenditures in the NATO countries, including defense, were absorbing only about one-half of the increase in total output achieved since 1950. Within the NATO countries, per capita consumption increased by 7 percent between 1950 and 1954.¹¹¹ By 1956, all of the European members of the Alliance had achieved new peaks of economic strength and prosperity.¹¹²

In retrospect, there was no objective basis for the belief that democracies were hopelessly outnumbered and thus had no alternative but to rely on nuclear weapons for both deterrence and defense. By the early to mid-1950s, the NATO countries had achieved rough parity with the Soviet Union and its East European satellites in the number of men under arms backed by prosperous and expanding economies. The crisis of the mid-to late 1950s – ultimately rooted in

¹⁰⁸ Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill," pp. 23–32; Glenn Snyder, "The New Look," in Schilling, Hammond, and Snyder, *Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets*, p. 437; Huntington, *The Common Defense*, p. 74.

¹⁰⁹ Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance*, p. 391, note 98. See also Thies, "Learning in U.S. Policy toward Europe," pp. 170–171.

¹¹⁰ Ritchie, *NATO: The Economic of an Alliance*, p. 56.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54; Lincoln Gordon, "Economic Aspects of Coalition Diplomacy – The NATO Experience," *International Organization* 10 (November 1956): 533.

¹¹² Ritchie, *NATO: The Economics of an Alliance*, pp. 14, 52–53.

fears that the United States would not use its nuclear weapons to retaliate for and/or repel a Soviet attack, or that it would and thereby destroy Europe – appears in retrospect mostly as a self-inflicted wound. A better appreciation of NATO's strengths and the Warsaw Treaty Organization's weaknesses¹¹³ would likely have reduced the salience of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy and bolstered Western self-confidence. Kennan's judgment – "The West could win this Cold War" – was as applicable in 1958 as it had been in 1948.¹¹⁴

Concerning the second question – how could so many believe for so long in the myth of NATO's inferiority – the hyperbole that frequently crept into these assessments is surprising in retrospect because it was so much at variance with what could and should have been known about the military balance in Europe. The twenty-two or so Soviet divisions in East Germany could not have overwhelmed the twenty or so NATO divisions stationed in West Germany without large-scale reinforcements, which would have required weeks to move forward and would have constituted strategic warning that would have allowed the NATO countries to bring up reinforcements from their own larger pool of active-duty and reserve forces.¹¹⁵ NATO was often judged to be at a grave disadvantage because the Soviets could move reinforcements by road and by rail whereas American forces would have to cross 3,000 miles of ocean to get to Europe. On the other hand, the Americans did not have to garrison the territory of their allies the way the Soviets did. The geographical separation of America from Europe was more than offset by the Soviets' need to station forces in their Far East and by the political unreliability of the East Europeans, which kept some Soviet divisions tied down to ensure the loyalty of their ostensible allies.

The Suicide/Surrender Dilemma

This aspect of the missiles crisis offers a good illustration of what I called in Chapter 1 the *law of diminishing consequences* – namely, a tendency to remember the past as much less troubling than it seemed at the time. In 1979, Henry Kissinger described the 1950s as a kind of golden age when the United States had overwhelming superiority over the Soviet Union in strategic nuclear forces.¹¹⁶ At the time of the missiles crisis, however, it was Kissinger's view that the West was inherently disadvantaged vis-à-vis the Soviet Union because

the choices which we must make are more difficult than the aggressor's The aggressor can choose his point of attack; he can select the weapons system which seems most

¹¹³ Soviet and Polish forces nearly came to blows in the summer of 1956, and Hungary exploded in revolution a few months thereafter.

¹¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, hereafter FRUS, 1948, vol. 3, p. 157.

¹¹⁵ Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," p. 33. See also Enthoven and Smith, *How Much Is Enough?* pp. 140–141.

¹¹⁶ Henry Kissinger, "NATO: The Next Thirty Years," pp. 264–268. This was also Walter Hahn's assessment ("the most harmonious years in NATO") in "The U.S.-European Strategic Linkage," p. 74. For a similar view, see Gregory Treverton, "Nuclear Weapons in Europe," *The Adelphi Papers*, No. 168 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981), pp. 5–6.

promising; he can concentrate on the area where his opponent is weakest either geographically or in weaponry. The defender must be able to defend all likely targets of aggression and against any weapons system that may be employed.¹¹⁷

Because the West's defense effort was "polarized between inadequate conventional forces and nuclear weapons of enormous destructiveness," Kissinger argued, the Soviets could pose "the dilemma of suicide or surrender" at a time and place of their choosing.¹¹⁸

The 1950s Kissinger was pessimistic about the ability of democracies to endure a prolonged, high-stakes competition from what seemed like an inherently disadvantaged position. "Already influential groups in Britain argue for a unilateral renunciation of nuclear weapons and considerable pressures exist in Germany against equipping German forces for nuclear war Once the Soviet Union has succeeded in bringing about a divergence between our [nuclear-armed] military establishment and that of our European allies, it may hope that our NATO partners will be paralyzed by their impotence and we by our unwillingness to risk all-out war."¹¹⁹

Kissinger's assessment, especially his suggestion of antinuclear phobia in Great Britain and West Germany, raises the question of whether the crisis threshold was breached in those two or, indeed, any NATO country during this episode. What actually happened in Britain and Germany during the missiles crisis? Did either of them become indifferent between staying in and getting out? Did they lose the ability to work closely with the United States?

In Great Britain, there was a revolt within the governing Labor Party, but it occurred in 1951, years before the missiles crisis, in the form of resignations from the government by Aneurin Bevan (minister for Labor and National Service) and Harold Wilson (president of the Board of Trade). Bevan and his supporters argued that the defense spending projections derived from NATO's Korean War rearmament effort would lower the standing of living, require cuts in social services, and thereby allow "Soviet Communism [to establish] a whole series of Trojan horses in every nation of the Western economy." These consequences would be the product of a policy that left Britain to be "dragged too far behind the wheels of American diplomacy," and thus subject to the "chaos of unrestrained capitalism in America."¹²⁰ The former claim proved to be wrong – living standards rose rather than fell within the NATO countries during the early 1950s.¹²¹ The latter was rejected by British voters, who turned to the Conservatives led by Winston Churchill – the foremost proponent of close ties with the United States – in the October 1951 general election.

¹¹⁷ Kissinger, "Nuclear Testing and the Problem of Peace," p. 9.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12. See also Alastair Buchan, "Britain Debates the 'Balance of Terror,'" *The Reporter* 18 (April 3, 1958): 8–11.

¹²⁰ Wilfred King, "Fair Shares on Teeth and Tanks," *Foreign Affairs* 29 (July 1951): 609. See also Alfred Grosser, *The Western Alliance*, p. 141.

¹²¹ See notes 111 and 112 in this chapter.

“If we permit a distinction to grow up between our military establishment and that of our NATO allies,” Kissinger predicted in a 1958 essay, “our expulsion from Europe is almost inevitable.”¹²² Whether such a distinction developed was not solely the product of American actions; the Europeans had a say in this matter too. A reexamination of British foreign policy before and during the missiles crisis suggests that Kissinger’s assessment was unduly alarmist. During the first half of the 1950s – namely, prior to the missiles crisis – successive governments in Great Britain aimed to draw *closer* to the United States, not farther from it. The goal of both the Attlee (Labor) and Churchill (Conservative) governments was to obtain greater influence over U.S. policy, which led both to support a British nuclear deterrent that might not count for much in Moscow but would (the British believed) count for a lot in Washington. Churchill told the House of Commons on March 1, 1955 that, “Personally, I cannot feel that we should have much influence over their policy or actions, wise or unwise, while we are largely dependent, as we are today, on their protection.” Harold Macmillan, then Minister of Defense, made the same point the next day, when he told the Commons that the lack of a British contribution to the “main deterrent force” would mean surrendering the ability to influence U.S. policy.¹²³

Portions of the Labor Party were indeed attracted to unilateral disarmament and/or withdrawal from NATO, but electoral defeat has a way of changing minds if not hearts,¹²⁴ and Labor ultimately reaffirmed its support for a “special relationship” with Washington in the context of a broader Atlantic Alliance. Bevan’s and Wilson’s “defections from the Cabinet [in 1951] did not provoke any public outcry on these issues, nor was there any likelihood that they would unless they brought the Government down.”¹²⁵ Their defections did not cause Attlee’s government to fall, but they weakened it prior to the 1951 general election, which Labor lost. “In March 1955, Bevan was almost expelled from the party, Harold Wilson having left it in the previous year.” Labor’s internal splits likely contributed to its defeat in the 1955 general election, called by Churchill’s successor, Anthony Eden. Hugh Gaitskell, who succeeded Clement Attlee as party leader in December 1955, arranged a reconciliation with Bevan and his supporters, and in the shadow cabinet of 1957, “Bevan functioned as foreign minister and Wilson as finance minister, and the same

¹²² Kissinger, “Nuclear Testing and the Problem of Peace,” p. 12.

¹²³ Churchill and Macmillan are both quoted in Leon Epstein, “Britain and the H-Bomb, 1955–1958,” *Review of Politics* 21 (July 1959): 517 (see also pp. 519, 522). Sir John Slessor made the same argument in his book, *Strategy for the West* (London: Cassell, 1954), p. 104.

¹²⁴ Anthony Verrier subsequently wrote regarding Harold Wilson, shortly before the latter became Prime Minister, that “More than most, he has pondered the ten-year strife which rent the Labor Party from 1951 to 1961” (“British Defense Policy Under Labor,” *Foreign Affairs* 42 [January 1964]: 282).

¹²⁵ King, “Fair Shares on Teeth and Tanks,” p. 609.

Aneurán Bevan went against his friends in his own party, rejected unilateral disarmament, and argued for a British hydrogen bomb.”¹²⁶

In effect, during the 1950s both British parties viewed “the United States as the special international partner of Britain, accompanied by the complacent idea that only Britain . . . can keep the United States on the path of diplomatic wisdom.”¹²⁷ It was, however, Harold Macmillan, Eden’s successor as prime minister, who convinced the electorate that he and his party were better suited to realize those ideals than were Gaitskell and Labor. Macmillan made it his top priority to restore the special relationship with the United States, seemingly fractured after the 1956 Suez debacle.¹²⁸ Macmillan and Eisenhower met in Bermuda in March 1957 in a summit that was by and large staged for the benefit of British voters. When Macmillan sought a new term in October 1959, he did so as the man who had restored Britain to its rightful place at America’s side, and he was returned to office with an enlarged majority in the Commons – “the fourth successive election at which the Labor Party had lost support and the third successive election at which the Conservatives had won a majority.”¹²⁹

In retrospect, what stands out is the *lack* of change in British foreign policy, despite all the talk of a crisis within the Alliance. To the extent the 1959 general election turned on international issues at all, it was on “the eligibility of Right or Left to represent the country in negotiations in which the likely British position was largely agreed on both sides On the central issue of the reality of the Soviet threat to the Western nations there is little or nothing to choose between the convictions of the two [British] parties.”¹³⁰ Britain’s commitment to the Atlantic Alliance did *not* waver, despite the efforts of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and other groups to the left of the Labor Party. “That British security requires . . . alliances with friendly states, especially within the Atlantic area, is a second area of agreement . . . [B]oth sides accept the value to British policy of the intimate association between Britain and the United States which has grown up since 1940. This can best be furthered, in the view of both parties, by leaving the institutional form of NATO as it is.”¹³¹ In effect, electoral competition pulled Labor *closer* to the center, not farther from it. “The greater the prospects of Opposition [Labor] leaders forming the next government the greater the discipline they tend to exert over their ranks, and the more international realities are imposed

¹²⁶ Grosser, *The Western Alliance*, p. 162. Concerning Bevan’s near-expulsion, see Leon Epstein, “Cohesion of British Parliamentary Parties,” *American Political Science Review* 50 (June 1956): 372–375. For more on Bevan’s re-integration into the Labor Party, see Leon Epstein, “Britain and the H-Bomb, 1955–1958,” *Review of Politics* 21 (July 1959): 523–524.

¹²⁷ F. S. Northedge, “British Foreign Policy and the Party System,” *American Political Science Review* 54 (September 1960): 639.

¹²⁸ See Chapter 6.

¹²⁹ Roy Jenkins, “British Labor Divided,” *Foreign Affairs* 38 (April 1960): 487.

¹³⁰ Northedge, “British Foreign Policy and the Party System,” p. 635.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 636–637.

on the kind of fantasy-thinking to which a party denied power for many years is especially prone.”¹³²

Turning to the West German case, the issue of the crisis threshold is particularly germane because of a series of political shocks felt within the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) both before and after joining the Alliance in 1955. As part of NATO's Korean War rearmament effort, the United States insisted on German rearmament as the price for sending four additional U.S. Army divisions to Europe in 1951 and appointing General Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. The very next year, though, NATO members essentially gave up on the force goals set at Lisbon in February 1952, opting instead for increased reliance on nuclear weapons of all kinds, including short-range weapons that would of necessity be exploded on German soil. If ever there were a moment when neutrality might seem preferable to NATO membership, this would seem to be it. In a June 1954 speech, former Chancellor Brüning criticized Chancellor Adenauer for being too Western-oriented, arguing instead for a policy of playing off East against West.¹³³ During the debate in the Bundestag over ratification of the Federal Republic's entry into NATO, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) likewise advocated rejecting alignment with either West or East in favor of exploiting the Cold War divide to Germany's benefit.¹³⁴ In response, as Gordon Craig notes, “Chancellor Adenauer and his government have shown a gratifying loyalty to the Western alliance,” rejecting suggestions to revert to the *Schaukelpolitik* of years past.¹³⁵ Adenauer stayed loyal, moreover, even though doing so was difficult, to say the least. Three events, including one of his own making, caused Adenauer and his party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), no end of grief.

First, in December 1954, barely two months after the signing of the Paris treaties by which the FRG became a member of NATO, the North Atlantic Council formally endorsed the Eisenhower administration's strategy of “massive retaliation,” whereby the Alliance's military plans would henceforth be based on the assumption that NATO forces would rely on nuclear weapons for both deterrence and defense against an attack from the east.¹³⁶ Second, in March 1955, while arguing in favor of entry into NATO, Adenauer claimed that “So long as we do not belong to NATO we are, in the case of a hot war between the Soviet and

¹³² Ibid., p. 635.

¹³³ Gordon Craig, *From Bismarck to Adenauer: Aspects of German Statecraft*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), p. 111; Lawrence Kaplan, “NATO and Adenauer's Germany,” *International Organization* 15 (Autumn 1961): 621.

¹³⁴ Kaplan, “NATO and Adenauer's Germany,” p. 622.

¹³⁵ Gordon Craig, “NATO and the New German Army,” in *Military Policy and National Security* ed. William Kaufmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 196.

¹³⁶ For more on NATO strategy, see the discussion of the NATO document MC 48, approved by the North Atlantic Council on December 17, 1954, in Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, pp. 158–178.

the United States, the European battlefield; and, if we are in the Atlantic Pact organization, we are no longer that battlefield.”¹³⁷ Third, in June 1955, eleven NATO countries participated in an exercise code-named *Carte Blanche*, as part of which NATO tactical air forces dropped 335 simulated nuclear weapons on FRG territory along a line between Hamburg and Munich, resulting in an estimated 1.7 million dead and 3.5 million injured, not counting the effects of radiation. These numbers “began to appear in highly colored press accounts at the very moment when the Bundestag was being asked to pass the Chancellor’s Volunteers Bill,” the first step in the creation of the new German army.¹³⁸

These events provided Adenauer’s political opponents plenty of ammunition to use against him, and they did not hesitate to do so. During the first day’s debate on the Volunteers Bill, the leader of the opposition Social Democratic Party opened his attack on the bill by citing both *Carte Blanche* and the Chancellor’s March 1955 statement that NATO membership would prevent Germany from becoming a battlefield. Since *Carte Blanche* was premised on a Soviet invasion that could not be stopped at the border, it was for all practical purposes a challenge to the chancellor’s policies. Gordon Craig notes in this regard, “There can be no doubt that these [opposition] attacks embarrassed the government, for the rejoinders of its spokesmen were often lame and sometimes inconsistent. They tried so far as possible to avoid any detailed discussion of NATO strategy, and to dispose of the awkward decision of December 1954 by denying its existence or intimating that it would soon be changed.”¹³⁹

More challenges followed soon thereafter. In July 1956, there appeared on the front page of *The New York Times* reports that the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Arthur Radford, had proposed a drastic reduction in U.S. military personnel – specifically, a manpower cut of 800,000, the bulk of which (450,000) would come from the Army – and concentration by the United States on nuclear weapons, on the grounds that even a small nuclear-armed force could pose a credible deterrent. “The reduction in the Army and the gradual shift in reliance in the Strategic Air Command from the medium-range B-47 to the long-range B-52 would permit the withdrawal of American troops from overseas and the retention of only token forces in Europe.”¹⁴⁰ Because these reports occurred in the midst of an ongoing parliamentary and political battle over German defense policy, they were for the chancellor the political equivalent of a stab in the back.¹⁴¹ His response was to reproach the

¹³⁷ Quoted in Kaplan, “NATO and Adenauer’s Germany,” p. 623. Adenauer’s claims in this regard were challenged in the German press, both before and after his March 1955 comment (Craig, “NATO and the New German Army,” pp. 219–220).

¹³⁸ Craig, “NATO and the New German Army,” pp. 225–226. See also King, “NATO: Genesis, Progress, Problems,” pp. 159–160; Grosser, *The Western Alliance*, p. 167.

¹³⁹ Gordon Craig, “Germany and NATO: The Rearmament Debate, 1950–1958,” in Knorr (ed.), *NATO and American Security*, pp. 241–242.

¹⁴⁰ Huntington, *The Common Defense*, pp. 99–100. The articles in question appeared in the *New York Times* on July 13, 14, 15, 1956 (Craig, “Germany and NATO,” p. 243).

¹⁴¹ Grosser, *The Western Alliance*, p. 167.

U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, for not having kept him current on U.S. strategic thinking. Adenauer also warned in a speech in Brussels in September that European dependence on the United States “can and must not remain a permanent condition . . . [W]hat are vital interests for European states are not always necessarily for the United States and vice versa. From this fact, there may result differences in political ideas which could lead to independent political action.”¹⁴²

There was “independent political action” to be sure, but not by the Federal Republic. Adenauer continued to argue in favor of rearmament and NATO membership on the grounds that only within NATO would West Germany be spared the fate of becoming the European battlefield.¹⁴³ This claim, as Arnold Wolfers notes, was premised on other NATO members providing their share of a force of thirty full-strength divisions in Central Europe for the sake of “defending all NATO territory.”¹⁴⁴ Germany rearmed, but other NATO members, especially Britain and France, used this as an excuse to withdraw some of their forces from central Europe (the former was downsizing and restructuring its armed forces; the latter was transferring forces from Europe to Algeria). Germany provided the twelve high-quality full-strength divisions that it had promised when it joined NATO, but the thirty-division force that General Norstad (Gruenther’s successor as SACEUR) wanted was never achieved.

Despite all this, the Federal Republic appears not to have crossed the crisis threshold. In this regard, it wasn’t foreordained that Adenauer’s Germany would be such cooperative partner. Even a sympathetic observer like Gordon Craig could write in the mid 1950s: “Making coalitions work is always difficult and making one which has Germans in it work may be particularly so. It should not be forgotten that, for a number of historical reasons, the Germans know less of other peoples, and are less used to cooperation with other peoples on equal terms, than either the English or [the Americans].”¹⁴⁵

So why did the German case turn out so well? In retrospect, three reasons stand out in this regard. First, the Americans were sensitive to the concerns of their European allies and tried hard to accommodate them. Trachtenberg’s account makes clear that, years before the suicide/surrender dilemma was being cited as a reason why the Alliance was in crisis, the “problem of ‘mutual deterrence’ was an object of intense interest within the Eisenhower administration.”¹⁴⁶ As early as 1953, Secretary of State Dulles “was concerned about the NATO concept ‘losing its grip’ in Europe, about American military bases there coming to be seen more as ‘lightning rods’ than as ‘umbrellas.’”¹⁴⁷ A year

¹⁴² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 168.

¹⁴³ Wolfers, “Europe and the NATO Shield,” p. 431.

¹⁴⁴ General Lauris Norstad (SACEUR), quoted in *ibid.*, p. 431.

¹⁴⁵ Craig, “NATO and the New German Army,” p. 213.

¹⁴⁶ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 183.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 190, citing a Dulles memo of September 6, 1953. See also John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 132.

later, in a paper dated November 15, 1954, Dulles warned that too great a reliance on nuclear forces, and especially on strategic nuclear forces, would lead the Europeans to separate themselves from the United States. It would, Dulles wrote, “strain the will to fight and spur neutralism.”¹⁴⁸

Eisenhower too took it for granted that the Europeans could not forever be dependent on the United States. “For God’s sake,” he told an NSC meeting on November 21, 1955, “let us not be stingy with an ally.” The United States could not, he continued, “treat many of our NATO allies like stepchildren, and then expect them to turn around and commit themselves to fight with us. By such actions we cut our own throats.”¹⁴⁹ Eisenhower’s preferred solution was to assist the Europeans to acquire nuclear forces of their own, thereby replacing dependence on the United States with increased control over their individual fates.¹⁵⁰ Dulles agreed – as early as 1953, he had spoken favorably of “atomic weapons ‘being meshed into’ NATO forces” so that the allies would not have to fight with “obsolete weapons.”¹⁵¹ With the Americans pushing nuclear sharing, Adenauer changed policies, in effect adjusting his government’s preferences to accommodate those of the United States. Adenauer’s claim that rearmament and entry into NATO would prevent Germany from becoming a battlefield proved politically unsustainable. Gordon Craig notes in this regard that Adenauer’s government weathered the political storms of 1955 and 1956 “because of the numbers and discipline of the coalition deputies rather than because of the persuasiveness of their arguments.” Hence in the fall of 1956, Adenauer’s government adopted a new approach, namely arguing that the newly forming *Bundeswehr* should itself be equipped with tactical nuclear weapons.¹⁵² With the Americans and the Germans each adjusting to the other’s concerns, the political shocks mentioned earlier triggered vigorous attempts to repair any damage done.¹⁵³ These efforts appear in retrospect to have been modestly successful. Roger Hilsman, for example, cites *Carte Blanche* as “probably the greatest single shock to European opinion” during the early

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 190.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 155–156.

¹⁵⁰ Eisenhower’s efforts in this regard are discussed more fully by Steve Weber, “Shaping the Postwar Balance of Power: Multilateralism in NATO,” *International Organization* 46 (Summer 1992): 633–680, esp. pp. 654–671.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 177.

¹⁵² Jeffrey Boutwell, “Politics and the Peace Movement in West Germany,” *International Security* 7 (Spring 1983): 74; Craig, “Germany and NATO,” p. 242. Craig suggests that opposition to conscription was an important reason for the Chancellor’s reversal. A reduction in the term of service for conscripts meant lower projected force levels for the *Bundeswehr*, with tactical nuclear weapons serving as a substitute for reduced manpower (*ibid.*, p. 243).

¹⁵³ For example, Dulles’s letter to Adenauer dated August 11, 1955, written “as a friend to a friend whom I deeply respect and admire” (quoted in Grosser, *The Western Alliance*, pp. 167–168). See also Gordon Craig’s account of the April 1955 speech in Bonn by General McAuliffe, commander of U.S. Army forces in Europe, “NATO and the New German Army,” p. 224.

Cold War.¹⁵⁴ Yet, in West Germany, confidence in NATO was actually increasing rather than declining. An opinion poll question asking whether NATO was useful for reducing the danger of war elicited 35 percent “yes” in June 1955 (the same month as *Carte Blanche*) and 43 percent “yes” in March 1957.¹⁵⁵

Second, the literature on the missiles crisis, especially Henry Kissinger’s contributions in this regard, portrays the Alliance and its members as immobilized by a series of intractable dilemmas to which there were no good solutions. The Eisenhower administration, however, was more flexible and forward-looking than it is generally given credit for. The European allies, Dulles told a meeting of State Department officials and outside consultants on November 6, 1957, could not be treated as “second-class members.” “Trust,” Dulles explained, had to “operate both ways. It is not enough that others trust us. We must also allocate tasks to them. We must give them things to do. They all want to be in the missile business and do not wish to be mere cannon fodder.”¹⁵⁶

These were not just pious platitudes – if the Europeans wanted to “be in the missile business,” the Eisenhower administration was prepared to do a lot to make that happen. During his March 1957 meeting with British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in Bermuda, months before *Sputnik*, Eisenhower formally accepted the idea of providing the British with IRBMs. “He did not insist or even suggest at the time that these missiles would be subject to NATO control. The agreement with Britain simply called for missiles to be ‘made available by the United States for use by British forces.’”¹⁵⁷

After *Sputnik*, the Americans redoubled their efforts to reassure the Europeans of U.S. support. Dulles met with French Foreign Minister Pineau on November 19, 1957. “The French wanted IRBMs and the Americans made it clear that they intended to help the French get them, with the warheads only ‘nominally’ in American hands.”¹⁵⁸ When Dulles met with West German Foreign Minister Brentano, also in November 1957, he stressed how important it was that nuclear weapons be available to the European allies in an emergency. It was not acceptable to the United States that there be “first and second class powers in NATO.”¹⁵⁹ When President Eisenhower met French President Charles de Gaulle on December 20, 1959, he personally told the latter that “France could at any time have the same arrangement as the United Kingdom under which missiles were given subject only to [a dual-key] arrangement. In fact, it would not be too difficult to obtain a key in a real

¹⁵⁴ Hilsman, “NATO: The Developing Strategic Context,” p. 26.

¹⁵⁵ Kaplan, “NATO and Adenauer’s Germany,” p. 624.

¹⁵⁶ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 155.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 208–209.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 210 (see also p. 177). Nash, *The Other Missiles of October*, pp. 14–16, likewise portrays U.S. officials as moving to bolster confidence in the Alliance by offering U.S. IRBMs as a way of “recoupling U.S. and European security” (*ibid.*, p. 16).

emergency.” The dual-key arrangement, Eisenhower admitted, was an “illusory precaution” because the host country could “always arrange to seize control of the [U.S.-held] key.”¹⁶⁰

Third, just as Adenauer changed policies in order to accommodate the Eisenhower administration’s preference for heavy reliance on nuclear weapons, so too did the Americans change their views to accommodate the hopes and fears of their European allies. In this regard, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles is well known as the champion of the strategy of massive retaliation during Eisenhower’s first term, but during Eisenhower’s second term Dulles “argued repeatedly... for shifting the emphasis away from strategic nuclear forces and toward area defense.”¹⁶¹ In effect, Dulles became “the leader of those forces in the administration that wanted to do away with [massive retaliation] and put something very different in its place.”¹⁶² Dulles told an NSC meeting on May 1, 1958, that the NATO allies “must at least have the illusion that they have some kind of defensive capability against the Soviets other than the United States using a pushbutton to start a global nuclear war.” If there were no such capability, the Europeans might “disassociate” themselves from the Alliance. “The massive nuclear deterrent,” Dulles continued, “was running its course as the principal element in our military arsenal.”¹⁶³

In effect, Dulles was saying that something else would have to take the place of massive retaliation, and the State Department’s preferred solution bore a striking resemblance to what the Kennedy administration would call “flexible response” – namely, an ability “to meet the situation with a response appropriate to the nature of the attack.”¹⁶⁴ The “threshold at which nuclear weapons are introduced into the battle,” Dulles’ successor, Christian Herter explained, “should be a high one.” The way to do that, in turn, was by having a substantial nonnuclear shield force that would give NATO commanders the “flexibility of response that will enable them to meet any situation with the appropriate response.”¹⁶⁵ An American secretary of state almost always speaks to many audiences at once, but a West German audience might well have construed Dulles’ and Herter’s remarks about replacing massive retaliation with something else as validating (at least partly) Adenauer’s claims that a Germany in NATO was less likely to be a battlefield than a Germany outside it. Herter in particular offered a “best of both worlds” approach – a robust nuclear deterrent aimed at preventing war, but also a high threshold

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 209. The French ultimately rejected this American offer – they wanted at least some weapons that were clearly under their own control (*ibid.*, pp. 223, 226).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹⁶³ Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 190, 185.

¹⁶⁴ Secretary of State Christian Herter, addressing a December 1960 meeting of the North Atlantic Council, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 189.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 189.

for going nuclear based on large shield forces that would give NATO commanders the ability to respond to any fighting in Europe in an “appropriate” manner.

In retrospect, what stands out about American–German relations during the missiles crisis is the way that both sides sought to anticipate problems and to adjust their policies to those of their allies. Forward thinking backed by a willingness to cooperate (on both sides of the Atlantic) meant that Adenauer’s policy of solidarity rather than neutrality proved more popular with the German electorate than the alternatives put forward by his opponents. The SPD made an issue out of equipping the Bundeswehr with nuclear delivery systems in the Bundestag debates in the spring of 1957 and in the period preceding the November 1957 general election. That election, however, resulted in an absolute majority in the Bundestag for Adenauer’s CDU/CSU government. SPD support for the antinuclear campaign known as the *Kampf dem Atomtod* (Struggle Against Atomic Death) “completely evaporated after July 1958, when the Christian Democrats won an absolute majority in the state elections in North Rhine-Westphalia, a traditional stronghold of the SPD.”¹⁶⁶ Politicians everywhere would not be surprised by the impact of these defeats. The SPD “came to the conclusion that it could not hope to gain power as long as the allies, and especially the Americans, were so strongly in Adenauer’s camp – so long as the CDU/CSU was the party of the western alliance and the SPD was hostile to the NATO system.” As in the British case, political considerations provided the impetus for a “fundamental rethinking of SPD policy on alliances and strategic issues.” By 1961, when the Social Democrats made Willy Brandt their chancellor-designate, “the party had become perfectly acceptable to the Americans as an alternative to Adenauer. The policy of the Schumacher era was now dead and buried. The SPD was now a moderate, pro-Western party, committed to NATO and the American alliance.”¹⁶⁷

Conclusion

Edgar Furniss and Klaus Knorr, writing separately, both thought that evidence of a crisis within the Alliance could be gleaned from parliamentary debates and newspaper accounts.¹⁶⁸ In a democracy, however, the opposition party is *always* trying to blame the government for something, and the government is *always* trying to shift the blame elsewhere, like onto an ally.

¹⁶⁶ Boutwell, “Politics and the Peace Movement in West Germany,” pp. 74–75.

¹⁶⁷ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 378. See also Kaplan, “NATO and Adenauer’s Germany,” p. 629.

¹⁶⁸ See notes 49 and 50 in this chapter. Henry Kissinger likewise cited five newspaper articles, one pamphlet, and two comments made in the British House of Commons as evidence that something was badly wrong in the Alliance (“Missiles and the Western Alliance,” pp. 383–384).

Editorialists and op-ed writers are *always* fulminating about this issue or that. A vigorous political debate is not necessarily a sign that the Alliance is in trouble; more likely it is a sign that the Alliance is taking needed corrective action.

In the missiles case, even though the vulnerability issue had been foreseen and steps taken to mitigate it years beforehand, the Soviet ICBM test in August 1957 followed by the two *Sputniks* in October and November nonetheless dramatized the need for policy innovation. “Almost immediately,” Huntington subsequently wrote, “the favorable public environment for the [Eisenhower] Administration’s defense policies disappeared: a sense of crisis and urgency swept the nation.”¹⁶⁹ In a democracy, however, innovation is never quick and rarely easy. “Program innovation is complex, slow, and controversial . . . Innovation involves major political struggles among many groups: military and scientific, industrial and political; governmental and private. These groups have different perceptions of strategic needs and different preferences about the ways in which those needs should be met. The conflicts ebb and flow about a variety of specific issues and proposals.”¹⁷⁰ The longer these arguments go on and the more they spill into public view, the more it may *seem* as if policy has hit a dead end. But a longer-term view is likely to lead to a different conclusion.

In the missiles case, governments on both sides of the Atlantic responded to looming changes in the strategic balance as eminently sensible decision makers: specifically, they took steps to mitigate the vulnerability problem, to improve survivability, and to develop new technologies (Minuteman, Polaris). Ultimately, massive retaliation was replaced by a new military strategy – flexible response. More important, governments on both sides of the Atlantic tried to anticipate their allies’ concerns and adjust policies accordingly. The members of pre-1939 alliances often viewed their allies as accomplices to be duped, used, and then abandoned once the last drop of value had been squeezed from them. Among the NATO allies, in contrast, statesmen who regularly had to renew their mandate by winning an election seemed instinctively to grasp the need to periodically shore up support among their allies too.

Put differently, if the alarmist claims made by Knorr, Kissinger, Hilsman, and others regarding the missiles crisis really were true, NATO members should have had a very hard time responding to the November 1958 Soviet ultimatum and accompanying threats that touched off an international crisis over Berlin that lasted until 1962. The reaction of the Eisenhower administration, however, says quite a lot about the true state of the Alliance. As described by Marc Trachtenberg, Eisenhower and his advisers were

¹⁶⁹ Huntington, *The Common Defense*, p. 109.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

not comfortable with a policy of simply dictating to the allies. There was a vague sense that the whole western system might collapse if the Europeans came to feel that the United States was blind to their concerns and was arrogantly dragging them to the brink of war, or, alternatively, was unilaterally forcing distasteful concessions down their throats. The enormous responsibilities relating to the great issues of war and peace had to be shared. It was therefore important . . . to find some real political support in Europe.¹⁷¹

There is thus a difference between a “sense of crisis and urgency” in one NATO member and a crisis for the Alliance as a whole. Our review of the missiles case suggests that the threshold for an Alliance crisis was not breached. Individually, NATO members may have felt a need for policy change on an urgent basis, but none of them ever reached the point of feeling indifferent between staying in and getting out. Indeed, a strong case can be made that it is precisely because NATO members felt a sense of urgency that they took the steps – both collectively and individually – that meant that the Alliance crisis threshold was never breached.

THE INF CRISIS

Background

Like the missiles crisis, the INF case has its roots in efforts by NATO members to devise a military strategy and supporting programs that could achieve several goals at once: (1) provide a credible *deterrent* to a Soviet military adventure in Europe, (2) make possible a successful *defense* should deterrence fail, (3) *apportion fairly* the burden of looking after NATO members’ shared interest in the security of Western Europe, and (4) enable the NATO countries to *resist Soviet political challenges*. The last of these could take the form of *menacing gestures* intended to “demonstrate overwhelming military capabilities, superior strategy, and the futility of resistance,”¹⁷² *limited challenges* to the status quo, intended to raise the level of tensions internationally and thereby generate political pressures in Western Europe for a more accommodating stance toward the Soviet Union,¹⁷³ or even *peace offensives* intended to convince the publics of Western Europe that the Americans and not the Soviets were the real danger to peace in Europe.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 267.

¹⁷² Nils Ørvik, “Scandinavian Security in Transition: The Two-Dimensional Threat,” *Orbis* 16 (Fall 1972): 725.

¹⁷³ For example, Khrushchev’s comment: “Every time I want to make the West scream, I squeeze on Berlin” (quoted in Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p. 140). For a more recent example, see Roger Thurow, “Soviets Use Europe’s Anxiety to Test Alliance,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 23, 1984, p. 33.

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, Marshall Shulman, *Stalin’s Foreign Policy Reappraised* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), especially Chapter 4 (“The Peace Movement as an Instrument of Diplomacy”) and Chapter 9 (“The Use of the Peace Movement and the French Communist Party, 1951–1952”).

There were important variations over time in the way that NATO members pursued these objectives during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s¹⁷⁵; however, one constant throughout this period was the attraction felt by virtually all NATO members to the idea that nuclear weapons could and should contribute to both deterrence and defense in Europe, thereby sparing NATO members the political, economic, and social costs associated with large nonnuclear forces. The Europeans were attracted to the idea of relying heavily on nuclear weapons for both deterrence and defense because of their distaste for mass armies, which required either conscription or expensive volunteer forces. The Americans too liked the idea of relying on nuclear weapons because there were definite political limits on the size of the U.S. contribution to the NATO integrated force, and it was always easier to pledge to the Europeans that the United States would use nuclear weapons to deter and if need be defend against a Soviet attack than to try to change the political constraints on how many U.S. soldiers could be stationed in Western Europe.

On the other hand, all NATO members were repelled by the thought of actually fighting a nuclear war in densely populated Europe; hence, NATO strategy inevitably gravitated toward an intense preoccupation with ensuring that deterrence worked. The fixation on deterrence had its roots in the Alliance's Korean War rearmament effort, which aimed to assemble the forces necessary for a robust nonnuclear defense of Western Europe. That rearmament effort was more successful than generally realized, but the fact that it fell short of the goals set at Lisbon in 1952 and then was scaled back in the face of pleas of financial hardship left a lingering sense of the inadequacy of Western armies and a belief that the NATO countries could never match the Soviet Union and its allies in numbers of troops and tanks. Deterrence was the preferred strategy in no small part because history suggested there was no other way – a deterrent strategy simply *had* to be found because a high confidence nonnuclear defense was out of reach.

To compensate for this perceived inadequacy, the United States pledged to its European allies that it would retaliate against a Soviet attack – even a nonnuclear Soviet attack – with the full spectrum of forces available to it, including strategic nuclear forces based in the United States. The Europeans accepted this pledge – indeed, they welcomed it – because it served two important purposes for them. On one hand, it was thought to be an effective deterrent; on the other, it got them off the hook with regard to providing the nonnuclear forces needed to meet and defeat a Soviet attack, should one ever come. But for the strategy to work, the American pledge had to be

¹⁷⁵ For example, the relatively relaxed view taken by the Truman administration prior to the Korean War, followed by the Korean War rearmament effort of the early 1950s, and then the Eisenhower/Dulles strategy of threatening massive retaliation during the remainder of the 1950s.

credible – both to the Soviets, so that they would be deterred, and to the peoples of Western Europe, so that they would *be* reassured and *stay* reassured, despite the shadow cast by nearby Soviet military power. In pursuit of credibility, there developed in Western Europe during the Cold War, an extensive collection of armed forces assigned to NATO and an agreed strategic doctrine to justify the presence of those forces in peacetime and to guide their use in wartime if need be. There were, of course, differences of opinion among NATO members about how many forces should be maintained along the East–West divide, who should supply them, and how they should be equipped, but in general there was a consensus within the Alliance that lasted roughly twenty-five years – from the early 1950s to the mid-1970s – on the following points.

First, the NATO countries should maintain substantial ground and tactical air forces along their side of the Central Front in Germany (about twenty-five full-strength divisions). The principal purpose of these forces was make credible any nuclear threats that Alliance members might make, by ensuring that any war in Europe would be a big one, and that there would be no chance for the Soviets to make easy gains by isolating and confronting one NATO country at a time. The presence of six divisions of American soldiers in West Germany effectively guaranteed that the United States would be involved in any European conflict from the start and that there would be no chance for the Americans to have second thoughts about whether to honor their pledge to stand with the Europeans in the event of war.

Second, intermingled with the Alliance's conventional forces were the so-called theater nuclear forces (TNF) – relatively small, short-range nuclear weapons intended for use within the European theater. Many of these were deployed quite close to the potential battlefields, which may not have made good sense militarily but which did greatly increase the likelihood that any war in Europe would go nuclear quickly, since it was expected that the NATO countries would be faced early in such a war with a choice between using these weapons or losing them to advancing Soviet forces.¹⁷⁶

The third and final element in the NATO consensus was American strategic nuclear forces, which the United States pledged to use in the event of a large-scale Soviet attack, and which for most of the period in question were greatly superior to their Soviet counterparts.

These three elements – conventional forces, theater nuclear forces, and U.S. strategic nuclear forces – were expected to work together as follows.

- The presence of American forces along the Central Front in Germany meant that the United States would inevitably be involved in a future war in Europe.

¹⁷⁶ Since it was assumed that democracies could not match dictatorships when it came to mobilizing manpower for military purposes, it was likewise assumed that Soviet forces would be advancing and NATO forces would be retreating.

- The presence of tactical nuclear weapons close to the potential battlefields meant that any war in Europe would likely go nuclear quickly.
- The superiority of U.S. strategic nuclear forces meant that the United States would honor its pledge to use them.
- The virtual certainty that U.S. strategic nuclear forces would be used meant that the Soviets would be deterred, war would not occur, and Western Europe could remain peaceful, prosperous, and secure.

Of course, things were never quite as simple as sketched out above – military technology changes, armed forces grow (or decline) in size and destructiveness, and these sorts of changes challenged the ability of American officials to reassure their European counterparts that it was safe to remain aligned with the United States. Soviet technological advances during the 1950s, for example, challenged NATO's strategy for deterrence, by suggesting that the Soviets would soon be able to strike the United States directly, first with long-range bomber aircraft and then with intercontinental ballistic missiles. As the United States became vulnerable to a Soviet counterstrike, Europeans wondered whether the United States could still be counted on to use its strategic nuclear forces on their behalf. In this case, American officials were able to reassure their European counterparts by pointing to the vast superiority of U.S. strategic nuclear forces compared to what the Soviets had, and by promising more insistently than ever that the United States really would honor its pledge to use them if need be. This was a response that bought time – about twenty years worth – but it could never work forever. In particular, the gradual attainment by the Soviet Union of rough parity with the United States in strategic nuclear forces during the mid 1970s posed a more serious challenge in this regard.

The source of this latter problem can be traced to production and deployment decisions made by the United States and the Soviet Union during the 1950s and 1960s. During that period, while the United States was pouring resources into the Minuteman ICBM, Polaris SLBM, and B-52 jet bomber programs, the Soviets allocated a large share of their resources to medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs, IRBMs) and to medium-range bomber aircraft targeted on Western Europe and China. "Whereas by 1962 the USSR had deployed fewer than 40 ICBMs and roughly 200 long-range bombers, it could field more than 1200 medium-range bombers of various types and almost 600 SS-4 and SS-5 intermediate-range ballistic missiles."¹⁷⁷ The United States did not try to match these Soviet medium- and intermediate-range forces, in part because matching would have raised politically difficult questions about where to base these U.S. forces. Already in the 1950s there were qualms in Europe about hosting U.S. nuclear forces capable of reaching Soviet territory, for fear that doing so would make the host countries targets for Soviet political pressures and perhaps even a Soviet first-strike. More important,

¹⁷⁷ Kevin Lewis, "Intermediate-Range Nuclear Weapons," *Scientific American* 243 (December 1980): 67.

matching Soviet medium- and intermediate-range forces seemed unnecessary in view of the vast superiority achieved by the United States in strategic nuclear forces.¹⁷⁸ Hence during the 1950s and 1960s, Americans and Europeans found it tolerable that the Soviet Union maintained hundreds of medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles targeted on Western Europe because these were offset by American strategic nuclear forces, which were greatly superior to Soviet strategic forces.¹⁷⁹

By the mid-to late 1970s, however, the Soviets not only achieved rough parity with the United States in strategic nuclear forces, but they were also modernizing their medium- and intermediate-range missile force by replacing older SS-4s and SS-5s with new and far more capable SS-20 IRBMs.¹⁸⁰ It was this combination of developments that led European statesmen like German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to look with concern on the Soviet modernization program.¹⁸¹ Soviet theater nuclear forces, Schmidt and others argued, were developing to the point at which they might be able to destroy in a first strike all of NATO's means for retaliating against the Soviet Union that were then based in Europe. In view of the emerging parity in strategic nuclear forces between the United States and the Soviet Union, the American strategic nuclear deterrent might be paralyzed rather than invoked in the event of a Soviet attack.¹⁸²

This is not to suggest that the developments described above generated fears in Europe of Soviet military action – the problem facing the NATO countries was subtler than that. As was explained in [Chapter 3](#), Soviet policy during the Cold War aimed at gaining control over Western Europe, in the sense of rendering it subservient to Soviet wishes, rather than destroying it.¹⁸³ Put differently, the Soviets sought to enjoy the fruits of military power but without actually having to use it in battle.

¹⁷⁸ For more on the decision not to match these Soviet medium- and intermediate-range forces, see Gregory Treverton, "Nuclear Weapons and the 'Gray Area,'" *Foreign Affairs* 57 (Summer 1979): 1075–1076; Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*, pp. 121–122.

¹⁷⁹ Gregory Treverton, "Nuclear Weapons in Europe," *The Adelphi Papers*, No. 168 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981), pp. 1, 5; Christoph Bertram, "The Implications of Theater Nuclear Weapons in Europe," *Foreign Affairs* 60 (Winter 1981/1982): 306–307.

¹⁸⁰ Soviet modernization of their theater nuclear forces (TNF) was across the board, and not limited to just the SS-20. On this point, see James Thomson, "The LRTNF Decision: Evolution of U.S. Theater Nuclear Policy, 1975–1979," *International Affairs* 60 (Autumn 1984): 602.

¹⁸¹ See, for example, Chancellor Schmidt's 1977 Alastair Buchan Memorial Lecture, reprinted in *Survival* 20 (January/February 1978): 2–10. See also Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*, p. 309.

¹⁸² The literature on this point is vast. See, for example, Jeffrey Record, "Theater Nuclear Weapons: Begging the Soviets to Preempt," *Survival* 19 (September/October 1977): 208–211; Treverton, "Nuclear Weapons and the 'Gray Area,'" pp. 1076–1079; Uwe Nerlich, "Theater Nuclear Forces in Europe: Is NATO Running Out of Options?" *Washington Quarterly* 3 (Winter 1980): 115–116; Bertram, "The Implications of Theater Nuclear Weapons in Europe," p. 307; Treverton, "Nuclear Weapons in Europe," p. 6; Françoise de Rose, "Updating Deterrence in Europe: Inflexible Response?" *Survival* 24 (January/February 1982): 20.

¹⁸³ For more on this point, see Gaddis, *We Now Know*, [Chapter 2](#) ("Cold War Empires: Europe").

The struggle for Europe during the Cold War was thus a political/psychological one, in which military power was used by the Soviets as an instrument of intimidation and coercion rather than conquest and destruction. The goal of Soviet policy was to remind the Europeans of their vulnerability to Soviet power, convince them that they could not find safety by aligning with the United States, and thus impress on them that their only realistic option was to accept Soviet dominance and accommodate it. In practical terms, this meant convincing the Europeans to break their ties with the United States and seek safety in neutrality. It was a policy that sought deference and submission rather than conquest and physical control. It was this interpretation of Soviet motives that led European statesmen like Chancellor Schmidt to suggest that the Soviets were deliberately shaping their weapons deployments to intimidate the Europeans, in the following manner.

If the Soviets could foster in Europe the impression that they *could* destroy in a first strike all of NATO's means of retaliating against the Soviet Union that were then based in Europe *and* that the United States would be deterred from using its strategic nuclear forces in response, then they would have gone a long way toward fostering a sense of vulnerability and isolation that, Schmidt and others feared, could ultimately "decouple" Western Europe from the United States, which was the prerequisite for Soviet dominance of all of Europe.¹⁸⁴

It was this line of thinking that provided the rationale for the deployment of new American-owned nuclear missiles in Europe – Pershing II MRBMs and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) – although the way in which these deployments were intended to "recouple" America to Europe was seldom discussed explicitly in public:

- In the event of war in Europe, the Soviets would have to attack the Pershings and the GLCMs rather than run the risk that they would be used to inflict a devastating retaliatory strike on the Soviet Union. A Soviet attack on these missiles, in turn, would all but guarantee that the Americans would fire the survivors at the Soviet Union, rather than withhold them and allow them to be destroyed from the air or overrun on the ground.
- The Soviets would surely retaliate against the homeland of the state owning a missile that struck the Soviet Union, in addition to attacking the state from which the missile was launched.¹⁸⁵
- Soviet retaliation against the United States would activate American strategic nuclear forces for use against the Soviet Union.

¹⁸⁴ The political/psychological challenge posed by the SS-20s is discussed by François de Rose, "The Future of SALT and Western Security in Europe," *Foreign Affairs* 57 (Summer 1979): 1065–1074; Klaas de Vries, "Responding to the SS-20: An Alternative Approach," *Survival* 21 (November/December 1979): 252. McGeorge Bundy, in contrast, argued that the Soviets could pose such a threat long before they deployed the SS-20, "America in the 1980s: Reframing Our Relations with Our Friends and among Our Allies," *Survival* 24 (January/February 1982): 25.

¹⁸⁵ See, for example, Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov's threat to do so (John Burns, "Soviet Said To Add to Subs off U.S.," *New York Times*, May 21, 1984, p. 4).

- The certainty that U.S. strategic nuclear forces would be used in the event of war in Europe meant that deterrence was assured and war would not occur.

The purpose of these new American-owned missiles was thus to recouple Europe and America by making them equally vulnerable in the event of war.¹⁸⁶ The goal of the deployments was to share the risk so that North America would not – indeed, could not – be a privileged sanctuary because if North America were such a sanctuary, how could the United States be counted on to stand with the Europeans in a confrontation with the Soviet Union? There was, however, one major flaw in this line of reasoning.

The new American missiles were purposely land based, to give them greater visibility, which was deemed essential both to reassure European publics that the United States would stand with them and, more important, to link the new missiles to any land war in Europe. If the missiles were sea based, the Soviets would not know where they were and hence would not be able to attack them, which meant the Americans would not be compelled to fire the survivors at the Soviet Union, thereby drawing Soviet retaliation against North America and activating U.S. strategic nuclear forces.¹⁸⁷ The greater visibility that came with land basing, however, had the effect of frightening many in Europe and reminding them of their country's vulnerability in the event of war. Land basing, in the minds of many Europeans, was the military equivalent of painting a gigantic bull's eye over their countries, thereby *drawing* rather than preventing a Soviet nuclear attack.¹⁸⁸ It was these kinds of fears that drew hundreds of thousands of Europeans to participate in antinuclear demonstrations in 1981 and 1982, intended to block deployment of the new American missiles in their countries. This, in turn, led the Soviets to take a hard line in the intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) negotiations during 1981, 1982, and 1983, in the hope that European publics would refuse to accept the new missiles, thereby sparing the Soviets from having to give up much in return.

¹⁸⁶ The idea that new U.S. missiles in Europe could serve as a bridge to U.S. strategic nuclear forces is discussed by Harold Feiveson, "The Dilemma of Theater Nuclear Weapons," *World Politics* 33 (January 1981): 284; Lawrence Freedman, "A Critique of the END Campaign," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 37 (December 1981): 39; Lawrence Freedman, "Limited War, Unlimited Protest," *Orbis* 26 (Spring 1982): 97–98. Kevin Lewis, on the other hand, is critical of this rationale for deploying the missiles, "Intermediate-Range Nuclear Weapons," p. 71.

¹⁸⁷ Freedman, "Limited War, Unlimited Protest," p. 97; Catherine Kelleher, "The Present as Prologue: European Theater Nuclear Modernization," *International Security* 5 (Spring 1981): 153; For a different perspective on why the missiles could not be sea-based, see Gregory Treverton, "Managing NATO's Nuclear Dilemma," *International Security* 7 (Spring 1983): 99. Morton Halperin is very skeptical of the claim that land-basing was necessary for recoupling, "NATO and the TNF Controversy: Threats to the Alliance," *Orbis* 26 (Spring 1982): 109–110.

¹⁸⁸ This was hardly a novel problem – recall in this regard Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's concern in 1953 that Europeans would look on U.S. bases in Europe as "lightning rods" rather than "umbrellas" (see note 147 in this chapter).

Why the INF Case was Thought to be a NATO Crisis

Scholarly accounts written during and after the events just recounted often cited one or both of two reasons why the INF case was thought to be a crisis for the Alliance. First and foremost was the way in which a carefully prepared, exhaustively discussed decision to deploy new missiles *and* pursue an arms control agreement with the Soviets seemingly metastasized into a kind of cancer threatening the Alliance's very existence. The NATO double-track decision, as it was known, was formally endorsed by the Alliance's foreign and defense ministers meeting in Brussels on December 12, 1979. As described by Catherine Kelleher, supporters saw the outcome "as a success, and the process as a model for future decision-making. The Alliance has now demonstrated it can meet new Soviet challenges; the exhaustive consultation procedures did lead to a genuinely informed NATO consensus despite the political risks." As described by one of Kelleher's interviewees, the double-track decision was marked by "the most remarkable degree of consensus I have seen in NATO decisions, achieved with speed and relative harmony."¹⁸⁹

Yet even before the ministerial endorsement there were signs of trouble ahead. Kelleher dates the controversy to March 1979, when a formal debate in the West German Bundestag, initiated by left-wing members of the governing Social Democratic Party, was critical of the missile modernization program that was then under discussion within the Alliance. West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt's "careful political steering quickly led to a dampening of criticisms and a favorable parliamentary outcome. But rumblings and occasional direct challenges continued," not only in Germany but also in Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway.¹⁹⁰

In the Netherlands, the governing coalition of Christian Democrats and Liberals had only a two-seat majority in parliament (77 of 150 seats). In an advisory vote on December 6, 1979, ten Christian Democrats voted with the opposition (the Dutch Labor Party and several smaller parties) in favor of a resolution calling on the government not to consent to either production or deployment of the new missiles. The vote suggested the government might fall if it endorsed the double-track decision at the NATO ministerial meeting on December 12; on the other hand, the (conservative-leaning) Liberal Party announced that it was prepared to bring down the government if the cabinet adhered to the resolution.¹⁹¹ In Belgium, the Socialist Party voted on December 8 to insist on delaying a decision on missile modernization; in response, Foreign

¹⁸⁹ Kelleher, "The Present as Prologue," pp. 150, 154. Theo Sommer was even more enthusiastic: "a triumph of alliance diplomacy" ("Europe and the American Connection," in *Foreign Affairs: America and the World*, 1979 ed. William P. Bundy [New York: Pergamon, 1980], p. 628). See also Thomson, "The LRTNF Decision," p. 612; Raymond Garthoff, "The NATO Decision on Theater Nuclear Forces," *Political Science Quarterly* 98 (Summer 1983): 210.

¹⁹⁰ Kelleher, "The Present As Prologue," p. 154. See also Garthoff, "The NATO Decision on Theater Nuclear Forces," p. 209.

¹⁹¹ Reuters, "Dutch Cabinet Considers Missiles," *New York Times*, December 12, 1979, p. A10.

Minister Henri Simonet threatened to resign if the government did not endorse both parts of the double-track decision.¹⁹² The Danes advocated delaying for six months a decision on missile modernization in order to explore Soviet expressions of interest in an arms control solution. The Danes hinted they might not support the double-track decision, but they never said openly they would oppose it.¹⁹³ Norwegian Prime Minister Odvar Nordli met with U.S. President Jimmy Carter shortly before the NATO ministerial session in Brussels in order to, in his own words, “emphasize the importance of having real negotiations” with the Soviet Union aimed at reducing the number of missiles deployed in Europe.¹⁹⁴

These challenges were finessed at Brussels, where the double-track decision was unanimously endorsed by the assembled foreign and defense ministers, albeit with reservations in the case of the Netherlands and Belgium.¹⁹⁵ An attempt to topple the governing coalition in the Netherlands failed,¹⁹⁶ but from then on opposition to the missile modernization track grew steadily until, as described by Stanley Hoffmann, it became a “mass movement of continental dimension, which mobilizes and moves people across borders” and which indicates “both the existence in several nations of a broad politically destabilizing gap between government and a sizable, mobilized section of the public, and a growing divorce of feelings and perceptions between the two sides of the Atlantic.”¹⁹⁷ This outcome was all the more unwelcome because the double-track

¹⁹² Flora Lewis, “NATO Voting Today on Nuclear Missiles,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1979, p. A11.

¹⁹³ Dusko Doder, “Carter Brushes Aside Allied Objection, Expects NATO Consensus on Missiles,” *Washington Post*, December 8, 1979, p. A9.

¹⁹⁴ Quoted in Dusko Doder, “Two Allied Leaders to Discuss NATO Missiles With Carter,” *Washington Post*, December 7, 1979, p. A35.

¹⁹⁵ The Dutch said they would put off for two years a decision on whether to deploy cruise missiles in the Netherlands in order to assess progress toward an arms control agreement that might render deployment unnecessary. In effect, this was a promise to decide by December 1981 whether they would allow cruise missiles on Dutch soil or not. The Belgians, while approving in principle the decision to produce and deploy, reserved the right to reexamine their position in six months, again depending on progress along the arms control track (Michael Getler, “10 NATO Allies Favor New Missiles But Dutch Still Waiver,” *Washington Post*, November 14, 1979, p. A21; Michael Getler, “NATO Agrees to Modernize Nuclear Arms,” *Washington Post*, December 13, 1979, pp. A1, A34; Flora Lewis, “NATO Approves Plan to Install Missiles and Promote Talks,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1979, pp. A1, A3). On November 19, 1980, Belgian Prime Minister Wilfried Martens announced that Belgium would accept U.S. cruise missiles on its soil if the U.S.–Soviet arms talks failed. The decision was a compromise: it reaffirmed Belgium’s pledge to support the double-track decision, but Belgium would wait until after the U.S.–Soviet talks had been held to make a final decision on deployment (AP, “Belgians Agree to Take U.S. Nuclear Missiles,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 1980, p. 5).

¹⁹⁶ Reuters, “Dutch Cabinet Periled on Missiles,” *New York Times*, December 20, 1979, p. A2; “Dutch Cabinet Fights for Life,” *Washington Post*, December 20, 1979, p. A29.

¹⁹⁷ Stanley Hoffmann, “NATO and Nuclear Weapons: Reasons and Unreason,” *Foreign Affairs* 60 (Winter 1981/1982): 328, 327. Josef Joffe claims that there was “not a genuine mass movement; nor did the revolt sweep the entire length and breadth of the half-Continent” (“Peace and Populism,” *International Security* 11 [Spring 1987]: 18).

decision had been so carefully prepared to ensure widespread support.¹⁹⁸ Yet within less than a year of the ministerial endorsement in Brussels, observers were describing it as a potential Alliance-shattering event. “[T]he divergence is sharpening,” Richard Burt wrote during mid 1980. “If allowed to continue, the alliance itself will be placed at risk.”¹⁹⁹ An influential news weekly was more acerbic: “The relationship between Western Europe and North America, alias the Atlantic Alliance, is in the early stages of what could be a terminal illness. The alliance has been in trouble plenty of times before, but this time is the worst yet.”²⁰⁰

A second, closely related reason why the Alliance was said to be in crisis focused on what seemed to be a growing rift between Americans and Europeans concerning the merits and even the morality of any strategy that relied on nuclear weapons for both deterrence and defense. In 1979, the European members sought to couple the United States more tightly to Europe. By 1981, many of those same members were questioning whether they wanted to be closely tied to the United States.²⁰¹ There was little evidence, Christopher Makins argued, that publics in the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries accepted – indeed, even understood – the rationale for going ahead with the new missiles. In Britain, “the latent disposition of a part of society toward unilateral nuclear disarmament has again reared its head, . . . and the Labor Party opposition, while divided on this issue, is committed to an anti-nuclear platform.”²⁰² François de Rose cited the antinuclear demonstrations staged in Europe in the aftermath of the double-track decision as evidence of a “serious crisis” in Europe’s will to defend itself, caused by a “loss of confidence in the ability of the Alliance . . . to prevent war.”²⁰³ Lawrence Freedman suggested the problem was even broader: the antinuclear, anti-NATO demonstrations were “a symptom of a general crisis in Atlantic relations. This crisis is over Western policy regarding the Soviet Union and particularly over what is the most appropriate response to turbulence in the Third World.”²⁰⁴

In effect, what began as an attempt to use missile deployments to send subtle signals to the Soviets about what would happen if there should ever be another war in Europe had, by the early 1980s, seemingly become a struggle to keep the

¹⁹⁸ The run-up to the December 12, 1979 endorsement of the double-track decision is ably described by Garthoff, “The NATO Decision on Theater Nuclear Forces,” pp. 197–214. See also Fred Kaplan, “Warring Over Missiles For NATO,” *New York Times Magazine*, December 9, 1979, pp. 46ff.

¹⁹⁹ Richard Burt, “Washington and the Atlantic Alliance: The Hidden Crisis,” in *National Security in the 1980s* ed. W. Scott Thompson (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1980), p. 110. See also Christoph Bertram, “Theater Nuclear Weapons in Europe,” *Foreign Affairs* 60 (Winter 1981/1982): 316.

²⁰⁰ “Did You Say Allies?” *The Economist*, June 6, 1981, p. 11.

²⁰¹ Lawrence Freedman, “Limited War, Unlimited Protest,” *Orbis* 26 (Spring 1982): 100.

²⁰² Christopher Makins, “TNF Modernization and the ‘Countervailing Strategy,’” *Survival* 23 (July/August 1981): 159.

²⁰³ François de Rose, “Updating Deterrence in Europe,” *Survival* 24 (January/February 1982): 19.

²⁰⁴ Freedman, “Limited War, Unlimited Protest,” pp. 96–97.

Alliance from falling apart.²⁰⁵ The larger and the more vocal the antinuclear and anti-NATO demonstrations staged in Europe in 1981 and 1982, the more insistent the questions about whether the NATO countries would actually go through with the missile deployments, scheduled to begin toward the end of 1983. And if they did not go through with deployment on schedule, would that not be tantamount to admitting that the NATO countries no longer had the will to balance changes in Soviet military power?²⁰⁶

What Actually Happened?

The double-track decision was in essence an attempt to finesse a seemingly insoluble problem, neatly captured by David Schwartz in an insightful article written several years before the decision itself:

The United States wants to avoid strategic nuclear war with the Soviet Union unless its very existence is threatened and it perceives no other alternatives As a result, the U.S. views the European escalation ladder as being somewhat independent of the strategic exchange ladder. Although it has never publicly declared so, the United States would probably prefer to fight the Soviet Union on a European battlefield until Europe is destroyed rather than risk the destruction of American cities [G]iven a choice between a demolished Europe and a demolished homeland, U.S. political leaders would inevitably choose the former.

The prime concern of West German policy makers, in contrast, “is almost diametrically opposed to that of the U.S.; they wish to avoid, at all costs, being victims of a protracted U.S.–Soviet duel, either nuclear or conventional.”²⁰⁷

Given these divergent interests, it comes as no surprise that the call for new missiles intended to recouple the U.S. strategic deterrent to Europe originated in Europe, with U.S. officials “significantly less impressed with the need for them.”²⁰⁸ There was, however, a kind of political role reversal as the LRTNF/INF case unfolded. “[A]s Soviet opposition and European domestic controversy over the program picked up and enthusiasm waned in Europe, the implementation of the program became for many in the U.S. a test of Alliance cohesion.”²⁰⁹ Did the Alliance pass this test, or not?

At the time these events were taking place, the answer often given to this question was “no.” Two claims were advanced in support of this position: first,

²⁰⁵ Suggested by *ibid.*, p. 101.

²⁰⁶ John Newhouse, “Arms and Allies,” *The New Yorker*, February 28, 1983, pp. 64ff.

²⁰⁷ David Schwartz, “The Role of Deterrence in NATO Defense Strategy: Implications for Doctrine and Posture,” *World Politics* 28 (October 1975): 129–130. Jeffrey Boutwell too saw the LRTNF/INF issue “as a crucial test of NATO’s ability to make and implement difficult decisions” (“Politics and the Peace Movement in West Germany,” *International Security* 7 [Spring 1983]: 73). See also Gregory Treverton, “Managing NATO’s Nuclear Dilemma,” *International Security* 7 (Spring 1983): 93–115.

²⁰⁸ Christoph Bertram, “The Implications of Theater Nuclear Weapons in Europe,” p. 309.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

that opposition to the modernization half of the double-track decision was growing and intensifying in a way that was undermining support for defense in general; second, that U.S. pressure on its European allies to go through with the missile deployments was creating a “crisis of governability”²¹⁰ for several European members, especially Belgium, the Netherlands, West Germany, and to a lesser extent Denmark and Norway. Yet what stands out in retrospect is how wrong these claims proved to be.

NATO Missiles and European Attitudes

In an article published just as the antinuclear, anti-NATO protest movement in Europe appeared to be swelling, Stanley Hoffmann argued that it was crucial to distinguish between “routine difficulties engendered by Western Europe’s dependence on the United States . . . and major breakdowns or misunderstandings which reveal not simply an inevitable divergence of interests but dramatically different views of the world and priorities.” The Euro-missiles controversy, he claimed, “belongs in the second [category], and now confronts the Alliance with one of its most dangerous tests.”²¹¹ Helmut Sonnenfeldt agreed: “Today’s situation is probably more serious than the crises and frictions we’ve had in the alliance during the past 30 years. You’re not just dealing with differences among governments. You’re dealing with differences that run deeply into the body politic.”²¹²

There are, however, three problems with claims that the LRTNF/INF case coincided with dramatic shifts in European public opinion.²¹³ First, long before the double-track decision became an issue in European politics, public opinion surveys suggested that many in Europe wanted their governments to do everything possible to avoid entanglement in a U.S.–Soviet conflict. During the 1950s – a period that Hoffmann described as one of “general confidence in American nuclear superiority”²¹⁴ – one-third or more of West German respondents routinely took the position that Germany should stay out of the East–West struggle; indeed, the percentage of West German respondents preferring neutrality in the event of an East–West war rose from 37 in September 1952 to 46 in early 1954 to 53 in October 1954.²¹⁵ In a February 1964 survey, 42 percent of West German respondents said they preferred neutrality between East and West to friendship with the United States, while 49 percent preferred the latter.²¹⁶ In an April 1980 survey, majorities in Britain and France and a

²¹⁰ The phrase is from Kelleher, “The Present as Prologue,” p. 156.

²¹¹ Hoffmann, “NATO and Nuclear Weapons,” p. 327.

²¹² Quoted in “Disarming Threat to Stability,” *Time*, November 30, 1981, p. 39. Sonnenfeldt served as counselor to the U.S. State Department in the 1970s.

²¹³ Here I draw on an earlier work of mine on this subject: Thies, *The Atlantic Alliance*, pp. 7–11.

²¹⁴ Hoffmann, “NATO and Nuclear Weapons,” p. 329.

²¹⁵ Richard and Anna Merritt, *Public Opinion in Semisovereign Germany* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), p. 25.

²¹⁶ Karl Deutsch, Lewis Edinger, Roy Macridis, and Richard Merritt, *France, Germany and the Western Alliance* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1967), p. 181n.

plurality in West Germany said their governments should do everything possible to stay out of quarrels between the United States and the Soviet Union.²¹⁷ However, when asked in 1980 and 1981 whether NATO was “still essential” for their country’s security, majorities in Belgium, Denmark, Britain, West Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands and a plurality in France responded that it was.²¹⁸ Given a choice between remaining in NATO and neutrality, majorities in Britain, West Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands preferred NATO in a March 1981 survey.²¹⁹

Second, in those cases for which trend data are available, they suggest that support for the Alliance was stable or even increasing, despite the so-called crisis over the double-track decision. A series of polls in the Netherlands found that support among Dutch respondents for remaining in NATO held steady at 76 percent between July 1974 and December 1980. Between December 1980 and October 1981, the percentage of Dutch respondents preferring that the Netherlands remain in NATO declined from 76 to 69, but then rebounded to 76 by January 1982.²²⁰ In West Germany, opinion was evenly divided between maintaining a military alliance with the United States and neutrality in surveys conducted between 1961 and 1973, but between 1974 and 1981 roughly half of the respondents favored maintaining the alliance with the United States while only about one-third favored neutrality. When asked to choose between good relations with the United States and good relations with the Soviet Union, the percentage of West German respondents believing the former more important than the latter increased from 52 in 1975 to 63 in 1979 and to 65 in 1981.²²¹ A 1980 poll commissioned by the West German government found that 75 percent of Germans had faith in America’s determination to defend West Germany and West Berlin, compared to 70 percent when a similar question was asked in 1974.²²²

Third, the pacifist left that captured so much attention during the early 1980s was far noisier than it was politically strong.²²³ The protest marches

²¹⁷ Karen DeYoung, “European People Favor Limited Backing for U.S.,” *Washington Post*, April 17, 1980, p. A33.

²¹⁸ Kenneth Adler and Douglas Wertman, “Is NATO in Trouble? A Survey of European Attitudes,” *Public Opinion* 4 (August–September 1981): 9.

²¹⁹ William Schneider, “Elite and Public Opinion: The Alliance’s New Fissure,” *Public Opinion* 6 (February/March 1983): 6. See also Adler and Wertman, “Is NATO in Trouble?,” p. 10; Werner Kaltefleiter, “German Divisions,” *Policy Review* 18 (August/September 1981): 41–49.

²²⁰ Jan Stapel, “Surveys by Netherlands Gallup Affiliate Reveal Extent of ‘Hollanditis,’” *The Gallup Report* 208 (January 1983): 21. See also Richard Eichenberg, “The Myth of Hollanditis,” *International Security* 8 (Fall 1983): 143–159.

²²¹ *World Opinion Update* 4 (March/April 1980): 33; Adler and Wertman, “Is NATO in Trouble?,” p. 10; Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, “Polls Favor Good Relationship with United States,” *Capital*, August 1981 [Foreign Broadcast Information Service translation]; Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, “In West Germany, Conservative Mood Isn’t Helping the Conservative Candidate,” *Public Opinion* 3 (August/September 1980): 44.

²²² “Fourteen Anxious Faces as Schmidt Enters the Bear’s Den,” *The Economist*, June 28, 1980, p. 41.

²²³ Suggested by Josef Joffe, “Schmidt and His Tormenters,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 27, 1981, p. 25.

that attracted hundreds of thousands of demonstrators made it *appear* as if “pacifism is sweeping Northern Europe.”²²⁴ Election results, however, tell a different story. Political parties that based their electoral appeals on opposition to new U.S. missiles in Europe did not do particularly well in elections during the 1980s. Indeed, “every Labor (or Liberal) party that had sought to absorb or outflank the protest movement ended up not in power but on the opposition benches.”²²⁵ In West Germany, the governing SPD/FDP coalition (Social Democratic Party/Free Democratic Party) led by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt won the October 1980 election running in support of the double-track decision. Opposition to the missile modernization track from the left wing of Schmidt’s own party played an important role in the fall of his government, which was replaced by a center-right coalition led by Helmut Kohl that supported the Pershing II/GLCM deployments.²²⁶ Hans-Jochen Vogel, the SPD’s candidate for chancellor in the West German election on March 6, 1983, promised a “prompt personal initiative . . . designed to make cruise and Pershing II missiles unnecessary,” but the German electorate turned instead to the CDU/FDP coalition led by Chancellor Kohl.²²⁷ In the 1980 Bundestag election, the CDU/CSU won 44.5 percent of the vote (226 seats), rising to 48.8 percent in 1983 (244 seats). In 1980, the SPD won 42.9 percent (218 seats), but only 38.2 percent in 1983 (193 seats). The SPD lost again in the 1987 Bundestag election, during which they did slightly worse than in 1983 (37.0 percent, 186 seats), although the CDU/CSU lost seats too (44.3 percent, 223 seats).²²⁸ In effect, the SPD lost both national elections that followed its change of heart on the double-track decision; it did not return to power until 1998, by which time the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty had rendered the issue moot.

²²⁴ Dominique Moïsi, “Mitterand’s Foreign Policy: The Limits of Continuity,” *Foreign Affairs* 60 (Winter 1981/82): 347. Other writers used even more colorful phrasing. See, for example, Bradley Graham, “Soviets Campaign For Support,” *Washington Post*, March 10, 1981, p. A13 (“a swelling wave of pacifist and antinuclear sentiment”); Ronald Steel, “A Neutral Europe?” *The New Republic*, November 11, 1981, p. 20 (“a powerful neutralist tide”); Irving Kristol, “NATO at a Dead End,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 15, 1981, p. 20 (“a tidal wave that will sweep all before it, leaving NATO in ruins”). See also “A Pacifist Wave in Europe,” *Newsweek*, August 24, 1981, pp. 28ff.; “Toward A Farewell to Arms,” *Time*, March 23, 1981, p. 36.

²²⁵ Joffe, “Peace and Populism,” p. 12.

²²⁶ The Free Democratic Party led by Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher pulled out of the coalition, costing Schmidt his Bundestag majority. The FDP then aligned with Kohl’s Christian Democratic Union to form a new government.

²²⁷ Quoted in Newhouse, “Arms and Allies,” p. 76. Vogel was also quoted as saying that, if he was elected Chancellor, West Germany would go ahead with missile deployment only “under very extreme circumstances” (John Vinocur, “Rome and Bonn Appear to Ease View on Missiles,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1983, p. 10).

²²⁸ These results are from the Bundestag Web site/election history: <http://www.bundestag.de/geschichte/wahlen.html>. I am indebted to Dorle Hellmuth for compiling these figures on my behalf.

In Great Britain, the Conservatives led by Margaret Thatcher – probably the most vocal advocate since Harold Macmillan of close ties with the United States – won the 1979 election against the governing Labor Party. Labor responded to its defeat by moving to the left – promising not to accept U.S. cruise missiles on British soil and endorsing unilateral nuclear disarmament by Britain. Their reward was to lose three more national elections in a row: a “humiliating defeat”²²⁹ in 1983, in which Labor’s share of the vote plunged to 27.6 percent (209 seats in the House of Commons),²³⁰ down from 36.9 percent (268 seats) in 1979, followed by defeats in 1987 (30.8 percent, 229 seats) and 1992 (34.4 percent, 271 seats).²³¹

In the Netherlands, the Labor Party led the fight against the double-track decision in 1979, and its platform for the May 1981 election called for refusing to accept U.S. cruise missiles on Dutch soil and sharply reducing the nuclear missions performed by Dutch armed forces. Labor’s reward was to *lose* nine seats in the Dutch parliament, while the governing Christian Democrats and Liberals – which supported the double-track decision – lost one and two seats, respectively, which meant the Christian Democrats were now the largest party in the Dutch parliament, with forty-eight seats to Labor’s forty-four. The Dutch case is far from clear-cut, however, in part because economic issues were important and in part because the biggest gainer (from eight to seventeen seats) was the Democrats 66 party, which wanted to postpone but not abandon acceptance of cruise missiles in Holland. Overall, though, the relative strength of the Christian Democrats, Liberals, and Labor in the new parliament hardly supports claims of a tidal wave of neutralist/pacifist sentiment sweeping across Europe.²³²

Subsequent election results likewise cast doubt on the tidal wave hypothesis. In Italy, the communists stepped up their opposition to the deployment of GLCMs on Italian soil, making it one of the principal issues in the run-up to the June 1983 election. Their reward was a slight decline in their share of the vote, from 30.4 percent in 1979 to 29.9 percent in 1983, followed by a further decline to 26.6 percent in the 1987 elections.²³³ In Belgium, the governing coalition led by Prime Minister Wilfried Martens *increased* its majority in the

²²⁹ R. W. Apple, Jr., “Europe Faces ‘Hot Autumn’ of Hostility to Missiles,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1983, Sec. 4, p. 3.

²³⁰ This was Labor’s “worst showing (in terms of ballots) since 1918,” Joffe, “Peace and Populism,” p. 11.

²³¹ The results cited here are from Bryn Morgan and Joseph Connelly, “UK Election Statistics: 1945–2000,” Research Paper 01/37, 29 March 2001, available at the official House of Commons Web site: <http://www.parliament.uk.commonslib/research/rp2001/rp01>, p. 8.

²³² “Toward A Farewell to Arms,” *Time*, March 23, 1981, p. 36; “A Dutch Gift to the Russians?” *The Economist*, May 23, 1981, p. 47; R. W. Apple, Jr., “Voters in Netherlands Send A Mixed Signal on Missiles,” *New York Times*, May 27, 1981, p. 5; “Dutch Coalition Loses Majority in Parliament,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 27, 1981, p. 29; R. W. Apple, Jr., “A Setback for NATO?” *New York Times*, May 28, 1981, p. 4; “Happy Ending for a Fairy-tale Writer?” *The Economist*, May 30, 1981, p. 41.

²³³ Henry Kamm, “Italian Communists Press Arms Issue,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1983, p. 3. Election results are from Wikipedia, courtesy of Dorle Hellmuth.

parliament in elections held in October 1985, seven months after Martens' government agreed to accept ground-launched cruise missiles on Belgian soil.²³⁴ In the parliamentary election in the Netherlands in May 1986, roughly six months after securing the Dutch parliament's approval of deploying cruise missiles in the Netherlands, Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers' Christian Democrat Party *gained* nine seats, although this was offset by a nine-seat loss by their coalition partners, the Liberal party. The anti-cruise missile Labor Party gained five seats, which meant that the Christian Democrats surpassed them (again) as the largest party in the Dutch parliament.²³⁵

Did Any NATO Member Cross the Crisis Threshold?

As the antinuclear, anti-NATO demonstrations gained visibility, observers became increasingly pessimistic about NATO members' ability to work together in the face of what seemed to be a rising tide of protest. Catherine Kelleher, for example, suggested that several European members – especially Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, and West Germany – were facing a “crisis of governability” due to fragile governing coalitions, growing antinuclear sentiments in their electorates, conflicting views about the relative importance of defense and welfare, and their continued commitment to détente despite the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and the seeming intensification of the Cold War at the start of the 1980s.²³⁶ Taken together, she predicted, these constraints would make it hard for the Alliance to take coordinated action, especially on matters involving nuclear weapons.²³⁷ “Relations between the United States and Western Europe may seem bad today,” two Americans wrote using the florid prose often found in the crisis literature, “but they are likely to be vastly worse a year from now, as NATO governments tremble and even fall under the weight of a divisive issue that can no longer be postponed: Euromissiles.”²³⁸ John Newhouse, writing in February 1983, predicted that “Neither of the two major [West German] parties is likely to acquire a parliamentary majority in the elections that are to be held on March 6th, and the winner may not even be able to put together a coalition.”²³⁹ Jonathan Dean, writing near the end of 1983, warned of “physical resistance to deployment of the first battery of Pershings [in West

²³⁴ Steven Dryden, “Government Wins Election in Belgium,” *Washington Post*, October 14, 1985, p. A16; “Belgian Election Results,” *Washington Post*, October 15, 1985, p. A17.

²³⁵ William Drozdiak, “Dutch Voters Reelect Premier Who Opted for Cruise Missiles,” *Washington Post*, May 22, 1986, pp. A1, A28. In the September 1982 Dutch election, discussed later in this chapter, Labor had won the largest share of the popular vote.

²³⁶ See note 210 in this chapter. See also Joffe, “Peace and Populism,” p. 4, who calls it a “crisis of political institutions.”

²³⁷ Kelleher, “The Present as Prologue,” pp. 156–159. See also Walter Laqueur, “Hollanditis: A New Stage in European Neutralism,” *Commentary* 72 (August 1981): 19–26.

²³⁸ Nick Eberstadt and Tom Ricks, “A Crisis in NATO on Missiles,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1982, p. 27.

²³⁹ Newhouse, “Arms and Allies,” p. 68.

Germany], in which some demonstrators may be seriously injured.”²⁴⁰ Jane M. O. Sharp endorsed Dean’s article, adding that it shows “how destructive the December 1979 decision has already proved, both for domestic politics in the Federal Republic and in intra-NATO relations, but also how the situation will almost certainly worsen if Pershing II and cruise deployment proceeds on schedule.”²⁴¹

There was annoyance aplenty during the 1980s, but what did it all add up to? Did any NATO member cross the crisis threshold – in other words, become indifferent between staying in and getting out? Much of the annoyance came from Europeans upset about what they saw as insensitive U.S. policies, and rightly so. Both the Ford and Carter administrations had been willing to accept limits on long-range cruise missiles within the SALT negotiations.²⁴² As seen from Europe, “The United States appeared more concerned about limiting the nuclear threat to the U.S. than the nuclear threat to Europe, and to be willing to bargain away weapons important to Europe [e.g., cruise missiles] to obtain limits on Soviet strategic forces.”²⁴³ The Carter administration’s attempt to repair the damage by discussing cruise missiles in a more evenhanded way proved disastrous – it simply “exacerbated European anxiety about U.S. intentions.”²⁴⁴ When the German government suggested that the United States should alter its SALT position to allow the deployment of long-range cruise missiles, “The suggestion was peremptorily rejected,” which prompted German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to air his concerns in public in the form of his 1977 Alastair Buchan Memorial Lecture.²⁴⁵ It was only after the neutron bomb fiasco in April 1978 that “a policy review process was set in motion inside the United States government that sharply shifted the U.S. stance on cruise missiles and more generally on LRTNF.”²⁴⁶

Given that there was a lot of ill will expressed as the LRTNF/INF case played itself out, why didn’t the Alliance fall apart? It is instructive in this regard to consider again the strengths and weaknesses of an alliance of democracies, both of which were on display in the way the NATO allies handled this case. Consider first the intersection of political with strategic concerns. Like the Eisenhower administration during the 1950s, which had to deal with Soviet missile

²⁴⁰ Jonathan Dean, “Federal Germany after the Euromissiles,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 39 (December 1983): 32.

²⁴¹ Jane M. O. Sharp, “A Perspective,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 39 (December 1983): 12.

²⁴² SALT is an acronym for Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.

²⁴³ Thomson, “The LRTNF Decision,” p. 604. Laurance Martin’s assessment was even more acerbic: “the most explicit instance of going beyond merely neglecting threats to allies to actually diverting them in that direction” (quoted in John Borawski, “Towards Theater Nuclear Arms Control?” *Washington Quarterly* 3 [Winter 1980]: 88).

²⁴⁴ Thomson, “The LRTNF Decision,” p. 604.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 604. See also Garthoff, “The NATO Decision on Theater Nuclear Forces,” pp. 199–200; Freedman, “Limited War, Unlimited Protest,” p. 97.

²⁴⁶ Thomson, “The LRTNF Decision,” p. 605. For more on the neutron bomb issue, see Thomson, “The LRTNF Decision,” pp. 605–606; Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*, pp. 309–312.

advances while fending off criticisms from Democrats in Congress that it wasn't doing enough, the Carter administration saw the LRTNF issue as a political as well as a strategic problem. One reason why the Carter administration was eager to appear responsive to European concerns was to repair the damage caused by earlier policy initiatives that created the impression that the Americans were *not* attuned to European concerns. The Carter administration "tried to compensate for its handling of the neutron bomb decision by seeking to respond boldly to a perceived European concern The administration thus hoped to generate a NATO 'success' in the theater nuclear forces field. Doubts by some as to the military necessity (or even the desirability) of deploying new LRTNF systems were overwhelmed by a perceived political necessity within the Alliance."²⁴⁷

Solving political problems means cutting political deals, and even before the double-track decision was formally endorsed in December 1979, the governments involved were cutting deals to make the deployment track more palatable to European electorates. In October 1979, American and Dutch officials discussed a plan that would "remove older U.S. nuclear weapons from the Netherlands and eliminate the [planned] nuclear attack responsibility of the Dutch F-16 air squadron assigned to NATO. That would appear to reduce the Netherlands' overall nuclear role in return for taking the [forty-eight] cruise missiles."²⁴⁸ Also in 1979, Deputy National Security Adviser David Aaron, while in Europe to consult with NATO members about the double-track decision, suggested that the missile modernization track should be linked to withdrawal of 1,000 older, short range nuclear weapons, as a way of undercutting opposition to the presence of new U.S. missiles.²⁴⁹ Italy was selected to host 112 cruise missiles in part to hedge against the risk that Belgium and/or the Netherlands would refuse to go through with the deployment, thereby leaving West Germany as the only continental ally willing to accept Pershings IIs and GLCMs. Italy thus earned points for being a good ally even though in 1979 it spent only 2.4 percent of GDP on defense, a full percentage point less than the Netherlands and only 0.1 percent more than Denmark.²⁵⁰

On the other hand, unlike the members of pre-1939 alliances, who could make (or break) agreements with alacrity, an alliance of democracies is likely to be prone to indecision and delay, as Cabinet ministers wonder what their parliamentary majorities can accept and backbenchers wonder what their constituents will swallow. There was plenty of indecision and delay in the LRTNF/INF case, to be sure, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. After the May 1981 election in the Netherlands, it took roughly three-and-one-half months to cobble together a center-left coalition of Christian Democrats, Labor, and Democrats 66 (D-66), replacing the previous center-right government of Christian

²⁴⁷ Garthoff, "The NATO Decision on Theater Nuclear Forces," p. 203.

²⁴⁸ Michael Burns, "Netherlands to Debate NATO Nuclear Missiles," *Baltimore Sun*, October 23, 1979, p. 4.

²⁴⁹ "U.S. May Withdraw 1,000 NATO Weapons," *New York Times*, October 26, 1979, p. A6.

²⁵⁰ Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, p. 203.

Democrats and Liberals. Even so, the only way to put together a new government was to leave the most contentious issue – whether to accept the Netherlands' allotment of forty-eight cruise missiles – unresolved. The Christian Democrats wanted to postpone a decision on the missiles, Labor said it would never accept them, and D-66 said it opposed the missiles at that time but might change its stance later if the strategic situation changed. In effect, the Dutch resorted to the time-honored tradition in a democracy of stalling for time.²⁵¹ The manner in which the Dutch, and the Belgians too, waffled on this issue did not go unnoticed. "A number of commentators have concluded that either Dutch or Belgian locations for the projected GLCM flights (forty-eight in each) are relatively improbable."²⁵² Improbable or not, these predictions proved to be wrong.

In the Dutch case, the government formed after the May 1981 election did not address the deployment issue, in part because the Labor party reiterated "at every opportunity . . . its intention to bring the Government down the minute deployment is approved," and in part because neither the Christian Democrats nor D-66 were ready to face the issue head-on.²⁵³ Despite an earlier promise to decide by December 1981 whether the Netherlands would accept its share of the deployments agreed on by the NATO countries in December 1979, the Dutch government (hopelessly divided internally on the missiles issue) in effect let matters drift until the next national election in September 1982. In that election, the antideployment Labor Party won the largest share of the vote (30.4 percent), but the Christian Democrats (29.3 percent) and the (mostly conservative) Liberals (23 percent) together won enough seats to form a new government with a six-seat majority in the parliament.²⁵⁴ With Labor no longer in a position to bring down the government, the new center-right government indicated greater willingness to proceed with cruise missile deployments, but no more than that. The reason why is that opposition to the missiles was not confined to the Labor Party; there were also ten or so left-wing Christian Democrat parliamentarians who were undecided and wavering on the deployment issue. With deployment not scheduled to begin until 1986, the governing coalition elected in 1982 again put off a final decision on whether to accept the missiles, this time until after a parliamentary debate in the spring of 1984,

²⁵¹ "The Queen's Men Try Again," *The Economist* August 8, 1981, p. 42; Richard Eder, "Dutch Forge a New Cabinet Painfully," *New York Times*, September 8, 1981, p. 6; Richard Eder, "Dutch in Vanguard of Missile Skeptics," *New York Times*, September 18, 1981, p. 4; R. W. Apple, Jr., "Dutch Attitudes Shift on Politics," *New York Times*, October 4, 1981, p. 9.

²⁵² Kelleher, "The Present as Prologue," p. 155. See also Coit Blacker and Farooq Hussain, "European Theater Nuclear Forces," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 36 (October 1980): 35.

²⁵³ R. W. Apple, Jr., "After 200 Years, a Chill Develops in Ties Between U.S. and Dutch," *New York Times*, February 14, 1982, p. 8. See also "Neutrality in Europe: The Dutch Quail Disease," *The Economist*, August 23, 1982, pp. 43–45.

²⁵⁴ Jon Nordheimer, "Rightists Tip the Scale in Dutch Election," *New York Times*, September 9, 1982, p. 3. Democrats 66, which had waffled on the deployment issue, "sank heavily in today's voting and recorded only 4.3%" (ibid.).

which would allow an opportunity to observe the reaction in West Germany to the arrival there of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles, scheduled for December 1983.²⁵⁵ But by the spring of 1984, the government was *still* not prepared to make a decision, mainly because of continuing opposition from within Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers' Christian Democrat Party, including the Minister of Defense, Jacob de Ruijter.²⁵⁶ With Lubbers' government holding 79 of the 150 seats in the Dutch parliament, and "at least eight and perhaps as many as 20 Christian Democrats . . . expected to vote 'no' on full deployment" of the forty-eight cruise missiles allocated to the Netherlands, Lubbers spent the spring and summer of 1984 searching for a deployment formula that would satisfy both his party and other NATO members.²⁵⁷

Once again, it is important to notice what did *not* happen. Other NATO members, and not just the Americans, were annoyed with the way successive Dutch governments put off a decision on accepting the GLCMs.²⁵⁸ Yet there was no attempt to excoriate the Dutch, much less desert them or expel them from the Alliance. When U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger visited The Hague in March 1984 to discuss deployment options, his visit was preceded by a convoluted leak to the press that attributed to NATO officials the belief that "Mr. Weinberger will be prepared to accept any arrangement that preserves NATO's solid front by avoiding outright rejection of the missiles by the Dutch government."²⁵⁹ In the aftermath of Weinberger's visit, even as Dutch sources were predicting that Lubbers' government would be unable to go through with deployment, "diplomatic sources" let it be known that the United States "is not taking an 'all-or-nothing' position and wants to continue to explore ways out of the situation."²⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the Americans and the Dutch found other things on which they could agree, like the sale of U.S. Patriot air defense missiles to the Netherlands (along with a lucrative package of offsets for Dutch industry).²⁶¹

²⁵⁵ Jon Nordheimer, "Dutch Protests Revived by Invasion," *New York Times*, October 29, 1983, p. 3.

²⁵⁶ Lubbers had replaced Andreas von Agt as prime minister after the latter resigned in October 1982, citing fatigue as his reason (UPI, "Dutch Leader Quits Abruptly; A Former Aide Replaces Him," *New York Times*, October 14, 1982, p. 8).

²⁵⁷ R. W. Apple, Jr., "Dutch Government in Quandary on Stationing U.S. Missiles," *New York Times*, March 24, 1984, p. 6. See also R. W. Apple, Jr., "Dutch Are Unable to Deploy Missiles," *New York Times*, May 13, 1984, p. 3.

²⁵⁸ See, for example, John Tagliabue, "Bonn Sharpens Attack On Dutch Over Missiles," *New York Times*, June 4, 1984, p. 6.

²⁵⁹ Apple, "Dutch Government in Quandary on Stationing of U.S. Missiles," p. 6. But see also Robert Greenberger, "Weinberger Annoys Netherlands With His Tough Talk on Missiles," *Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 1984, p. 30, which attributes a harder line to the U.S. Secretary of Defense.

²⁶⁰ Apple, "Dutch Are Unable to Deploy Missiles," p. 3.

²⁶¹ The offset package was so favorable to the Dutch that the Germans complained that it was better than what they had received ("U.S., Dutch Reach Agreement on Patriot Missile Purchase," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, January 23, 1984, p. 29).

On June 1, 1984, the Dutch cabinet voted to delay a final decision on deploying cruise missiles until November 1, 1985. In a letter to the Dutch parliament outlining the compromise reached in the cabinet, Prime Minister Lubbers said that the cabinet would decide by then whether to conclude an agreement with the United States on stationing cruise missiles in the Netherlands, with a draft bill to that effect to be submitted to Parliament by January 1, 1986. The Netherlands would deploy all forty-eight cruise missiles, the prime minister's letter continued, if there were no Soviet American arms control agreement by then and the Soviet Union had in its forces more SS-20s than the 378 in place as of June 1, 1984 (the date of the agreement in the Dutch cabinet). Meanwhile, preparations for site construction would continue, so that the cruise missiles could be installed by December 1988, which was the final date set for completion of deployment in the double-track decision.²⁶² In Washington, the Reagan administration opted to interpret this move as a step toward deployment rather than more burden shirking.²⁶³

The Belgian government, meanwhile, had been doing what it said it would do when it approved the dual-track decision in December 1979 – namely, review the decision every six months, thereby leaving open the possibility of rejecting the missiles. But the Belgian government also set in motion substantial construction at an air base at Florennes, south of Brussels, to prepare for arrival of the missiles. Deployment of forty-eight cruise missiles was scheduled to begin in March 1985, but the Belgian government still had not decided whether to proceed with deployment or (like the Dutch) seek another delay. Unlike the Dutch, however, on March 15 Prime Minister Wilfried Martens formally announced that Belgium would accept deployment of the missiles on schedule.²⁶⁴ The Belgian government did so, moreover, even though Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko had warned, two days before a visit to Washington by Martens and Foreign Minister Leo Tindemans, that if additional NATO missiles were deployed, “then I must say bluntly that the situation will be made more complicated, and greatly more complicated.”²⁶⁵ On March 20, 1985, the Belgian parliament voted 116–93 to approve deployment of the missiles, which was better than expected considering that the governing coalition had only a six-seat majority and there were fears that six or so members of the governing

²⁶² John Tagliabue, “Dutch Cabinet Decides to Delay A Decision on Deploying Missiles,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1984, p. 1. The Dutch parliament approved the Cabinet's plan roughly two weeks later by a vote of 79–71, despite the defection of six members of the Christian Democrat Party to the opposition (John Tagliabue, “Dutch Parliament Backs A Proposal to Delay Missiles,” *New York Times*, June 14, 1984, p. 1).

²⁶³ Bernard Gwertzman, “U.S. Takes Optimistic View of Dutch Missile Decision,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1984, p. 5.

²⁶⁴ Richard Bernstein, “Belgium to Accept Nuclear Missiles,” *New York Times*, March 16, 1985, p. 4. See also Richard Bernstein, “Missile Debate in Belgium Grows As Deployment Time Approaches,” *New York Times*, January 13, 1985, p. 4.

²⁶⁵ Quoted in Bernard Gwertzman, “Belgium Pressed by U.S. on Missiles,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1985, p. 6.

parties might vote against the government.²⁶⁶ Seven months later and – perhaps more importantly – two weeks after the ruling coalition in Belgium had been returned to office with an enlarged majority, the Dutch parliament finally voted on the missiles issue, in the form of an agreement with the United States governing deployment of cruise missiles in the Netherlands, which passed by a healthy majority of 91 out of 150 members.²⁶⁷ This cleared the way for the Dutch cabinet to announce on November 1, 1985, that the Netherlands would indeed (finally) deploy the forty-eight cruise missiles allotted to it by the double-track decision.²⁶⁸

At the time these steps were being taken, it was widely believed that the Netherlands for sure and Belgium very likely would reject cruise missiles on their soil. “It is simply impossible, in domestic political terms, for us to deploy in full on time,” was the judgment of a ranking Dutch diplomat who backed deployment. “To put 48 missiles in here on schedule, just like that, another job done, is a hopelessly unrealistic proposition.” A member of Prime Minister Lubbers’ own party described his search for a compromise as “desperate, and getting more desperate every day.” A Dutch journalist likewise told an American colleague, “In the end, I think the search for agreement will fail. That means the fall of the government, which will probably mean a Labor-Christian Democrat Government and no missiles.”²⁶⁹ What a difference plodding persistence can make! By May 1986, shortly after his party had won fifty-four seats in the Dutch parliamentary elections – a gain of nine, making the Christian Democrats the largest party in the new parliament – Lubbers was being hailed as the prime minister who “crafted an ingenious compromise” that “put the onus on the Soviet Union to freeze or reduce its deployment of SS-20 missiles aimed at Western Europe When the Soviets continued to expand their SS-20 arsenal, Lubbers was able to persuade a majority of parliament to favor installing the cruise missiles by 1988.”²⁷⁰

Policy making in a democracy is rarely aesthetically pleasing. Even so, it is precisely through tactics such as delay, delay, delay that opposition is worn down, compromises emerge, and seemingly insurmountable problems are overcome.

²⁶⁶ Bernstein, “Belgium to Accept Nuclear Missiles, p. 4; AP, “Belgian M.P.’s to Vote Today on Deploying Cruise Missiles,” *New York Times*, March 19, 1985, p. 4; AP, “Belgians Back Missile Policy,” *New York Times*, March 21, 1985, p. 4.

²⁶⁷ William Drozdiak, “Dutch Legislators Approve Missile Pact,” *Washington Post*, October 25, 1985, p. A30; William Drozdiak, “Dutch Opt to Accept Missile Deployment,” *Washington Post*, November 2, 1985, p. A1. A formal vote on deployment was taken in February 1986, which passed by a margin of 79–70 (AP, “Dutch Approve Cruise Missile Deployment,” *Washington Post*, February 28, 1986, p. A24).

²⁶⁸ Drozdiak, “Dutch Opt to Accept Missile Deployment,” p. A1.

²⁶⁹ All three of these judgments are from Apple, “Dutch Are Unable to Deploy Missiles,” p. 3.

²⁷⁰ William Drozdiak, “Dutch Voters Reelect Premier Who Opted for Cruise Missiles,” *Washington Post*, May 22, 1986, p. A28. The compromise also included the Netherlands giving up two nuclear weapons missions within NATO: eliminating the nuclear weapons carried by Dutch F-16 fighter-bombers and by Orion P-3 maritime patrol aircraft (Drozdiak, “Dutch Opt to Accept Missile Deployment,” p. A17).

Resisting Soviet Coercion

At the very moment that the Alliance was widely said to be in its worst shape ever, it was actually resisting – indeed, triumphing over – Soviet attempts to coerce it to abandon the double-track decision. The Soviets tried hard to prevent the Pershing and GLCM deployments from happening, but in the end they failed. Their efforts in this regard began even before the double-track decision was formally endorsed at the NATO ministerial meeting on December 12, 1979. On October 1, 1979, the Soviet news agency TASS quoted Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev as criticizing the “initiators of the arms race” for wanting to deploy new American weapons targeted on the Soviet Union. “These forces are playing a dangerous game with fire,” Brezhnev was quoted as saying.²⁷¹ On October 6, Brezhnev offered immediate negotiations to limit theater nuclear forces in Europe, but only if the NATO countries rejected their own High Level Group’s recommendation to deploy a mixed force of Pershing IIs and GLCMs in Western Europe.²⁷² In November 1979, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko warned during a press conference in Bonn, West Germany that, if the missile deployments were indeed approved by the NATO countries, then “the basis for negotiations would be destroyed; it would cease to exist.”²⁷³ Gromyko’s press conference came just ten days before an SPD political convention at which Chancellor Schmidt was expected to encounter resistance to German participation in the double-track decision and at a time when the Dutch government was publicly undecided about production and deployment of the new missiles.²⁷⁴

The pressure continued even after the NATO countries had formally endorsed the double-track decision. On December 16, 1979, the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* repeated Gromyko’s warning, saying that “as a result of NATO’s action, the basis for negotiations had been destroyed and a ‘favorable situation for Europe passed up.’”²⁷⁵ In January 1980, the Soviets responded to a U.S. offer of talks on theater nuclear forces in Europe by saying that there could be no such negotiations until the NATO countries had publicly reversed the production and deployment half of the double-track decision.²⁷⁶ The NATO countries held firm, and two months later Gromyko reversed course when he said that “détente is alive and well” and that “all talks in the field of arms control

²⁷¹ Kevin Klose, “Brezhnev Warns Americans Against A-Missiles in Europe,” *Washington Post*, October 2, 1979, p. A9.

²⁷² Blacker and Hussain, “European Theater Nuclear Forces,” p. 34. See also Garthoff, “The NATO Decision on Theater Nuclear Forces,” pp. 207–208.

²⁷³ Blacker and Hussain, “European Theater Nuclear Forces,” p. 35.

²⁷⁴ Michael Getler, “Gromyko Escalates Pressure Against NATO Arms Plan,” *Washington Post*, November 24, 1979, p. A12.

²⁷⁵ Blacker and Hussain, “European Theater Nuclear Forces,” p. 35.

²⁷⁶ Don Oberdorfer and John Goshko, “Soviets Reject NATO Parley to Limit Missiles in Europe,” *Washington Post*, January 5, 1980, pp. A1, A9; Richard Burt, “Soviet Says U.S. Missiles Rule Out New Arms Talks,” *New York Times*, January 6, 1980, p. A17.

should be resumed and continued.”²⁷⁷ In July 1980, the Soviets dropped a second precondition they previously had set for beginning talks on theater nuclear forces in Europe – namely, U.S. ratification of the 1979 SALT II treaty.²⁷⁸ Talks between U.S. and Soviet representatives on long-range theater nuclear forces in Europe subsequently began in October 1980.²⁷⁹

The Soviet negotiators at the Geneva LRTNF talks initially tried for wide-ranging discussions, while NATO’s preference was for a relatively narrow approach focused on long-range, land-based theater systems (most prominently the Soviet SS-20 IRBM but also Soviet SS-4s and SS-5s). The Soviets argued that “when all the principal nuclear arms in Europe were taken into account, a general balance existed” and therefore NATO should not be allowed to deploy any new missiles nor should they (the Soviets) have to make any cuts in their forces. The NATO countries again held firm, and when the talks resumed in 1981 (now known as the INF negotiations), they focused on U.S. and Soviet land-based medium- and intermediate-range missiles, as the NATO countries had preferred all along.²⁸⁰

The Soviets tried coercion again in October 1983 when Soviet President Andropov (Brezhnev’s successor) offered to reduce the number of SS-20 missiles in Europe to “about 140” and to halt SS-20 deployments in Asia, while warning that the Soviet Union’s next move would be to walk out of the INF negotiations if NATO went ahead with GLCM and Pershing II deployments, scheduled to begin in November and December 1983.²⁸¹ Even so, when the British announced the arrival of the first shipment of GLCMs on November 14, 1983, the Soviet delegation in Geneva continued to meet with its American counterparts. On November 22, the West German Bundestag approved the deployment of Pershing IIs in Germany; the next day the Soviet delegation in Geneva terminated the negotiations. “A series of high-level statements from Moscow ruled out a resumption of the talks unless the United States withdrew the missiles it had begun to deploy.”²⁸²

At the time these events were unfolding, the Reagan administration’s apparent lack of interest in arms control was often seized upon by the organizers of the various antinuclear, anti-NATO demonstrations held in 1981 and 1982 to justify their opposition to the missiles portion of the double-track decision. On

²⁷⁷ Blacker and Hussain, “European Theater Nuclear Forces,” p. 35. See also Simon Lunn, “At Issue: Nuclear Modernization in Europe,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 38 (August/September 1982): 17.

²⁷⁸ John Goshko, “Soviets Said to Modify Arms Stance,” *Washington Post*, July 3, 1980, pp. A1, A22; “Soviets Reported Willing to Drop 2d Bar to Talks,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1980, p. A3.

²⁷⁹ Paul Lewis, “New U.S.-Soviet Arms Talks Open in Geneva Under Strictest Secrecy,” *New York Times*, October 17, 1980, p. A10.

²⁸⁰ Lunn, “At Issue,” p. 17.

²⁸¹ Strobe Talbott, “Build-up and Breakdown,” *Foreign Affairs: America and the World*, 1983 62 (#3, 1984): 601–602.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 602–603.

the basis of these dramatic manifestations of public opposition, many observers concluded that, despite the Soviets' previous reversals, it was unlikely that the NATO countries could hold their own in a prolonged bargaining contest with the Soviets. John Newhouse, for example, wrote in early 1983 that "In some capitals – particularly Bonn, Brussels, and The Hague – the Soviet position is likely to be steadily more appealing as the American missile deployment, which is supposed to begin at the end of the year, becomes imminent."²⁸³ The president of France, François Mitterrand, was openly skeptical of the Alliance's ability to stand up to Soviet pressure tactics, as evidenced by his comment that the Soviet Union produces weapons while the West produces pacifists.²⁸⁴

These suggestions too proved less than prescient. The Soviets walked out of the INF negotiations (the START negotiations too) in a bid to create enough fear and opposition to the new missiles among the European host countries that the deployment would somehow be blocked or at least delayed. Toward that end, throughout 1984 the Soviets issued regular pronouncements that they were increasing the number of theater nuclear missiles targeted the NATO countries,²⁸⁵ and increasing the number of submarine-launched ballistic missiles carried by Soviet submarines deployed off the coasts of the United States.²⁸⁶ But the deployment half of the double-track decision went ahead relatively smoothly, and it was the Soviets who subsequently found themselves in the embarrassing position of having to reopen negotiations that they said they would never return to as long Pershing IIs and GLCMs were in place in Europe. The INF talks resumed in 1985, and after two years or so of inconclusive talks, the Soviets suddenly accepted a solution that they had for years ridiculed as inequitable and thus unacceptable – namely, a "zero-zero" solution whereby both sides would withdraw and dismantle all land-based nuclear missiles with ranges between 300 and 3,400 miles.

CONCLUSION

The two cases considered in this chapter, though separated in time by nearly two decades, share a number of similarities. Both were the product of Soviet advances in missile technology; and in both cases, the problem – Soviet ICBMs and then SS-20 IRBMs – was foreseen and steps taken to minimize or mitigate

²⁸³ Newhouse, "Arms and Allies," p. 68.

²⁸⁴ Eugene Rostow, "The Russians' Nuclear Gambit," *The New Republic*, February 20, 1984, p. 18.

²⁸⁵ See, for example, John Burns, "Russians Report They Are Manning New Missiles in East Germany," *New York Times*, January 18, 1984, p. 6; Reuters, "Czech Gives Data On Soviet Missiles," *New York Times*, April 1, 1984, p. 6; "Soviet Deploys More Missiles in East Germany to Match West," *New York Times*, May 15, 1984, p. 5;

²⁸⁶ See, for example, Gerald Seib, "New Soviet Submarine Moves Close to U.S. in a Move Seen as Politically Motivated," *Wall Street Journal*, January 27, 1984, p. 6; Burns, "Soviet Said to Add to Subs off U.S.," p. 1.

any undesirable consequences. In both cases, those steps proved controversial, and it was those controversies that triggered claims that the Alliance was in crisis or even facing its gravest challenge ever. The sequence of events is important because it suggests that in each case, claims that the Alliance was in crisis were more a reaction to the controversy that preceded them than to the viability of the Alliance itself.

More important, in each case the Alliance exhibited important self-healing tendencies. In the 1950s crisis over Soviet missile advances, the Eisenhower administration anticipated the vulnerability problem and was taking steps to remedy it years before the launch of the *Sputniks*, which seemingly touched off the crisis phase. In the INF case, the Carter administration was embarrassed by its mishandling of the SALT and neutron bomb issues and thus eager to appear responsive to the concerns of the European allies. In each case, by the time the Alliance was being pronounced in crisis, these self-healing tendencies were already at work within it. In the 1950s case, U.S. strategic forces were already expanding well before claims that the Alliance was in crisis had been made. In the INF case, NATO members had already rebuffed multiple Soviet attempts to split the Alliance by dangling offers of negotiations before them if only they would cancel the deployment plan.

This is not to suggest that democracies are somehow perfect – they surely are not. Their leaders are ambitious overachievers, not selfless angels. But it is precisely because leaders have personal stakes to defend that they are led to do things that give an alliance of democracies far more staying power than pre-1939 alliances. The INF case is a good illustration of how seemingly selfish motives can hold an alliance together.

Jimmy Carter's relations with German Chancellor Schmidt and French President Giscard "had begun badly. The two leaders were especially peeved and worried by what seemed an imperious and moralistic view of their civil nuclear policies." Carter's relations with Giscard "were never better than correct, and he couldn't get on with Schmidt, who considered himself, correctly, as the most gifted Western leader."²⁸⁷ Carter wanted something that would erase the stain caused by the neutron bomb fiasco, and he needed the Europeans' support for his SALT II treaty with the Soviets. The Europeans wanted something too – Giscard wanted the political credit that would come from being seen as the mediator who brought Carter and Schmidt together; Schmidt wanted the credit for an INF agreement to redound to himself, not to Carter; and British Prime Minister James Callaghan wanted a sweetheart deal to buy Trident SLBMs from the United States (to replace the Royal Navy's Polaris SLBMs), which he hoped to accomplish by supporting INF.²⁸⁸

A personal quest for recognition and praise may seem like something tawdry and even sordid compared to pursuit of the national interest, but it is precisely because leaders are ambitious and even vain that they are led to pursue

²⁸⁷ Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*, p. 307.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 324–326.

outcomes that prove beneficial for the Alliance as a whole. Is it merely coincidental that, in both the missiles crisis and then the INF crisis, the Alliance's success in surmounting both of these challenges was followed, albeit not immediately, by a string of diplomatic triumphs? The crisis of confidence supposedly caused by Soviet missile advances in the 1950s was followed by a successful defense of the Western position in Berlin in the two Berlin crises (1958, 1961), the German opening to the east during the 1960s (*Ostpolitik*), and then the 1971 Berlin agreement ("a tremendous diplomatic victory for the United States and its allies"²⁸⁹), détente, and the Helsinki Conference of 1975 (which put the Soviets on the defensive by making an issue of their human rights policies). The INF crisis opened the door to the 1987 INF Treaty (which required the Soviets to give up hundreds more missiles than did the United States), followed by the collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War.

This record of diplomatic triumphs is one more reason why the crisis literature is so misleading. Pick just about any year at random from the 1950s through the 1980s and you likely will find a chorus of doomsayers claiming that the Alliance is again on the brink of collapse.²⁹⁰ It's only by looking beyond the Alliance's travails at any given moment that it becomes apparent how amazingly successful it has proven to be.

²⁸⁹ Benjamin Rosenthal, "America's Move," *Foreign Affairs* 51 (January 1973): 381.

²⁹⁰ See the various citations in Chapter 1.

NATO and the Out-of-Area Issue

The drafters of the North Atlantic Treaty intended it to be geographically limited in scope. Article 5 states that “The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” Article 6 defines the area within which the obligations of membership apply as follows:

For the purpose of Article 5 an armed attack on one or more of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian departments of France, on the occupation forces of any Party in Europe, on the islands under the jurisdiction of any Party in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer or on the vessels or aircraft in this area of any of the Parties.

At the time the Treaty was signed, many of the parties to it had important interests outside the area specified by Article 6. Britain and France had their colonial empires in Africa and Asia; Belgium, the Netherlands, and Portugal had large colonial holdings too; and the United States had worldwide interests both economic and military. Even though there was no *obligation* for members to assist one another out-of-area, there was an *expectation* right from the start that members could and should be able to count on their allies for support.¹ Members with interests at stake outside Europe “attempted to identify their own concerns with those of the alliance. The French in Indochina, the British at Suez, and the Americans in Vietnam all sought allied support for their cause.”² When this expectation of allied support was not met, the result was often disappointment and recriminations within the Alliance, which outsiders were quick to pronounce a crisis or even the prelude to disintegration.

¹ See, for example, the account of the drafting of Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty in Elizabeth Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 13–17.

² *Ibid.*, p. 2. For a specific example, see President Eisenhower’s account of how the French expected support against Egyptian President Nasser after the 1956 nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 77–78.

This chapter examines two such cases – the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt in 1956 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 – both of which were widely said to be not just another NATO crisis but the Alliance’s worst crisis ever.

THE 1956 SUEZ CRISIS

Background

The Suez story has been told extensively and well elsewhere, so there is no need to retell it here in full.³ What is important for our purposes is that Suez was an international crisis as well as a NATO problem, which meant that American and British officials especially had to make difficult decisions while facing short deadlines. Unlike the Soviet missiles and INF cases discussed in [Chapter 5](#), each of which played out over a period of years, the most intense part of the Suez affair lasted only about a week. The intensity of the interaction compounded the anger and shock felt when the parties acted in ways that confounded and disappointed each other.

Suez, the international crisis was precipitated by Egypt’s nationalization of the Suez Canal Company on July 26, 1956, which Britain’s Conservative government interpreted as a mortal threat both to Britain’s position in the Middle East and to Western Europe’s oil supply, much of which was carried by tankers through the canal.⁴ The French, for their part, were convinced that the Egyptian government led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, an Egyptian army officer, was aiding and abetting the rebellion against French rule in Algeria, so they too were eager for a showdown with the Egyptians. Once the Egyptians

³ Book-length accounts include Hugh Thomas, *Suez* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); Chester Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar: Suez, 1956* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); Donald Neff, *Warriors at Suez* (Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1988). Shorter accounts are those by Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 83–104; Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, pp. 68–94; Douglas Stuart and William Tow, *The Limits of Alliance: NATO Out-of-Area Problems since 1949* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 58–66; Herbert Feis, “Suez Scenario: A Lamentable Tale,” *Foreign Affairs* 38 (July 1960): 598–612; Anthony Adamthwaite, “Suez Revisited,” *International Affairs* 64 (Summer 1988): 449–464. Also very useful are Anthony Eden, *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden: Full Circle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960); Harold Macmillan, *Riding the Storm, 1956–1959* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); Leon Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964); Richard Neustadt, *Alliance Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); Brian Urquhart, *Hamarskjold* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1972), pp. 132–230.

⁴ For the British reaction, see Eden, *Full Circle*, pp. 472–477; Thomas, *Suez*, pp. 37–49; Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar*, pp. 105–116; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 275–287. Egypt nationalized the Canal Company in response to an announcement by U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles on July 19 that the United States was withdrawing its financial support for Egypt’s proposed High Dam across the Nile at Aswan. The Egyptians proposed to use the toll revenues collected by the Canal Company to finance construction of the dam. For the reasons behind Dulles’s cancellation of American participation, see Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar*, pp. 93–99.

nationalized the Suez Canal Company, the British and French almost immediately began planning military action intended to restore Western control over the canal.⁵ The British and French, however, had difficulty finding a suitable pretext for military action, mainly because the United States was opposed to using force and proposed one diplomatic alternative after another to delay action and thereby defuse the crisis. By mid-October, frustrated by repeated delays that had brought little progress toward a solution they could accept, the British and French turned to collusion with the Israelis, who were spoiling for a fight because of Egyptian support for armed incursions into Israel by guerrilla fighters operating from the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip, and because of Egypt's blockade of the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba, thereby denying Israeli ships access to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.⁶

The plan concocted by the three conspirators called for an Israeli attack on Egyptian positions in the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula, which Israeli forces launched on October 29, 1956. The next day, the British and the French issued an ultimatum to the parties (prearranged with the Israelis) to cease fighting and withdraw their forces from the vicinity of the canal, and to allow an Anglo-French force to "separate" the combatants and secure the canal.⁷ Since the Israelis had no intention of menacing the canal, the ultimatum left them free to do what they had intended to do all along. Following the prearranged plan, the Israelis "accepted" the Anglo-French ultimatum on October 31, but the Egyptians did not. In response, the British and French launched air attacks on Egyptian airfields and other targets to clear the way for an Anglo-French invasion force – which had sailed from the British base on Malta on October 30, the day of the Anglo-French ultimatum – to come ashore. British and French paratroops were dropped into Egypt on November 5, and on November 6 British and French ground forces landed near Port Said, at the northern end of the Canal. Meanwhile, the Soviets (who were themselves invading Hungary to suppress an uprising there) threatened rocket attacks on Britain and France if they did not halt the invasion and withdraw their forces.

In the United States, meanwhile, President Eisenhower learned of the Anglo-French ultimatum through a wire-service news story read to him by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.⁸ Eisenhower was reportedly amazed that the British and French had disregarded repeated warnings from the United States not to

⁵ Eden, *Full Circle*, pp. 475–476; Thomas, *Suez*, p. 39; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, p. 288. Nasser was a leader of the Free Officers movement, which deposed King Farouk in July 1952 and proclaimed Egypt a republic in June 1953. Nasser became Premier in March 1954 and was elected President in June 1956.

⁶ Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, has the most extensive discussion of the Egyptian/Israeli military rivalry. Chapters 1 through 12 of his book set the stage for Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company.

⁷ For Israel's attack, see Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 363–370. The Anglo-French ultimatum is reprinted in Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 165. The Israelis were ordered to withdraw their forces to a line ten miles east of the Canal, the Egyptians to a line 10 miles west of the Canal.

⁸ Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, p. 365. See also Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 83.

resort to force, and even more so by the seemingly clumsy and transparent way in which the intervention had proceeded.⁹ The British for their part were surprised by the intensity of the American reaction. Eisenhower's treasury secretary, George Humphrey, gave the British a "virtual ultimatum" on November 5: either "an immediate cease-fire or war on the pound with not a dollar to be had for oil supplies." Humphrey also warned that he would "block their [the British] path to dollars from the IMF, put off their hopes of credit from our Import-Export Bank, and make no effort to align our central bankers behind sterling."¹⁰ With their economic situation worsening by the day and the Americans adamant that the British could expect no help until they had withdrawn their forces, British Prime Minister Anthony Eden, after securing the cabinet's consent, ordered a cease-fire on November 6, even though British and French commanders judged that, given a few days more, they could have taken the entire canal zone.¹¹

Why Suez was Thought to be a NATO Crisis

In a telegram to Eisenhower the day after the Egyptians nationalized the Suez Canal Company, Eden wrote that "We are unlikely to achieve our objective by economic pressures alone . . . [W]e must be ready, in the last resort, to use force to bring Nasser to his senses."¹² The British thought their intent was clear – Washington *knew* (or should have known) that they were preparing to fight. The British assumed further that their American ally, while it might not like what they were doing, would at least not oppose them openly. "If the United States government had approached this issue in the spirit of an ally," Eden wrote in his memoir, "they would have done everything in their power, short of the use of force, to support the nations whose economic activity depended upon the freedom of passage through the Suez Canal."¹³ The Eisenhower administration, however, was opposed to using force from the very start of the crisis. Despite "considerable efforts. . .to communicate and coordinate their policies," no amount of communication could change the fact that the British and French "were dead set on using military force to stop Nasser." Eisenhower, in contrast, fundamentally opposed their efforts in this regard.¹⁴

It was this tension between "individual national interests and collective alliance interests" that made Suez a NATO problem as well as an international

⁹ The most vivid account of Eisenhower's reaction is that by Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, pp. 24–25.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28; Thomas, *Suez*, pp. 140, 150; Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, pp. 191, 193–195, 208–209.

¹² Eden's message to Eisenhower is quoted at length in Eden, *Full Circle*, pp. 476–477; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 277–278; and Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, pp. 108–109. See also Thomas, *Suez*, p. 39.

¹³ Eden, *Full Circle*, p. 512.

¹⁴ Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 71.

crisis.¹⁵ The British were furious that the Americans did not stay neutral, especially since all they were asking was that the Americans look the other way for a few days while the British and French seized the Canal Zone and may be toppled Nasser too. The Americans were furious that the British disregarded their repeated injunctions not to use force to solve the problem. The British expected that their being an ally should count for something in American eyes; the Americans expected an ally to heed their advice and not use force. The British were shocked that the Americans used coercive measures against them; the Americans were shocked that the British kept them in the dark while conspiring with the French and the Israelis, in effect converting a dispute with the Egyptians into, potentially, a Middle East war involving who knows how many other parties.¹⁶ When each side realized how wrong it had been about the other, the result was recriminations and vituperative language. “The isolation of Britain and France inside NATO over Suez,” Denis Healey wrote a few years after the events in question, “led to a frightening explosion of anger in Britain against the alliance as a whole and the United States in particular. Besides the Conservative politicians, at least one senior civil servant in a key position began talking as if America’s ‘betrayal’ must mean the end of NATO.”¹⁷ James E. King, Jr., echoed Healey’s assessment: “For a moment it appeared that NATO might have been destroyed.”¹⁸ More recent works take much the same view. Suez, Elizabeth Sherwood writes, was “the worst intra-allied out-of-area crisis in [NATO’s] history.”¹⁹ As seen by Philip Nash, “Suez caused the greatest rift in the Anglo-American ‘special relationship’ since the end of World War II and shook the whole Atlantic Alliance to its foundations.”²⁰ Suez, in Lawrence Kaplan’s view, resulted in “the near destruction of the [Atlantic] Alliance.”²¹

And yet, despite the bad feelings and harsh language, what stands out in retrospect about the Suez affair is not the recriminations exchanged – NATO

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁶ Eisenhower and Dulles feared entrapment, especially if the Egyptians asked the Soviets for help against the British and the French (Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar*, pp. 167–169).

¹⁷ Denis Healey, “Britain and NATO,” in *NATO and American Security* ed. Klaus Knorr (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 221. See also H. C. Allen, *Conflict and Concord: The Anglo-American Relationship since 1783* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1959), p. 234, who calls Suez “the gravest Anglo-American breach of all.”

¹⁸ James E. King, Jr., “NATO: Genesis, Progress, Problems,” in *National Security in the Nuclear Age* ed. Gordon Turner and Richard Challener (New York: Praeger, 1960), p. 162.

¹⁹ Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 94. Risse-Kappen calls Suez “a major interallied crisis” (*Cooperation among Democracies*, p. 85).

²⁰ Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Jupiters, 1957–1963* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 9. For a similar judgment regarding the “special relationship,” see David Reynolds, “A ‘Special Relationship’? America, Britain and the International Order since the Second World War,” *International Affairs* 62 (Winter 1985–1986): 4.

²¹ Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), p. 13.

members are *always* blaming each other for something²² – but the way in which the Anglo-American rift was, within months, “remarkably, indeed astoundingly, repaired.”²³ The Suez literature for the most part focuses on the events of October and November 1956, seen as a mortal threat to the Anglo-American special relationship and thus to NATO itself.²⁴ Indeed, the literature makes so much of the rift between Britain and America that one can’t help but wonder how the alliance between them survived. The next section attempts to remedy this by concentrating on what was described earlier as the self-healing tendencies likely to be found within an alliance of democracies. It pays special attention to how ambitious and self-interested politicians were led to put the past behind them and to move quickly to reestablish ties between Britain and America.

What Actually Happened?

If we had to pick one NATO member as the closest ever to crossing the crisis threshold, in the sense of becoming indifferent between staying in and getting out, it would almost certainly be Great Britain during and after the Suez affair.²⁵ For the British, Suez was one slight after another. The Americans did not share their belief that Nasser’s seizure of the canal was a threat so grave that inaction would mean, as Eden put it in his message to Eisenhower on July 27, that “our influence and yours throughout the Middle East will. . . finally be destroyed.”²⁶ Eisenhower’s response was to send Deputy Undersecretary of State Robert Murphy to London “to discourage impulsive armed action” (Dulles was in Latin

²² Two years earlier, to cite one example, French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault “attempted to blame the Dienbienphu debacle on his American counterpart [Dulles] . . . a man he came to despise thoroughly.” The Americans were angry too. “British and French responses to the crisis infuriated American leaders. Privately, Eisenhower vented his rage with his allies.” For the American reaction, see Richard Immerman, “Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu: ‘The Day We Didn’t Go to War’ Revisited,” *Journal of American History* 71 (September 1984): 357–358, 360.

²³ Allen, *Conflict and Concord*, p. 234. H. G. Nicholas likewise finds “remarkable” the speed with which the breach was repaired (*The United States and Britain* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975], p. 157).

²⁴ Of the three book-length accounts cited in note 3 in this chapter, only Cooper discusses the aftermath of the crisis; reconciliation receives about six pages of his concluding chapter. Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, devotes approximately twenty pages (pp. 69–88) to the intra-Alliance conflict over Suez and about six pages (pp. 89–94) to the aftermath and reconciliation.

²⁵ The French did not expect the United States to tolerate the use of force against Egypt, so they were not disappointed the way the British were. See, for example, the comments by French Foreign Minister Pineau, in Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar*, p. 141. Plus France never had a relationship with the United States comparable to the Anglo-American “special relationship.” Precisely because Britain had been America’s special friend for so long, the shock from the breakdown of cooperation was arguably much stronger for the British than for the French.

²⁶ See the references in note 12 in this chapter.

America and thus unable to make the trip himself).²⁷ Murphy's visit had little effect on his hosts' thinking – on July 30 Eden and his chancellor of the exchequer, Harold Macmillan, each sent Eisenhower a message indicating that the British government had made a “firm and irrevocable” decision to “break Nasser.”²⁸ This time, Eisenhower sent Dulles to London carrying a letter from the president to Eden conveying Eisenhower's “personal conviction . . . as to the unwisdom even of contemplating the use of military force at this moment.”²⁹

Despite these and other communications expressing opposition to the use of force,³⁰ the British thought Eisenhower might still come round, if not to endorse at least not to oppose their use of force.³¹ The British felt this way in no small part because of some equivocation by Dulles, which allowed them to hear what they wanted to hear. As recounted by Eden and later confirmed by the U.S. ambassador, Winthrop Aldrich, while in London at the end of July Dulles told the British that “Force was the last method to be tried, but the United States did not exclude the use of force if all other methods failed.” Nasser's action, Dulles continued, was intolerable, and he must be made “to disgorge” the canal.³² “[T]here is no doubt in my mind,” Aldrich subsequently wrote, “that Dulles at this time gave the impression to Eden that the United States would also be prepared to use force if all else failed.”³³ The British understood that the Americans expected a reasonable effort to find a diplomatic solution *before* any resort to force. Hence they deferred military action until after two international conferences – the first in London in August 1956, intended to work out a set of

²⁷ Eisenhower's account is quoted in Thomas, *Suez*, p. 55. For Murphy's account of his visit to London, see his memoir, *Diplomat among Warriors* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1965), pp. 418–438. See also Eden, *Full Circle*, p. 484; Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 109; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, p. 280.

²⁸ The Eden/Macmillan messages to Eisenhower are quoted in Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, p. 286.

²⁹ For Dulles's visit to London, see Thomas, *Suez*, p. 59; Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, pp. 114–116; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 284–286; Feis, “Suez Scenario,” p. 600. Cooper quotes at length from Eisenhower's letter to Eden, *The Lion's Last Roar*, pp. 111–113; see also Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 70.

³⁰ Eisenhower sent two messages to Eden in early September, both of which are quoted in Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 300–302; also in Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, pp. 124, 126–128. Even a sympathetic observer like Herbert Nicholas concludes that, having received Eisenhower's message of September 3, Eden should have realized the “deep repugnance” that resort to force would have caused in Washington (*Britain and the U.S.A.* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1963], p. 118). See also Thomas, *Suez*, p. 76.

³¹ See, for example, Feis, “Suez Scenario,” pp. 599–600.

³² Quoted in Eden, *Full Circle*, p. 487, who adds: “These were forthright words. They rang in my ears for months.” See also Feis, “Suez Scenario,” p. 600; Thomas, *Suez*, p. 60; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 290–291. Feis concludes that “Eden may fairly reproach the American Government – particularly Dulles – with having misled him in the crucial first period of this conflict” (“Suez Scenario,” p. 611). Cooper is likewise critical of Dulles for confusing almost everyone involved regarding where the United States stood (*The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 238). More strident judgments are those of Charles Bohlen, quoted in Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, pp. 122–123; and Nicholas, *Britain and the U.S.A.*, p. 118.

³³ Winthrop Aldrich, “The Suez Crisis: A Footnote to History,” *Foreign Affairs* 45 (April 1967): 543. Aldrich confirms Dulles's use of the phrase “to disgorge” (*ibid.*, p. 543).

principles to guide an International Authority that would be created to run the canal, and the second in London in September to launch the Suez Canal Users' Association – followed by an appeal to the UN at the start of October.³⁴ By then, the British knew that the United States would not join in military action itself, but they clung to the hope that it would accept a *fait accompli*.

Frustrated by the delays that conference diplomacy had imposed and believing that the Americans would find a way to accept what they were about to do, the British gave up on diplomacy and turned instead to collusion with the Israelis to provide an excuse for an Anglo-French invasion of Egypt. Hugh Thomas notes that Eden was “often accused of acting in a nineteenth-century manner.”³⁵ In this case, the charge was particularly apt. The British “embarked upon a conspiracy with one ally, France, to the deliberate exclusion and deception of the other, the United States.”³⁶ The French, meanwhile, were doing some conspiring too. When Eden and Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd went to Paris on September 26 to discuss how to approach the UN Security Council, the French neglected to mention that they had talked with the Israelis just a few days before about concerted military action against Egypt.³⁷ The French tried to get the Israelis to do their work for them, by attacking Egypt first, without waiting for Britain and/or France to act.³⁸ The Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, was opposed to Israel acting alone, which could mean condemnation as the aggressor, but he *was* willing to attack Egypt *if* Britain and France joined in, *and* he could use the war to seize territory from Jordan and Lebanon.³⁹ The French lied to the Americans when they said the United States would be informed of any new French arms shipments to Israel.⁴⁰ British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd lied to Aldrich, the American ambassador, when he said Her Majesty's government had no information about the Israeli mobilization that preceded the Israeli attack on Egypt⁴¹; and although he may

³⁴ Regarding the first London conference, see Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 296–298; Feis, “Suez Scenario,” pp. 601–602; Eden, *Full Circle*, pp. 501–504. For the second London conference, see Thomas, *Suez*, pp. 80–82; Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, pp. 133–137; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 318–320; Eden, *Full Circle*, pp. 529–544. Concerning the appeal to the UN, see Eden, *Full Circle*, pp. 545–565; Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, pp. 139–140; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 320–321. Arthur Campbell Turner describes these events as “a tedious series of almost entirely bogus diplomatic moves in which Dulles managed to involve Eden without once making it clear where the United States stood” (*The Unique Partnership: Britain and the United States* [New York: Pegasus, 1971], p. 189). Thomas, *Suez*, p. 86, also discusses the tensions and misunderstandings between Dulles and Eden.

³⁵ Thomas, *Suez*, p. 42.

³⁶ Nicholas, *Britain and the U.S.A.*, p. 118.

³⁷ Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, pp. 141–142; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, p. 321.

³⁸ See the account of General Paul Ely's conversation with Israeli Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, in Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, p. 325.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 343–346.

⁴⁰ See the comments by French Foreign Minister Pineau, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 238.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 360, 376; Aldrich, “The Suez Crisis,” p. 545. Thomas, *Suez*, p. 157, suggests that Lloyd lied to the House of Commons about collusion with the Israelis; so does Aldrich, “The Suez Crisis,” p. 545.

not have lied, he certainly misled Aldrich the next day when he told him that Britain's response to Israel's attack on Egypt would likely be to cite Israel as an aggressor before the UN Security Council.⁴² Eden himself lied to the House of Commons when he said, "there was not foreknowledge that Israel would attack Egypt."⁴³

The Anglo-French-Israeli alliance consummated in October 1956 was thus a "marriage of convenience" that a nineteenth-century statesman would have found very familiar.⁴⁴ Like good nineteenth-century allies, "each participating government had its own agenda."⁴⁵ The French "acted out of anger and frustration and in impatient spite of the United States, while the British resorted to collusion with resignation," in no small part because of reservations about allying with Israel, which was the enemy of Britain's allies, Jordan and Iraq.⁴⁶ The Israelis cared little about who ran the canal – their ships had been excluded from it even before Nasser had seized it – although they were happy to find someone willing to side with them against the Egyptians, even if only temporarily. The British and French cared little about Israel's quarrel with Egypt, but they needed the Israelis to ignite the conflagration so they could pretend to rush in and extinguish it. Like good nineteenth-century allies, "there was little communication or trust between Britain and Israel from the beginning, and between Britain and France toward the end."⁴⁷ As late as mid-October 1956, the British were contemplating military action against *both* Egypt and Israel, the latter because it was threatening Jordan in the hope of diverting attention from the planned attack on Egypt.⁴⁸ French aircraft dropped supplies to the Israelis without the British being informed, even though a British officer was nominally in charge of the combined air assets.⁴⁹ Moshe Dayan, the Israeli chief of staff, told his officers that when the British and French attacked Egypt, "we should behave like the cyclist who is riding uphill when a truck chances by and he grabs hold. We should get what help we can, hanging on their vehicle and exploiting its movement as much as possible, and only when our routes fork should we break off and proceed along our separate way with our own force alone."⁵⁰

In effect, Britain, France, and Israel fought separate wars for different reasons against the same foe, and when things went awry, they deserted each other

⁴² Aldrich, "The Suez Crisis," p. 546.

⁴³ Quoted in Adamthwaite, "Suez Revisited," p. 459. Eden and Macmillan both neglect to point out in their memoirs that the British and French knew in advance of the planned Israeli attack on Egypt (*Full Circle*, pp. 584ff.; *Riding the Storm*, pp. 150–151).

⁴⁴ Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 80. Cooper calls it an "artificial" alliance, "born in conspiracy but sired by men who had neither heart nor gift for conspiracy" (*The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 203).

⁴⁵ Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 80.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80. Eden wrote in his memoir that, if Israel were to attack Jordan, "then the position for us would be terrible indeed" (*Full Circle*, p. 571). See also Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, pp. 146–147; Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 155.

⁴⁷ Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 203.

⁴⁸ Thomas, *Suez*, pp. 106–107.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, p. 354.

with alacrity. The Israelis' goals were to bloody the Egyptians and break the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba, and once they had done so, they sought to exit the war as quickly as possible to minimize damage to their own connection with the United States. The Israelis seized their last military objective – the Egyptian town of Sharm el-Sheikh, which guarded the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba – on Sunday, November 4. Having done so, the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations was instructed to announce Israel's readiness for an immediate cease-fire provided Egypt agreed. At that time, however, the Anglo-French invasion force was still at sea. A cease-fire before British and French forces could come ashore would make a mockery of their claim that they were acting to "separate" the belligerents. The British and French pressed the Israelis to keep fighting, and the Israelis did indeed withdraw their offer of a cease-fire. Even so, an Israeli military spokesman announced on November 4 that "All operations in the Sinai Peninsula have stopped. The job is complete and done."⁵¹

The slights worsened as the British and French prepared to bring their invasion force ashore. The British expected the Americans to complain but ultimately to acquiesce in the Anglo-French seizure of the canal. Instead, the Americans turned on them, refusing to honor previously made arrangements for sharing oil in the event of a canal closure (which meant gasoline rationing for Britain),⁵² using the U.S. Navy's Sixth Fleet to obstruct the Anglo-French invasion force,⁵³ "short-selling . . . sterling on a massive scale in a quite deliberate effort to break the pound,"⁵⁴ and blocking British attempts to secure a loan from the IMF that would shore up their financial position.⁵⁵ The British were "astonished when [U.S. Ambassador Henry] Cabot Lodge led the pack in the violent attack that was launched upon America's two closest allies at the United Nations. The sight of the American representative trying to outdo the Soviets in their attempts to humiliate Britain and France shocked and infuriated the whole Cabinet in London."⁵⁶

Nor did the slights end once the British had accepted a cease-fire. Even though the fighting had stopped, an Anglo-French force was ashore and in possession of Port Said at the northern end of the canal. Eden tried to dignify

⁵¹ Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 189. See also Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, p. 400. Urquhart says the Israelis announced their acceptance of a cease-fire on November 3, not November 4, *Hammar skjold*, p. 178.

⁵² Gas rationing began on December 17, 1956 (Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 226; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, p. 424).

⁵³ Richard Rosecrance, *Defense of the Realm* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 229. See also Stuart and Tow, *The Limits of Alliance*, p. 62.

⁵⁴ Turner, *The Unique Partnership*, p. 191. See also Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, p. 164; Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 191; Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, p. 26; Richard Barnet, *The Alliance* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 169.

⁵⁵ Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 409–410; Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, p. 164.

⁵⁶ Lord Harlech (David Ormsby-Gore), "Suez SNAFU, Skybolt SABU," *Foreign Policy*, #2 (Spring 1971): 44. Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, pp. 151–152, accuses Lodge of adopting a "hostile and emotional attitude . . . He was certainly prejudiced against Britain." See also Nicholas, *The United States and Britain*, p. 156.

this presence and gain some leverage too by proposing that the invasion force remain in place while a UN peacekeeping force was organized and transported to the Middle East.⁵⁷ The Americans would have none of it. Eden and Eisenhower spoke on the telephone on November 6 and 7, but Eisenhower refused to meet with him as long as British forces were still in Egypt.⁵⁸ “The United States administration,” Eden subsequently recalled, “seemed to be dominated at this time by one thought only, to harry their allies.”⁵⁹ Dulles, as recounted by Macmillan, “showed in the vital period a degree of hostility amounting almost to frenzy.”⁶⁰ Eisenhower’s treasury secretary, George Humphrey, reportedly shouted at the British ambassador, “You will not get a dime from the United States government if I can stop it, until you have gotten out of Suez. You are like burglars who have broken into somebody else’s house. So get out! When you do, and not until then, you’ll get help.”⁶¹ Faced with implacable American hostility to any Anglo-French military presence in Egypt, the British and French on December 3 “agreed to repatriate their forces in exchange for American promises of economic assistance. They completed their troop withdrawal on December 22.”⁶² Eden resigned on January 9, 1957, replaced the next day by Harold Macmillan, formerly chancellor of the exchequer.

Despite their anger over the way they had been treated by the Americans – the kind of treatment that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would have provided ample grounds for dissolution of an alliance, or even a reversal of alliances – from November 6 onward Eden, and subsequently Macmillan, worked unstintingly to regain Britain’s previous position as America’s closest ally. Eden phoned Eisenhower on November 7 to suggest an “immediate consultation” among Eisenhower, Mollett, and himself. When Eisenhower asked what date Eden had in mind, Eden replied that he and Mollett could fly over *that evening*. Eden’s eagerness to tell the House of Commons that he and Mollett had been invited to Washington speaks volumes about the importance that he and others attached to repairing the rift with the Americans.⁶³ So did his repeated attempts to secure an invitation from Eisenhower despite being rebuffed again and again.⁶⁴ More important, Eden (and subsequently Macmillan)

⁵⁷ “We held a gage,” was how Eden put it (quoted in Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, p. 166). See also Feis, “Suez Scenario,” p. 611; and Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar*, p. 241.

⁵⁸ Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 411–415. See also Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 87 (also the text of note 113 on p. 212).

⁵⁹ Eden, *Full Circle*, p. 635.

⁶⁰ Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, p. 158.

⁶¹ Quoted in Alfred Grosser, *The Western Alliance* (New York: Continuum, 1980), p. 144. See also Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, pp. 28–29.

⁶² Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 88.

⁶³ Eden, *Full Circle*, pp. 629–630. See also Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar*, p. 215. Eisenhower subsequently phoned to tell Eden the time was not right for such a meeting.

⁶⁴ Eden, *Full Circle*, pp. 630–631; Murphy, *Diplomat among Warriors*, p. 437; Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar*, p. 215; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 414–415, 419–420; Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 87.

acted this way even though there were many in their party,⁶⁵ in the civil service,⁶⁶ and in the country at large⁶⁷ who wanted to blame the Americans rather than reconcile with them. If the British believed so strongly that they were the wronged party,⁶⁸ why did Eden and Macmillan try so hard to restore the American alliance? In retrospect, three reasons stand out in this regard.

First, what options did they have? The British joined an old-fashioned marriage of convenience to wage war against Nasser, but when things fell apart they did not have the same freedom of action as an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century great power. After arguing that Nasser was a Soviet foil who had to be ousted to block the spread of Soviet influence in the Middle East,⁶⁹ the British could hardly look to execute a reversal of alliances, like the members of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century alliances could and frequently did. "I assume it to be our object," the newly arrived British ambassador in Washington, Sir Harold Caccia, wrote to Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd on December 28, 1956, "to reestablish our relations on their previous footing and to recover all of our special position. While the Communist threat remains, nothing else makes sense."⁷⁰ When a superpower like the United States faced a choice between pleasing an ally and confronting it, it could and did opt for the latter. But a middle power – even a middle power with a long and distinguished history of acting independently – had no such freedom of action.

Second, Britain's inability to persevere for the few days more needed to seize control of the Canal inspired a reconsideration of what a middle power could

⁶⁵ According to Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, p. 57, "The most significant demonstration of parliamentary anti-American views. . . was the collection of Conservative signatures on a motion tabled in late November. This motion, worded moderately to say that the attitude of the United States was 'gravely endangering the Atlantic alliance,' obtained at one time or another 127 different signatures." For other examples of Parliamentary anti-Americanism, see *ibid.*, pp. 56–58. See also Nicholas, *The United States and Britain*, pp. 156–157.

⁶⁶ See, for example, the memorandum by H. A. A. Hankey, head of the Foreign Office's American Department, "Restoration of Confidence in United States/United Kingdom Relations," reprinted in John Baylis, *Anglo-American Relations since 1939: The Enduring Alliance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 85–86. In that memo, Hankey argued that "Had we received from the Americans the measure of confidence and support which our hitherto intimate relationship would presuppose, the operation would probably have been more successful than it had been and Nasser might well by now have been out of power and the whole Middle East situation transformed."

⁶⁷ Cooper cites an editorial in *The Sunday Times*, November 25, 1956, that railed against the "vigorously anti-British policies of President Eisenhower and his Secretary of State" (*The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 230).

⁶⁸ In Macmillan's words, "we felt that we had been let down, if not betrayed, by the vacillating and delaying tactics which Dulles had pursued in the earlier stages of the Suez crisis and by the viciousness with which he and his subordinates had attacked us after the launching of the Anglo-French operation" (*Riding the Storm*, p. 240).

⁶⁹ Eden made this claim in a telegram to Eisenhower, cited by Thomas, *Suez*, p. 97.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 89.

and could not do.⁷¹ Eden never doubted the rightness of his actions,⁷² but for many others in Great Britain Suez made clear that British policy toward the Middle East was based on “attitudes and beliefs that no longer made sense” – most prominently, an overestimate of “the importance of maintaining physical control of the area” and of what Britain could accomplish on her own. Policies that “taxed British strength and stimulated hostility to British influence” were not just a heavy burden; they also boded ill for the next election, which had to be held by 1960 at the latest.⁷³

Third, “Eden’s ill-judged adventure” was not popular with British voters.⁷⁴ Gallup polls conducted from August through December 1956 showed “that at no time . . . did the Eden government enjoy clear majority support for its military action in the Middle East.”⁷⁵ A mid November poll found that fewer than half of British respondents said they were “satisfied with Mr. Eden as Prime Minister.”⁷⁶ Eden’s hold on power was never in doubt. Within the government, only two junior ministers resigned to protest his resort to force.⁷⁷ Eden’s majority in the House of Commons decreased but only slightly.⁷⁸ The immediate cause of his resignation was “ill health, not. . . a parliamentary defeat.”⁷⁹ Even so, Eden’s colleagues surely sensed that absent a leadership change, the result might well be defeat for many of them in the next election.⁸⁰ Eden was in ill health to be sure, but if he had not been, another reason for his resignation likely would have been found.

All in all, the behavior of Eden and his successor, Harold Macmillan, suggests that membership in an old-fashioned alliance was not at all to their liking.

⁷¹ See, for example, the newspaper editorials cited by Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar*, p. 234.

⁷² See, for example, Macmillan’s (*Riding the Storm*, p. 128) description of Eden as “quite determined. It was 1938 all over again. He would not be party to any new appeasement.”

⁷³ Nicholas, *Britain and the U.S.A.*, p. 110.

⁷⁴ Nicholas, *The United States and Britain*, p. 155.

⁷⁵ James Christoph, “The Suez Crisis,” in *Cases in Comparative Politics* ed. James Christoph (Boston: Little Brown, 1965). p. 114. See also the poll results cited by Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, pp. 141–144; Thomas, *Suez*, pp. 136–137; and Adamthwaite, “Suez Revisited,” pp. 461–463.

⁷⁶ Cited in Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar*, p. 213.

⁷⁷ These were Anthony Nutting, minister of state at the Foreign Office, and Sir Edward Boyle, economic secretary to the Treasury. The minister of defense, Sir Walter Monckton, resigned in mid October 1956, apparently because of unease with the preparations for military action that were then under way. For more on these points, see Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, pp. 70, 88; Hugh Thomas, *Suez*, pp. 103–104; Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar*, p. 143; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 334, 385–385; Urquhart, *Hammar skjold*, p. 171; Adamthwaite, “Suez Revisited,” p. 460.

⁷⁸ Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, pp. 108, 123–124.

⁷⁹ Nicholas, *The United States and Britain*, p. 155.

⁸⁰ Macmillan recalls that “Outside the ranks of the Cabinet, etc., M.P.s have been meeting. There has been a general acceptance of the fact that the Government could not go on. As soon as Parliament met it would be in trouble; in a few weeks it would fall” (*Riding the Storm*, p. 182). See also Neff, who reports that Conservative Party leaders met in mid December 1956 to explore ways to ease Eden out (*Warriors at Suez*, pp. 424, 430). Regarding Eden’s loss of support in the House, see also Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 435–436.

Once in, they stayed for as short a time as possible, and at the first opportunity they sought to return to the familiar confines of the special relationship with the United States and NATO.⁸¹ The idea of America as Britain's special friend was still very popular in the country at large, as was Eisenhower, remembered fondly for his service as supreme allied commander during the Second World War and then again during the creation of the NATO integrated force at the start of the 1950s.⁸² Eden resigned before he could make much progress in restoring the special relationship with the United States, but his successor, Harold Macmillan, pursued this goal with even more energy and determination than Eden had been able to muster. Macmillan was driven to do so in no small part because he needed a quick success to show his colleagues and his party that he was not just the "stop-gap [that] everyone – except, one suspects, himself" – thought him to be.⁸³ Plus, restoring the alliance with the Americans was something Macmillan was well suited to do. He and Eisenhower had worked together extensively and well as far back as the Second World War, when Macmillan was the British minister-resident in Algiers and Eisenhower commanded the Anglo-American force that landed in Morocco in 1942. Eisenhower too was eager to reconcile, as evidenced by his willingness to meet *and* to let Macmillan choose the site – Washington or Bermuda.⁸⁴

The Bermuda summit in March 1957 was more than just pageantry, although there was plenty of that too. "Eisenhower and Macmillan held *tour d'horizon* discussions in Bermuda to coordinate their foreign and defense policies."⁸⁵ Macmillan was already planning substantial changes in British defense policy – an end to conscription, cuts in defense spending and force levels, and greater reliance on nuclear weapons for both deterrence and defense.⁸⁶ Eisenhower could and did help in this regard, by persuading Congress to change the McMahon Act to permit greater sharing of nuclear information between the United States and Britain. Eisenhower and Macmillan met again in October 1957, by which time "the wounds of Suez appeared almost totally healed."⁸⁷ Anglo-American relations, "except for

⁸¹ In Macmillan's words, "The most urgent, and at the same time the most delicate, task which confronted me on becoming Prime Minister was to repair and eventually to restore our old relationships with Washington" (*Riding the Storm*, p. 240). See also Thomas, *Suez*, p. 164.

⁸² Nicholas, *The United States and Britain*, p. 144.

⁸³ Turner, *The Unique Partnership*, p. 194. On the day he was chosen to become prime minister, Macmillan told the Queen "half in joke, half in earnest, that I could not answer for the new Government lasting more than six weeks" (*Riding the Storm*, p. 185).

⁸⁴ Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 253, describes this as a "graceful gesture" by Eisenhower – "Macmillan naturally chose Bermuda; it was British territory and he could be a gracious host rather than a supplicant guest." Macmillan later admitted he "had not relished the idea of going to Washington," and was "touched by my old friend's delicacy in proposing Bermuda" (*Riding the Storm*, p. 241).

⁸⁵ Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 89.

⁸⁶ Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, pp. 244–246; see also Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, pp. 257–259.

⁸⁷ Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 90.

the scar-tissue on many Conservative hearts, were closer . . . than they had been before the [Suez] crisis.”⁸⁸

An additional payoff from Macmillan’s rebuilding of the special relationship took the form of close cooperation between the United States and the United Kingdom during their 1958 interventions in Lebanon and Jordan, respectively. “Joint plans for mutual assistance had been worked out following a visit to Washington by [Foreign Secretary] Selwyn Lloyd and Chief of Staff Sir William Dickson.” London allowed the Americans access to British bases in Cyprus; the United States airlifted supplies to the British force in Jordan and supplied air cover too. “Macmillan saw the joint operation as a validation of his policy of closer cooperation with Washington. In his elation, he asserted that in the future he would almost rather be ‘wrong together’ (with the United States) than ‘right separately.’”⁸⁹

It wasn’t inevitable that things would turn out this way. Macmillan inherited from Eden a fractured majority in the House of Commons that included two groups of dissident members of parliament (MPs): “anti-Suez Conservatives,” numbering perhaps as many as sixty, of whom about twenty-five to forty were “sufficiently concerned to meet together to stop the Suez action”⁹⁰; and “pro-Suez Conservative extremists” (better known as the Suez Group), numbering between twenty and forty, who were furious at Eden’s decision to order a cease-fire when control of the Canal was seemingly within reach.⁹¹ Among the anti-Suez Conservatives, only ten became publicly known – eight who abstained in a parliamentary vote on November 8, 1956, and two who voted with the government but whose anti-Suez views became known in other ways.⁹² The Suez Group’s existence had been common knowledge since 1954, when they opposed withdrawal from Britain’s Suez base.⁹³ During the 1956 Suez crisis, twenty pro-Suez Conservatives deliberately abstained on one or more votes in the Commons: fifteen abstentions on December 6, 1956, when the issue was withdrawal of British troops from the Canal zone; and fourteen abstentions (including nine repeaters) on May 16, 1957, when the issue was the government’s decision to advise British shipping companies to resume using the canal. One anti-Suez Conservative MP resigned from the party and became an

⁸⁸ Coral Bell, *The Debateable Alliance* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 46.

⁸⁹ Stuart and Tow, *The Limits of Alliance*, p. 128.

⁹⁰ Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, pp. 87–88, 97–122. James Christoph estimates that anti-Suez Conservative MPs numbered between 20 and 30 (“The Suez Crisis,” p. 100). Christoph describes the anti-Suez Conservatives as “not a particularly vocal group [who] seem to have lacked leadership” (p. 100). Concerning the anti-Suez Conservatives, see also Thomas, *Suez*, p. 142.

⁹¹ Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, pp. 41–60, 122–128.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 97–122; Christoph, “The Suez Crisis,” p. 100.

⁹³ Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, pp. 91–93 (also pp. 41–60). Christoph, “The Suez Crisis,” p. 95, describes the Suez Group as “a semi-permanent cluster of 30 to 50 Conservative MPs who were actively dedicated to exerting pressure within the party in Parliament, and so on the Conservative Cabinet itself, to adopt a tough policy toward the Nasser regime.”

Independent, as did eight of the pro-Suez dissidents, who sat as independent Conservatives.⁹⁴

The anti-Suez Conservatives might have seemed like a natural constituency for Macmillan, whose highest foreign policy priority was to restore the alliance with the United States, which had opposed Eden's use of force. The anti-Suez Conservatives, however, were for the most part unpopular with their constituency organizations.⁹⁵ Any effort by Macmillan to cultivate this group would likely have stirred up trouble with the party activists whose support he needed, both to show prospective challengers that he was more than just a stop-gap and to improve his chances of leading a unified party to victory in the next election.

The pro-Suez extremists, on the other hand, were prominent among those critical of the United States for its alleged betrayal during Suez the international crisis and thus unlikely to be impressed with Macmillan's attempt to restore the special relationship. But they were also popular with their constituency organizations, which meant that disciplinary action toward them would likely alienate the party activists whose support Macmillan needed. Plus the anti-Suez group had had their chance and lost it. If the rebellion by the ten known anti-Suez Conservatives had spread to include other Conservative MPs with anti-Suez views, it might have brought down Eden's government, especially since the Labor Party was openly appealing for defections or at least abstentions by disaffected Tories.⁹⁶ By the time Macmillan became prime minister, withdrawal from Egypt was under way, rendering the anti-Suez group's views moot. For Macmillan, the greater danger lay to his right, not his left.⁹⁷ Conversely, the pro-Suez Conservatives may not have liked Macmillan's courting of the United States, but any effort on their part to bring down his government – had it succeeded – might have brought Labor to power, which for them would have been a far worse outcome than Macmillan as prime minister.⁹⁸

Macmillan's response to all this was essentially to let the anti-Suez group face their fate on their own. With one exception – Sir Peter Boyle, who had excellent relations with his constituency association and whom Macmillan brought into his government as a junior minister – Macmillan didn't do anything to help them.⁹⁹ Of the ten known anti-Suez Conservatives, only Boyle and three others were renominated by their local party organizations to run in the

⁹⁴ Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, pp. 92–93, 108, 123–124. On the eve of the latter vote, Macmillan estimated that “Tory abstentionists would number twenty, or even thirty With a majority of only fifty, such a figure would be serious, even fatal” (diary entry, reprinted in *Riding the Storm*, p. 236).

⁹⁵ Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, pp. 97–122.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 78–79, 84.

⁹⁷ In a February 9, 1957, diary entry, reprinted in *Riding the Storm*, pp. 209–210, Macmillan listed several “immediate problems,” one of which was “Canal dues. Nasser will claim full dues. If we refuse, we don't get our oil. If we accept, we lose face terribly. (We might even lose our majority in the House.)”

⁹⁸ Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, pp. 87–93, 122–128.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110–112.

next general election in 1959.¹⁰⁰ The pro-Suez extremists, in contrast, were tolerated until their complaints about the government's policies had been overtaken by events. None of them lost their seat as a result of their actions; and the eight who renounced the Conservative whip were allowed to rejoin the parliamentary party in 1958, by which time Macmillan's policy of courting the Americans had produced such obvious benefits (renewed intimacy, sharing nuclear secrets, mutual support in the Middle East) that further complaints on their part would have seemed churlish and ungrateful.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

Suez was a dark moment for the Anglo-American relationship ("the most violent single explosion in Anglo-American relations since the [Second World] war,"¹⁰² "the lowest point since the American civil war,"¹⁰³ a "complete breakdown,"¹⁰⁴ the "sharpest break in the history of the Anglo-American alliance"¹⁰⁵). Yet it also proved remarkably transient in terms of its effects on that relationship. Eisenhower judged his March 1957 Bermuda summit with Macmillan as "by far the most successful international conference I had attended since the close of World War II."¹⁰⁶ Coral Bell has an especially apt comment in this regard: "Retrospectively it all seems to have had surprisingly little permanent effect, like one of those desert sandstorms which while they are going on obliterate every landmark and apparently portend the end of the world, but blown over, leave no more sign of their passing than a rearrangement in the pattern of the dunes."¹⁰⁷

An alliance able to rebound so quickly from what seemed like a terrible calamity "must have a good deal of natural stamina."¹⁰⁸ But what exactly was the source of such strength? Why did this alliance rebound so quickly and so completely when so many previous alliances simply dissolved at the first signs of disagreement among the members? One answer often given is that, "Here all credit must go to Harold Macmillan, who . . . brought an inheritance (his mother was a Hoosier), a temperament, and a set of priorities eminently conducive to re-creating the lost intimacy."¹⁰⁹ Macmillan proved enormously skillful to be sure, but was the Anglo-American alliance – the foundation on

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 97–122.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 122–128.

¹⁰² Bell, *The Debateable Alliance*, p. 46.

¹⁰³ Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ Nicholas, *The United States and Britain*, pp. 144–145.

¹⁰⁵ Nicholas, *Britain and the U.S.A.*, p. 105.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Nicholas, *The United States and Britain*, pp. 157–158.

¹⁰⁷ Bell, *The Debateable Alliance*, p. 46. See also Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 90; Nicholas, *The United States and Britain*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁸ Bell, *The Debateable Alliance*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁹ Nicholas, *The United States and Britain*, p. 157. See also Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar*, pp. 241–242.

which the broader Atlantic Alliance had been built¹¹⁰ – saved only because Macmillan was there to step in after Eden’s health gave out? Or would *any* British prime minister likely have acted much like Macmillan? On balance, the case seems stronger for the latter than for the former.

Consider first the likely outcome if the anti-Suez Conservatives had abstained and/or voted against the government in sufficient numbers to cause a change in party control of the House of Commons. Unlike the Conservatives, Suez had not caused a split in the Labor Party’s ranks. To the contrary, “Both during and after the Suez crisis, the stand taken by the party’s moderate leadership was militant enough for the left-wing socialists who had, formerly as Bevanites, so often taken rebelliously independent positions on foreign and defense policies.”¹¹¹ Aneurin Bevan himself noted that “informed circles of Labor actually grew more friendly to the United States in the second half of 1956, for Labor’s Suez policy more closely resembled that of the White House than of our own Conservative Government.”¹¹² Since Labor’s opposition to Eden’s resort to force coincided with what Eisenhower and Dulles had been advocating all along, a Labor government would likely have found it relatively easy to make common cause with the United States. And Eisenhower’s administration could hardly have continued sanctions against a Britain led by a government whose policy positions mirrored those of the President and his Secretary of State.

A more intriguing possibility is whether a different Conservative leader would have acted differently than Macmillan.¹¹³ Whoever replaced Eden would inherit “a splintered party, a battered economy, and a divided country.”¹¹⁴ There were also urgent political problems that had to be solved right away: (1) forming a government that could indeed govern despite the splits in the Conservative Party brought on by Suez, (2) reestablishing at least a façade of party unity, crucial if the Conservatives were to have a fighting chance in the next election, and (3) achieving some tangible successes quickly, if for no other reason than to banish thoughts that whoever succeeded Eden was just a placeholder until someone stronger and more “elect-able” might emerge. Last but certainly not least, Eden’s successor – whoever he might be – faced a crucial choice regarding the United States: would it be better, in the sense of politically rewarding, to devote time, energy, and political capital to repairing the alliance

¹¹⁰ See Chapter 3. See also Wallace Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting In NATO* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), Chapter 2.

¹¹¹ Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, p. 128. See also Christoph, “The Suez Crisis,” pp. 96, 109.

¹¹² Aneurin Bevan, “Britain and America at Loggerheads,” *Foreign Affairs* 36 (October 1957): 65.

¹¹³ After Eden resigned, the Queen consulted with senior figures in the Conservative Party – most prominently, Sir Winston Churchill and Lord Salisbury – before asking Macmillan to form a new government (Christoph, “The Suez Crisis,” pp. 117–118; Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, pp. 183–185).

¹¹⁴ Cooper, *The Lion’s Last Roar*, p. 242.

with the Americans, or to take revenge on them for the slights inflicted during and after the Anglo-French military action?

Revenge may have appealed to the pro-Suez extremists and their sympathizers throughout the country, but on almost every count it was politically inferior to the course Macmillan chose, namely revitalizing the alliance with the Americans. Revenge would have meant rehashing the past, which would not only call attention to but also very likely exacerbate the splits in the Conservative Party, thereby complicating the task of forming a government that could unify the party and improve its prospects in the next election. More important, taking revenge on the Americans would violate an axiom that Churchill had followed faithfully and very successfully: “‘Without the United States,’ Churchill told Eden more than once, ‘Britain is alone.’”¹¹⁵ Conversely, restoring the Anglo-American alliance to its previous intimacy would be a significant accomplishment in its own right, and a renewed special relationship would make it easier for Eden’s successor to cut defense spending, which would free up resources that could be used to build a Tory version of the welfare state and thereby beat Labor at its own game.

Seen this way, an observer – even one with the benefit of decades of hindsight – is hard pressed to identify a course of action obviously superior to what Macmillan chose. First and foremost, Macmillan needed a government that could govern authoritatively and well; he solved this problem by putting together a cabinet with a few fresh faces but not too many. Macmillan avoided a debilitating debate over whom to blame by retaining eight holdovers from Eden’s government in the same positions plus R. A. Butler, formerly the lord privy seal and leader of the House of Commons, who was named home secretary. Macmillan’s government also included, in junior ministerial positions, the most prominent members of both the anti-Suez Conservatives and the pro-Suez extremists. The former was Sir Edward Boyle, who became parliamentary secretary at the Ministry of Education; the latter was Julian Amery as undersecretary of state at the War Office.¹¹⁶ Taking them into the government, as Epstein notes, effectively muffled their voices, which is likely what Macmillan wanted.¹¹⁷

The next item on Macmillan’s agenda – reestablishing at least a façade of party unity – required him to keep some distance from *both* the anti- and pro-Suez dissidents. As explained earlier, accommodating the anti-Suez group would likely have alienated the party activists whose support Macmillan needed to ward off potential challengers while he built a record that he could run on in the next election. Identifying too much with the pro-Suez group would jeopardize the intimate relationship that he wanted to reestablish with the United States. Hence Macmillan acquiesced to retribution against the anti-Suez Conservatives while tolerating the pro-Suez extremists, even though

¹¹⁵ Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, p. 154.

¹¹⁶ Christoph, “The Suez Crisis,” p. 120. Macmillan’s account of how he formed the new government is in *Riding the Storm*, pp. 185–191.

¹¹⁷ Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, p. 51.

his actions – reconciliation with the Americans as quickly as possible – were more in tune with the former than with the latter. Macmillan dealt with the pro-Suez extremists essentially by waiting them out while their anger cooled. Where else could they go? To whom could they turn? And while the pro-Suez extremists stewed, Macmillan achieved what Eden had been denied – a revived alliance with the United States, symbolized by the triumphant summit with Eisenhower at Bermuda in March 1957, another meeting with Eisenhower in October, and a NATO summit in December. By 1958 (and with an election looming), the pro-Suez extremists were ready to give up and accept reinstatement in the Conservative Party.

In retrospect, what stands out about Macmillan's tenure as prime minister is how little interest he exhibited in rehashing the past. Like ambitious politicians everywhere, he looked forward rather than backward. He was more interested in assembling a working government than in repaying scores or identifying scapegoats. Likewise, he was more interested in bettering his chances for victory in the next election than repaying the Americans for wrecking Britain's attempt to act like a great military power. And there were indeed slights that he might have chosen to repay. Like Eden, Macmillan had been wounded politically by the Americans' refusal to acquiesce in what the British were doing.¹¹⁸ But in the end it was Macmillan's judgment that his continued hold on power – both at present and in the next election – depended on rebuilding the alliance with the United States, not renouncing it like the dissidents in his own party suggested.¹¹⁹

He certainly did something right. Macmillan inherited from Eden a parliamentary majority of about fifty, which increased to about a hundred after the October 1959 general election, which was essentially a referendum on Macmillan's stewardship. Laborites could console themselves that their defeat was "not catastrophic," that only "about one percent of the electorate changed sides and only 23 seats in the House of Commons changed hands," and that Macmillan's enlarged majority "has been exceeded in seven out of the fifteen parliaments of this century."¹²⁰ Even so, Macmillan led his party to victory against a Labor Party that was "well led and peculiarly free from internal quarrels," whereas the Conservatives "faced the electorate at the end of a Parliament during which the collapse of Sir Anthony Eden and of his Suez policy had temporarily reduced their public prestige to what seemed the point of no recovery."¹²¹ Despite all this, Macmillan doubled his parliamentary majority, and he did so running as the prime minister who rebuilt the special relationship with the United States and restored Britain to its place as America's closest ally.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, Macmillan's account of "humiliations almost vindictively inflicted upon us at the instance of the United States Government" (*Riding the Storm*, p. 167).

¹¹⁹ Regarding the United States and Suez, Macmillan wrote in his memoirs, "Nor would it be worth arguing whose fault it was. Somehow, without loss of dignity and as rapidly as possible, our relationships must be restored" (*Riding the Storm*, p. 199).

¹²⁰ Roy Jenkins, "British Labor Divided," *Foreign Affairs* 38 (April 1960): 487.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 487.

Reviewing what Macmillan did and how he did it, it is hard not to conclude that, at least for him, the path to electoral success ran through Washington, not away from it.

THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN

Background

Prior to September 11, 2001, November–December 1979 was probably the worst two-month period in peacetime that any American administration has had to endure.

November 1979 began with the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran by an Iranian mob. The embassy staff was taken hostage and fifty-three of their number held for more than a year.

This was followed by an attack on the Great Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, by an Islamic terrorist group, which seized the shrine and held it for several days despite repeated attempts by the Saudi government to take it back. The Saudi police and armed forces did not distinguish themselves during this incident – their performance was widely judged to be awful, raising the specter that Saudi Arabia might succumb to civil war or even be taken over by Islamic fundamentalists hostile to the West.

Then came the destruction of the U.S. embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, by a mob incited to violence by rumors that the United States had been behind the attack on the Great Mosque. Pakistani police and armed forces were able to rescue most of the embassy staff, but two staff members died in the fire that consumed the embassy.¹²²

There then occurred an attack on the U.S. embassy in Tripoli, Libya, by a “mob” that was obviously organized by the Libyan government – obvious because the mob waited until the embassy staff had been evacuated through a rear door before entering the embassy and trashing it.

These events had a traumatic effect on the American people, who were able to watch many of these events on television news programs, and their impact on the senior ranks of the Carter administration was also profound.¹²³ What these events did was to make clear how limited was the capacity of the United States to project military power into the Persian Gulf region, approximately 7,000 miles from the United States. When the embassy in Tehran was seized, to cite one example, the nearest U.S. Navy aircraft carrier was the U.S.S. *Midway*, which was then in the Sea of Japan and needed ten days to make it to the Arabian Sea. Once there, all the *Midway* and its escorts could do was steam in circles while mobs outside

¹²² For a retrospective account, see Cameron Barr, “A Day of Terror Recalled,” *Washington Post*, November 27, 2004, pp. A20, A23.

¹²³ For more on this point, see William Odom, “The Cold War Origins of the U.S. Central Command,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8 (Spring 2006): 52–82, esp. p. 60.

the embassy chanted (for the benefit of nearby TV cameras), “America cannot do anything.”

The effect of all this was to galvanize the Carter administration to take action on an urgent basis to correct the deficiencies in U.S. power projection capabilities that were suddenly glaringly apparent. During the last week of November 1979, high-level meetings at the presidential retreat at Camp David resulted in decisions by President Jimmy Carter to strengthen American armed forces in the Indian Ocean region, to acquire air and naval facilities both in the region and en route to it, and to make additions to U.S. airlift and sealift forces.

In effect, the attacks on three U.S. embassies in a matter of weeks sensitized the Carter administration to the dangers to American interests posed by the upheavals in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. They also made the Carter administration very much aware of the limited ability of the United States to deploy armed forces quickly to the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region. More important, these events predisposed the Carter administration to interpret any further shocks in the vicinity of the Persian Gulf as posing an exceedingly grave challenge to American interests. What this meant in practice was that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of December 1979 had an especially powerful impact on the Carter administration because it followed a series of shocks that had already put the administration on high alert. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan served to confirm and intensify fears that had taken hold during November and the first part of December 1979; it also raised new fears as to whether the move into Afghanistan would be limited to that country or whether it was the first step in an attempt to extend Soviet control over Pakistan, Iran, and ultimately the Arabian peninsula. In the weeks that followed the Soviet move into Afghanistan, a consensus formed at the top levels of the Carter administration that the real meaning of the events of November and December 1979 was that *it was 1947 all over again*,¹²⁴ and that just as the Truman administration had built a political and military structure of alliances, aid agreements, and troop deployments to contain Soviet expansionism in Europe, so now it was the duty of the Carter administration to do the same to safeguard the interests of the West in the oil resources of the Persian Gulf. This was the basis for President Carter’s warning, in his State of the Union address in January 1980, that the United States would do whatever was necessary to resist an outside power intent on taking control of the oil resources of the Persian Gulf, including using force.

President Carter’s pledge to use force if need be to protect the West’s interest in Persian Gulf oil was instantly controversial – in part because Carter was widely seen as weak and indecisive, in part because his administration was believed to have neglected U.S. armed forces during the first three years of its

¹²⁴ At that time, I was a staff member in the State Department’s Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, assigned to work on Persian Gulf security issues. One of the bureau’s deputy directors used that phrase – “1947 all over again” – while explaining to a group of PM staffers what had been said and decided during a just-completed meeting at the White House.

term, and in part because the pledge was made during a presidential election year. The controversy had the effect of throwing the Carter administration on the defensive, both as to whether the United States had sufficient armed forces to do what the president said it would do, and also concerning the proper role of the European allies in the defense of Persian Gulf oil. The events of November and December 1979 had made it very clear that there were limits to what the United States could do when it came to projecting military power into a region so far from the United States and so close to the Soviet Union, and this suggested to many in the United States that it was imperative that the Europeans support and supplement what the United States was doing. This proved to be easier said than done. The European allies had for the most part been cutting their armed forces during the détente years of the 1970s,¹²⁵ with the result that those forces were so small and so heavily oriented toward defense of their home region that there were hardly any excess capabilities that could be devoted to the Persian Gulf.¹²⁶ Even the larger European allies, like Great Britain and France, had only a very limited capacity to project military power into the Indian Ocean region.

In this case, though, military constraints were overshadowed by political considerations, which required that the Europeans *be seen as* joining in the military venture that the Carter administration had set in motion. It would not look right, especially in an election year, for the United States to be running risks and taking on the burden of defending the West's access to Persian Gulf oil when it was well known that the Europeans were much more dependent on that oil than was the United States. This made it politically imperative for the Carter administration to secure the active cooperation of the European allies, and that the Europeans join with the United States in the effort to build a credible Western military presence close to the Persian Gulf.

As things turned out, the Carter administration encountered problems from the start in its efforts to secure the active cooperation of the European allies. The Europeans were "deeply dissatisfied over the way Mr. Carter has handled the Afghanistan affair From their point of view Mr. Carter went roaring ahead without first discovering whether they even agreed with his diagnosis of what the Soviets did and why they did it."¹²⁷ The Europeans for the most part did *not* share the administration's belief that it was 1947 all over again, and they were

¹²⁵ See the table entitled "NATO and Warsaw Pact Active-Duty Armed Forces, 1960-1982," in Wallace Thies, *The Atlantic Alliance, Nuclear Weapons and European Attitudes: Re-examining the Conventional Wisdom* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1983), pp. 47-51.

¹²⁶ See, for example, the Associated Press dispatch, "Allies' Naval Escort Ability Held Poor," *Baltimore Sun*, January 31, 1980, p. 4.

¹²⁷ Joseph Harsch, "Carter's Hard Job: Rallying the West on Afghanistan," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 21, 1980, p. 1. See also Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 150.

not enthused about the prospect of an intensification of the Cold War.¹²⁸ What they wanted was *more* détente, and they did not hesitate to say so, both in private and in public.¹²⁹ The Europeans by and large accepted the Carter administration's claim that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan changed the strategic situation in southwest Asia and that some Alliance-wide response was essential. Still, they tried to ensure that whatever response was chosen would not jeopardize the increased trade and family contacts that they had achieved during the détente years of the 1960s and 1970s. The Europeans also wanted to ensure that any Alliance-wide response would not be so costly as to severely strain their already deficit-ridden national budgets.

In the end, the Carter administration and the European allies were able to reach agreement on a modest package of steps intended to shore up the military balance in Europe (described in more detail later). In addition, the Carter administration was able to reach agreement with some of the European members on a division of labor toward the Persian Gulf region, whereby the United States would take the lead in projecting military power into the region while the Europeans would supplement American efforts in this regard by taking whatever generally modest steps were within their means, like economic aid, token military deployments, and support for U.S. armed forces en route to and within the region. But the agreements were accompanied by and even overshadowed by public sniping by both sides that left a bad taste all around. This was a time when a senior Pentagon official wondered out loud "whether Europe is as interested in its own defense as is the United States."¹³⁰ A few days later, the U.S. ambassador to France told a French audience that some French foreign policy attitudes were "neutralist nonsense," adding that "It seems to me important not to forget what side you're on."¹³¹ European officials for their part accused the Carter administration of jeopardizing the relative harmony that had been achieved in Europe during the détente years by overreacting to a minor upheaval in a distant theater.¹³²

More important than the public sniping was an impression that lingered as a result of this episode. What was noticed, especially in the United States, was *not* the package of measures that was finally agreed on as the Alliance's response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but rather the reluctance of the Europeans

¹²⁸ "The last thing Europe seems to want is another cold war, because the wind blows colder in Europe than in the United States" (Leonard Downie, Jr., "Some Allies Resist Severe Sanctions," *Washington Post*, January 15, 1980, p. A1, paraphrasing Theo Sommer, editor of the West German weekly, *Die Zeit*).

¹²⁹ John Goshko, "U.S. Allies, with Interests to Protect, Offer Vague Support," *Washington Post*, January 26, 1980, p. A15. See also Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 150.

¹³⁰ Robert Komer, undersecretary of defense for policy, speaking at a conference in Munich, West Germany (Richard Burt, "Pentagon Aide Says Allies Let U.S. Carry Burden," *New York Times*, February 10, 1980, p. 10).

¹³¹ Arthur Hartman, quoted in John Goshko, "U.S.-French Hostility Clouds Venice Visit," *Washington Post*, February 22, 1980, p. A22.

¹³² See, for example, Bradley Graham, "Carter's Way With Allies Reportedly Irks Schmidt," *Washington Post*, February 15, 1980, p. A37.

to respond promptly and favorably to American requests for assistance at a time when the United States appeared beleaguered and in need of their help. What lingered, even after the Iranian hostage crisis had been resolved and the focus of superpower rivalry had shifted to Lebanon and Central America, was an impression of a Europe that had gone soft – a Europe that had lost interest in sharing the burdens of Alliance membership and wanted only to reap the benefits. This was an impression that shaped the way that observers on both sides of the Atlantic would view European–American relations during 1980, the last year of Jimmy Carter’s presidency. It would also carry over to the first two years of the Reagan administration’s tenure, during which the idea of a crisis within the Atlantic Alliance appeared in several guises.¹³³

Why the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan was Thought to be a NATO Crisis

Two arguments were made to support the claim that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was not just another NATO crisis but the Alliance’s greatest crisis to date. The first rested on the apparent absence of cohesion within the Alliance – specifically, an alleged failure to unite in response to what the Soviets had done. The second focused on what was said to be a widening gap between those NATO members that were increasing defense spending and/or aid to states in the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region and those that were not. The argument here was that growing discrepancies between the two groups were causing serious strains over burden sharing within the Alliance.

Concerning the first of these, the Carter administration had been traumatized not just by the attacks on three U.S. embassies in less than two months, but also by its inability to do anything meaningful in the short term in response. It was thus predisposed to view any additional threats to U.S. interests in and around the Persian Gulf as posing a serious challenge that required a serious – indeed, immediate – response. The Europeans, while dismayed by the Iranians’ treatment of the U.S. embassy staff, were not affected anywhere near as directly as the United States; hence, they were not inclined to attribute to the Soviet move into Afghanistan the grave consequences seen by the upper ranks of the Carter administration.¹³⁴ Indeed, within a few weeks of the Soviet invasion, there were signs of multiple disagreements between the Americans and their NATO allies.

The Carter administration wanted to impose meaningful sanctions on the Soviet Union (embargoing grain sales, limiting trade, and boycotting the Moscow Olympics); the Europeans, with the Germans and the French leading the way, argued that “détente is not something we can give up for anybody.”¹³⁵ German

¹³³ See the various claims regarding NATO’s worst crisis ever in Chapter 1.

¹³⁴ The “most serious threat to peace since the Second World War,” as President Carter put it in his January 1980 State of the Union address, quoted in Stuart and Tow, *The Limits of Alliance*, p. 89.

¹³⁵ Rudolf Augstein, editor of *Der Spiegel*, quoted in James Goldsborough, “European Response to Soviet Aggression: Wherein Lies Decadence?” *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 1980, Section VI, p. 2.

Chancellor Helmut Schmidt let it be known that his government would not go back on its policy of reconciliation with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, despite what had happened in Afghanistan.¹³⁶ The French government likewise released a statement that said, “France does not . . . propose to renounce its quest for détente which is of reciprocal interest and the alternative to which is a return to the Cold War.”¹³⁷ President Carter was especially exasperated by the French, who, he noted in a February 1980 diary entry, have had “at least five different public positions” since the Soviet invasion. “I don’t know what’s going on in France.”¹³⁸

A second area of disagreement centered on what military measures should be taken to counter the Soviet move into Afghanistan. The Carter administration wanted specific, meaningful steps to improve the West’s ability to act should the fighting in Afghanistan spread to neighboring states, but a decade’s worth of cuts to the U.S. force structure made this difficult to do without the help and support of the European allies.¹³⁹ The Carter administration responded to the turmoil in Iran and then Afghanistan by dispatching first one and then a second carrier task force to the Arabian Sea; by opening negotiations for access to air and naval facilities in Kenya, Oman, Somalia, and Diego Garcia; and by adding several billion dollars to the fiscal 1981 defense budget request to pay for the ships and planes that would be needed to make its proposed Rapid Deployment Force a reality.¹⁴⁰ As the administration scrambled to assemble the forces and bases needed to make credible the President’s pledge to defend Persian Gulf oil, officials in Washington became more aware of the extent to which the new commitments being made by the United States conflicted with commitments made earlier in President Carter’s term to upgrade U.S. forces earmarked to reinforce Europe in the event of another war there. The heightened concern over Soviet intentions in the aftermath of the invasion of Afghanistan meant that the number of divisions that might be required for a Persian Gulf contingency had increased to the point where it began to cut into units earmarked to reinforce NATO Europe. The Carter administration also worried that a Persian Gulf contingency would so strain U.S. airlift forces that there would be few if any transport aircraft to carry reinforcements to Europe in the event a conflict in the vicinity of the Persian Gulf spread to Europe too. The administration’s plan to stockpile military equipment aboard ships in the Indian Ocean likewise seemed likely to cut into plans to pre-position additional equipment in Europe. Finally, the diversion of a carrier task force from the Mediterranean to the

¹³⁶ John Goshko, “White House Says Defense Partners Backing Sanctions,” *Washington Post*, January 11, 1980, p. A1.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 150.

¹³⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 150–151.

¹³⁹ U.S. armed forces peaked at about 3.5 million in 1968, declining to a post-Vietnam, Cold War low of 2.022 million in 1979 (Thies, *The Atlantic Alliance*, pp. 49–50).

¹⁴⁰ Here I draw on an earlier article: Wallace Thies, “The ‘Demise’ of NATO: A Postmortem,” *Parameters* 20 (June 1990): 21–23.

Arabian Sea reduced the tactical airpower the United States could bring to bear along the Alliance's southern flank.

The Europeans at first tried to remain aloof from what they saw as the Carter administration's excessive concern with military measures so as not to raise tensions in Europe as a result of something happening in a country far removed from the area covered by the North Atlantic Treaty.¹⁴¹ But they had even less freedom than the Americans to go it alone – they needed the United States for protection in Europe *and* for power projection in Southwest Asia (in case there should be a threat to Persian Gulf oil supplies), which meant that, when U.S. officials came calling, it was hard for the Europeans to say “no.” As is explained more fully later, the Europeans would eventually agree to a package of quick fixes intended to strengthen NATO forces in Europe while drafting for review at the end of 1980 a report that would set forth “further specific measures for prompt or accelerated implementation.”¹⁴² But it was the way in which they agreed – protesting and complaining and making excuses for themselves – that led many observers to conclude that something was terribly wrong with the Alliance.

The issue of the Alliance's health arose again in November 1980, when the governing coalition in West Germany let it be known that it was contemplating holding real growth in defense spending to 1.8 percent in 1981, despite an earlier pledge by Chancellor Schmidt to achieve 3 percent real growth. The German trial balloon coincided with pressures in Great Britain to back away from its own commitment to 3 percent real growth in defense spending during 1981.¹⁴³ In the United States, meanwhile, the newly elected Reagan administration was letting it be known that it was planning for *much* larger increases in defense spending – 7 to 10 percent annually, in contrast to the Carter administration's plan for 5 percent real increases in defense spending – and that it expected the Europeans to follow suit.¹⁴⁴ “Such a situation, characterized by serious discrepancies between those countries which manage to increase their defense efforts... and those which do not do so to the same extent, can be

¹⁴¹ For an insightful contemporary account, see Josef Joffe, “European-American Relations: The Enduring Crisis,” *Foreign Affairs* 59 (Spring 1981): 835–851. See also George Quester, “The Superpowers and the Atlantic Alliance,” and Robert Bowie, “The Atlantic Alliance,” both in *Daedalus* 110 (Winter 1981): 23–40, 53–69.

¹⁴² Bernard Gwertzman, “NATO Accuses Soviet of Imperiling Peace with Afghan Thrust,” *New York Times*, May 15, 1980, p. A1; “More for Asia, Less for Europe,” *The Economist*, May 17, 1980, p. 42; Eugene Kozicharov, “NATO to Boost European Defense Programs,” *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, May 19, 1980, p. 19.

¹⁴³ John Vinocur, “Bonn Will Restrain Spending for Arms,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1980, p. A1; Vinocur, “U.S. Asks Bonn to Pay More to Improve U.S. Bases,” *New York Times*, November 5, 1980, p. A3; David A. Brown, “Cuts Imperil British Force Planning,” *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, November 10, 1980, p. 57; “No 3% For NATO,” *The Economist*, November 29, 1980, p. 25.

¹⁴⁴ Leonard Silk, “Discord Stirs With Allies,” *New York Times*, November 14, 1980, p. D2; Flora Lewis, “A Distinction Between Arms and Security Troubles Alliance,” *New York Times*, November 23, 1980, Sec. 4, p. 5.

expected to trigger new strains in the Alliance over the traditional question of 'burden sharing.'"¹⁴⁵

It was this combination of complaining and excuse making followed by commitments made and then seemingly discarded that formed the basis for claims that the Alliance was facing not just another run-of-the-mill crisis but its greatest crisis ever.¹⁴⁶ On the eve of the defense ministers' meeting in May 1980, tensions within the Alliance were said to have risen to such an extent that it faced a "political crossroad marked by America's preoccupation with conflicts outside Europe and Europe's heightened sense of itself."¹⁴⁷ The combination of growing Soviet power and instability in the Third World was said to be confronting the Alliance with its "worst challenge" ever, while disagreements over how to respond had imposed strains that "are arguably worse than at any point in NATO's thirty-one-year history."¹⁴⁸ As seen by Pierre Lellouche, "The longer historical record had shown that the Alliance did tend to unite in cases where the threat was really serious, e.g., the crises of Cuba and Berlin in the 1960s. But it was precisely this element of cohesion. . . which was missing in 1979–80, despite the gravity of Soviet behavior."¹⁴⁹ "Instead of infusing the West with a new unity of purpose," Josef Joffe commented, "the crisis over Afghanistan has left a legacy of confusion, distrust, and resentment which, in retrospect, turns the many disputes of the past into minor family squabbles."¹⁵⁰

Especially interesting for our purposes is the way the doomsayers tried to differentiate *this* NATO crisis from all the others that had preceded it. "After thirty years of experience with the difficulties of a multinational coalition," William Hyland wrote, "there was a strong tendency to dismiss the [Afghanistan] controversy as a seasonal quarrel of no more than passing significance." That said, Hyland continued, "this time there were reasons to take the controversy more seriously." One was that "Europeans themselves were more and more frequently using the term 'crisis' to describe the situation in the alliance."

¹⁴⁵ Karl Kaiser et al., *Western Security: What Has Changed? What Should Be Done?* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1981), pp. 7–8.

¹⁴⁶ The West Germans later backed away from the 1.8 percent figure, and sources in Brussels subsequently let it be known the Alliance as a whole was broadly "on target" to meet the 3 percent real growth in defense spending in 1981 (John Vinocur, "Schmidt Questions NATO Military Spending Targets," *New York Times*, November 13, 1980, p. A6; Don Cook, "NATO Appears 'On Target' for Defense Budget," *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1980, pp. A1, A18).

¹⁴⁷ Bradley Graham, "NATO: Changing Alliance," *Washington Post*, May 12, 1980, p. A1.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Getler, "Crises Put New Strains on Alliance," *Washington Post*, May 24, 1980, p. A12; Graham, "NATO: Changing Alliance." See also James Reston, "The Allies and the President," *New York Times*, May 23, 1980, p. A31; Flora Lewis, "NATO's Mood: Solidarity on Afghan Crisis," *New York Times*, May 15, 1980, p. A10; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Tribulations of the Alliance," *Wall Street Journal*, May 22, 1980, p. 20.

¹⁴⁹ Pierre Lellouche, "Europe and Her Defense," *Foreign Affairs*, 59 (Spring 1981): 818.

¹⁵⁰ Joffe, "European-American Relations: The Enduring Crisis," p. 835. See also Lewis, "A Distinction Between Arms and Security Troubles Alliance"; John Vinocur, "NATO's Resolve: Soft Spots Show Up," *New York Times*, December 15, 1980, p. A3.

Another was that the Europeans weren't doing enough to match what the United States was doing in and around the Persian Gulf.¹⁵¹ William Pfaff too saw the idea of a crisis in the Alliance as an old story. "What is new about the present crisis," he commented, "is the turnabout in the relationship between the United States and its allies. The crisis in the past was mainly about the reliability of the American commitment to come to the aid of Western Europe. The crisis in the present is about the reliability of an assumed commitment by Western Europe to come to the aid of the United States."¹⁵²

Both of these claims were problematic – Hyland's because it was a self-fulfilling prophecy (the Alliance is in crisis because someone, somewhere says it is); Pfaff's because it begged the question that the Europeans *should* be heavily involved militarily in the Persian Gulf region. Less than two months after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, American officials were letting it be known that "the United States does not expect any large-scale military support on the scene in the Persian Gulf from Western Europe," because its armed forces "are too small and far away." Instead, the Carter administration "wants its allies to improve their own defense and mobilization readiness in Europe, a move that could free additional U.S. forces . . . for action in the Gulf."¹⁵³ And this by and large is what happened.

What Actually Happened?

The Europeans, to be sure, were not much impressed by the Carter administration. In their view, détente in Europe had required years of effort on their part, and they were unwilling, as French Foreign Minister Jean François-Poncêt explained to a French television audience, "to sell out overnight something that has been built up over 15 years."¹⁵⁴ Nor were they swayed by Carter's claim that the invasion of Afghanistan was the greatest threat to peace since the Second World War, which the Europeans saw as one more sign that "U.S. policies no longer follow any design; they are guided by crisis behavior as occasions arise."¹⁵⁵ The Europeans considered Carter weak and

¹⁵¹ William Hyland, "The Atlantic Crisis," *Daedalus* 110 (Winter 1981): 41, 49–50. Robert Bowie, writing in the same issue, took a more cautious position: "Friction is not new to the alliance; indeed, from the beginning it has been more the rule than the exception . . . Hence, some observers dismiss the current troubles as more of the same. They may prove correct" ("The Atlantic Alliance," p. 53).

¹⁵² William Pfaff, "The Western Misalliance," *Washington Quarterly* 4 (Winter 1981): 14. For Joffe's version of "this time it's different," see his "European-American Relations: The Enduring Crisis," pp. 835–836.

¹⁵³ Michael Getler, "Role of U.S. Allies in a Persian Gulf War Is Uncertain," *Washington Post*, February 11, 1980, pp. A1, A21.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Don Cook, "It's Time for Smug Western Europe to Lend a Hand," *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 1980, Sec. II, p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ Uwe Nerlich, "Change in Europe: A Secular Trend?" *Daedalus* 110 (Winter 1981): 72. See also the comments by Martin Hillenbrand, former U.S. Ambassador to West Germany, in Felix Kessler, "A Split in the Atlantic Alliance?" *Wall Street Journal*, January 30, 1980, p. A22.

ineffectual – the kind of ally who, in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, would have been a prime candidate to be swindled and then abandoned.¹⁵⁶ But this was not the eighteenth century or the nineteenth either; no other state could do what the Europeans expected of the United States. Indeed, it was precisely because Carter seemed weak and ineffectual that the Europeans were constrained not to weaken him further. Eisenhower could and did say “no” to Eden a quarter-century earlier, but it was much harder for the Europeans to say “no” to Carter. To see why this was so, it is helpful to track the positions taken by the European allies and how those positions changed in response to requests made by American officials.

Unlike Suez, this time it was the United States that was seeking the Europeans’ help. In his State of the Union address in January 1980, President Carter warned that any attempt by an outside power to gain control of the oil resources of the Persian Gulf “will be repelled by use of any means necessary, including military force.” Yet even before the end of January, the president told out-of-town newspaper editors that “I don’t think it would be accurate for me to claim that at this time, or in the future, we expect to have enough military presence there to defend the region unilaterally.”¹⁵⁷ Hence the Carter administration wanted from the Europeans more than just economic and diplomatic sanctions on the Soviets. The Carter administration expected that the United States would take the lead in projecting military power into the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf region, but it wanted the Europeans to (1) use their own forces to fill in for any U.S. units diverted from Europe to Southwest Asia, (2) facilitate U.S. access to the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf through overflight rights and refueling facilities en route, and (3) occasionally supplement the American military presence in the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region with their own forces (even token deployments were welcome in this regard). As the size of the Soviet force in Afghanistan increased, American officials argued that the threat to states like Pakistan and Iran was increasing. The United States was doing more to deter and if need be defend against any additional Soviet moves; hence, the Europeans too should do more, albeit in a supporting role.¹⁵⁸

These expectations were not met, at least not initially. As of mid January 1980, “no other [NATO member] had joined the United States in any specific action,” aside from verbal condemnation of the Soviet invasion.¹⁵⁹ Most of the European allies hoped “to limit NATO’s response to a continuing chorus of

¹⁵⁶ In the words of a senior NATO official, “[the Europeans] think the U.S. doesn’t know what it’s doing” (“U.S. Urging NATO Anti-Soviet Support,” *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, January 14, 1980, p. 18).

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in “President Says Allies Vital in Persian Gulf,” *Washington Post*, January 31, 1980, p. A22.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, Goshko, “U.S. Allies, with Interests to Protect, Offer Vague Support.”

¹⁵⁹ “U.S. Urging NATO Anti-Soviet Support” p. 18. The British sent three warships to the eastern Mediterranean both to signal their displeasure with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and to free U.S. ships for transfer to the Indian Ocean (Richard Weintraub, “Allies Temper Support With Caution in U.S.-Soviet Standoff,” *Washington Post*, January 28, 1980, p. A16).

condemnation of the Soviet invasion, along with diplomatic gestures like curtailment of official contacts and cultural exchanges and support for the U.S. embargo on grain sales to the Soviets.”¹⁶⁰ Costly actions were another matter entirely: “a majority of the allies do not want seriously to disrupt their trade with the Soviets or to jeopardize the East-West dialogue they still believe to be vital to Western Europe’s future.”¹⁶¹

Carter’s grandiose claims did not have the desired effect on the Europeans’ willingness to ante up, so in February 1980 the administration tried a different approach. Instead of warning about World War III, which only fueled doubts in Europe about his grasp of the situation, the Carter administration tried to get out in front of the competence issue by identifying specific improvements the Europeans could make and then pressing these to agreement within the NATO organizational machinery. In mid-February, the administration sent a twenty-page report to NATO headquarters in Brussels that discussed the military implications of the Soviet move into Afghanistan. The intent behind sending this report was to encourage the Europeans to adhere to the Alliance-wide goal, set in 1977, of 3 percent real annual increases in defense spending during the period 1979–1985. This was followed by a list of detailed and “do-able” suggestions for strengthening the Europeans’ armed forces, drafted by the State and Defense Departments during February and March and presented by Robert Komer, undersecretary of defense for policy, to a meeting of senior defense officials from the NATO allies in Brussels on April 14.¹⁶²

Komer’s presentation asked the Europeans to accelerate certain measures drawn from the Alliance’s Long-Term Defense Program, which had been formally adopted by the NATO countries in 1977, so that they would be better able to compensate for gaps in the NATO military posture that might occur if a large U.S. force was sent to Southwest Asia. Among the “quick fixes” on Komer’s list: (1) enlarging ammunition and other stockpiles so they could support at least a thirty-day conventional war in Europe, (2) strengthening European reserve forces, either by forming more reserve units from the pool of trained reservists available for call-up and/or upgrading the weapons and equipment assigned to existing reserve units, (3) preparing West European wide-body civil aircraft so they could be used to ferry U.S. troops and equipment to Europe (in case U.S. airlift assets were being used elsewhere),

¹⁶⁰ Leonard Downie, Jr., “Some Allies Resist Severe Sanctions,” *Washington Post*, January 15, 1980, p. A1.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. A1. See also Michael Getler, “Role of U.S. Allies in a Persian Gulf War Is Uncertain,” *Washington Post*, February 11, 1980, pp. A1, A21; Drew Middleton, “Allied Attitude On a Gulf War Troubling U.S.,” *New York Times*, February 17, 1980, p. A11.

¹⁶² Richard Burt, “U.S. Pressing Allies on Arms Rise,” *New York Times*, February 22, 1980, p. A10; Eugene Kozicharow, “NATO Emphasizing Political Cohesion,” *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, March 3, 1980, pp. 57–58; Michael Getler, “U.S. to Press Allies to Boost Defenses after Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, March 17, 1980, p. A20; Charles Corddry, “U.S. Pressing Its Allies to Boost Defense Role,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 2, 1980, p. 1. See also Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 152.

and (4) expanding naval and maritime aviation forces so they could play a larger role in the North Atlantic in case U.S. forces were sent to the Indian Ocean.¹⁶³

Komer's presentation was intended to give the Europeans a month to digest these requests before they were raised again, this time by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, at the regularly scheduled meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels in May. And while Brown was pressing the U.S. case on his European counterparts, back in Washington the State and Defense Departments were working on another list of steps that the Europeans would be asked to take, which was targeted for approval at the December 1980 meeting of defense ministers.¹⁶⁴

The Europeans' response to the U.S. proposals by and large followed the script laid out by the Carter administration. The Alliance's defense ministers approved the American recommendations during their meeting in Brussels on May 13; two days later the Alliance's foreign ministers, also meeting in Brussels, gave their approval too. By agreeing, the Europeans committed themselves to enlarging ammunition stockpiles, improving chemical warfare defenses, equipping NATO naval vessels with additional antiship and anti-air missiles, and increasing aid to southern flank countries, namely Turkey, Greece, and Portugal. The Europeans also agreed to study a second phase of longer term improvements, such as more pre-positioning of weapons and equipment in Europe (to speed the flow of reinforcements from the United States), improvements to reserve forces, and adapting commercial wide-body jetliners for military use. Defense ministers subsequently approved these second-phase measures at their next regularly scheduled meeting in December.¹⁶⁵ In addition, Komer and Brown won the Europeans' consent to an end to the so-called swing strategy, whereby the United States had planned to send forces based in the Pacific to fight in Europe in the event of another war there. This change was a reflection of the fact that the United States needed its Pacific-based forces for use in the Indian Ocean, making them unavailable for a European contingency. Conversely, the Europeans' recognition that U.S. military requirements were

¹⁶³ Rick Burt, "U.S. Asking Allies to Assume More of the Military Burden," *New York Times*, April 14, 1980, p. A11; Bradley Graham, "U.S. Asks NATO to Accelerate Long-Term Defense Programs," *Washington Post*, April 15, 1980, p. A2; Charles Corddry, "U.S. Demands an End to 'Lag' by NATO Allies," *Baltimore Sun*, April 24, 1980, p. A5; John Fialka, "U.S. Asks European Allies to Boost Defense Posture," *Washington Star*, April 24, 1980, p. A6. Stuart and Tow, *The Limits of Alliance*, p. 90, have a slightly different list of steps the Europeans were asked to take.

¹⁶⁴ Bradley Graham, "U.S. Freed to Boost Forces in Mideast," *Washington Post*, May 14, 1980, pp. A1, A21. See also Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 152.

¹⁶⁵ Graham, "U.S. Freed to Boost Forces in Mideast"; Flora Lewis, "NATO Agrees on Defensive Steps in Afghan Crisis," *New York Times*, May 14, 1980, p. A1; Eugene Kozicharow, "NATO to Boost European Defense Programs," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, May 19, 1980, p. 19; Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, pp. 152–153. Stuart and Tow, *The Limits of Alliance*, pp. 90–91, suggest a more reluctant response by the Europeans.

changing is one reason why they agreed to Komer's and Brown's requests that they do more in Europe.¹⁶⁶

By mid-May 1980, the Americans had proposed and the Europeans had accepted a package of improvements to NATO forces in Europe, with additional improvements under study and targeted for approval later that year. And yet, even as things were seemingly moving in the right direction, there appeared the first claims that something was terribly wrong within the Alliance. "[P]erceptions and definitions of security problems," a future assistant secretary of state for Europe wrote, "have long differed on both sides of the Atlantic," but now "the divergence is sharpening. If allowed to continue, the alliance itself will be placed at risk."¹⁶⁷ The Europeans, a prominent journalist predicted, "are unlikely to be able to develop sufficiently sturdy new agreements with the United States to repair what is widely perceived as a grave danger to the alliance."¹⁶⁸ "The recent tussles," another journalist wrote, "are putting the alliance under strains which arguably are worse than at any point in NATO's 31-year history."¹⁶⁹ Nor did the gloomy forecasts subside once the May ministerial sessions had ended, seemingly successfully. "President Carter and the allies have been fussing with one another lately, which is what allies . . . usually do, but this time there are fundamental differences of policy and personality."¹⁷⁰ "Among specialists closest to the situation," another journalist wrote, "there is a view that relations between the United States and its major allies are the worst since the end of World War II."¹⁷¹

In retrospect, the timing of these various claims and predictions suggests that they were made *not* in response to a failure by NATO members to take needed action; indeed, they appeared just as the Alliance was exhibiting "a fairly convincing show of transatlantic solidarity."¹⁷² Whenever NATO members ask each other to do more, there are almost always complaints by some (often, many) of the members that they are being asked to do too much while their allies are getting away with doing too little. This is a normal feature within an alliance of democracies whose elected leaders are expected to expand and/or improve an array of welfare benefits and whose prospects in the next election

¹⁶⁶ Rick Burt, "U.S. Strategy Focus Shifting from Europe to Pacific," *New York Times*, May 25, 1980, p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ Richard Burt, "Washington and the Atlantic Alliance: The Hidden Crisis," in *National Security in the 1980s: From Weakness to Strength* ed. W. Scott Thompson (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1980), p. 110.

¹⁶⁸ Flora Lewis, "Myth of Unity Dies in Europe," *New York Times*, May 1, 1980, p. A9.

¹⁶⁹ Bradley Graham, "NATO: Changing Alliance," *Washington Post*, May 12, 1980, pp. A1, A16.

¹⁷⁰ James Reston, "The Allies and the President," *New York Times*, May 23, 1980, p. A31.

¹⁷¹ Michael Getler, "Crises Put New Strains On Alliance," *Washington Post*, May 24, 1980, p. A1. For a specific example, see Stanley Hoffmann's diagnosis of an "acrimonious crisis" within the Alliance, "The Crisis in the West," *New York Review of Books*, July 17, 1980, p. 41. See also Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Tribulations of the Alliance," *Wall Street Journal*, May 22, 1980, p. 20; Joseph Kraft, "An Alliance in Disintegration," *Washington Post*, May 25, 1980, p. B7.

¹⁷² "More for Asia, Less for Europe," *The Economist*, May 17, 1980, p. 42.

will likely be worsened if they are seen by their constituents to be sacrificing welfare in order to spend more on defense.¹⁷³

In fairness, the Europeans were not enthused about the United States, as one NATO official put it, “having a competitive military interest outside Europe.”¹⁷⁴ But this was not the same as questioning the value of their alliance with the United States. The Europeans’ concern was that, in the future, the United States would do less for them, requiring them to do more, when what they wanted was just the opposite – the United States should do more so they could do less. Unlike the members of pre-1939 alliances, who often faced a choice between staying with their current partners and dumping them in favor of someone else, there is no evidence that even one NATO member came anywhere near the crisis threshold, in the sense of being indifferent between staying in and getting out. There was exasperation and occasionally anger to be sure, but this was not an argument over whether there should be an Atlantic Alliance; it was an argument over who should make how much of an incremental adjustment in defense spending and when. As if to drive home the point, at almost precisely the moment when observers were proclaiming the Alliance in its worst state ever, the government of Spain announced that it intended to press ahead with negotiations aimed at joining in 1981, the year Spain’s bilateral defense treaty with the United States was scheduled to expire.¹⁷⁵ Statesmen rarely scramble to climb aboard a sinking ship, so the timing of the announcement suggests that officials in Madrid were seeing something quite different than those outsiders who claimed that signs of an impending collapse were mounting.¹⁷⁶

More important, the fascination with crisis obscured some interesting developments on the Europeans’ side of the Atlantic. Part of the reason why the Carter administration was able to win the Europeans’ consent to the May 1980 package of quick fixes and then the phase two measures approved in December was that it used Komer’s presentation to signal what it intended to ask of them, giving them time to adjust to what was coming. Precisely because the Europeans knew they were going to be asked to do more, they tried to get out in front of the issue by identifying steps they could take on their own – steps that would deflect some of the pressure from the Americans while also being acceptable to their electorates. The Germans, for example, tried to carve out a role for themselves as the provider of aid to NATO southern flank countries such as Portugal and Turkey, and maybe Pakistan too.¹⁷⁷ And was it

¹⁷³ This theme is developed more fully in Thies, *Friendly Rivals*. See also the discussion of what happened to the governments that raised taxes in order to increase defense spending during the Korean War rearmament effort, in [Chapter 3](#).

¹⁷⁴ Graham, “NATO: Changing Alliance,” p. A16.

¹⁷⁵ Tom Burns, “Issue of NATO Entry Stirs Debate in Spain Before Carter’s Visit,” *Washington Post*, June 17, 1980, p. A18.

¹⁷⁶ For example, Walter Hahn, “Does NATO Have a Future?” *International Security Review* 5 (Summer 1980): 151–172. See also Flora Lewis, “Alarm Bells in the West,” *Foreign Affairs* 60 (# 3, 1981): 551–572, esp. p. 551.

¹⁷⁷ Bradley Graham, “Carter’s Way With Allies Reportedly Irks Schmidt,” *Washington Post*, February 15, 1980, p. A37; Eugene Kozicharow, “Schmidt Pledges Defense Spending Rise,” and “West Germany Speeds Foreign Aid,” both in *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, March 10, 1980, p. 19.

merely a coincidence that on the eve of the defense ministers' meeting in May, the German government announced that it had approved an extra \$1 billion for military spending and aid to Turkey, and that ninety thousand reservists would be called up for refresher training?¹⁷⁸ Meanwhile the Dutch unexpectedly proposed creating a second NATO naval squadron to replace those U.S. warships diverted from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean.¹⁷⁹

Even more interesting was the reaction by the British and the French. After complaining bitterly about the Americans' failure to deal with the Suez issue "in the spirit of an ally,"¹⁸⁰ the British could hardly stand idle while the Carter administration sought to organize a coherent Western response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.¹⁸¹ Yet the British shared many of the doubts about Carter's policies that were being voiced by the other European members.¹⁸² When the Carter administration requested advance assurances of access to airfields in the United Kingdom in the event it was necessary to send the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) to Southwest Asia, along with access to the former Royal Air Force (RAF) base at Masirah (an island off the coast of Oman where the British still operated a communications facility), and to the air base on the British-controlled island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, the British held back, promising only to give serious consideration to an American request once it actually was made.¹⁸³

The British endorsed in principle the Carter administration's plans for a rapid deployment force, but they also believed that the Americans were exaggerating the danger of the most demanding contingency in this regard – namely, a Soviet invasion of Iran – which the British thought was very unlikely. Because it was so unlikely, the British "insisted that it was unwise to make compensation for such an extreme and improbable contingency a test of NATO solidarity."¹⁸⁴ The British made plans for an RDF of their own, but they "did not envision the incorporation of these forces in America's Readiness Command, European Command, or any other unified U.S./NATO authority."¹⁸⁵ They also sought to confine any contingency planning for the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region

¹⁷⁸ "Germans Increase Defense Budget," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, May 12, 1980, p. 19; Michael Burns, "Preparing for U.S. Troop Pullout Is Likely NATO Topic This Week," *Baltimore Sun*, May 12, 1980, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ Don Oberdorfer and Bradley Graham, "Muskie Denounces Decision by French to Attend Olympics," *Washington Post*, May 15, 1980, p. A22.

¹⁸⁰ See the excerpt from Eden's memoir, quoted in footnote 13 of this chapter.

¹⁸¹ A senior Foreign Office official summed up the British perspective: while there was no formal obligation outside the treaty area to concert policy, there was, in the interest of allied "solidarity," a "moral obligation" not to undermine one's colleagues (quoted in Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 161).

¹⁸² Stuart and Tow, *The Limits of Alliance*, p. 134.

¹⁸³ Oswald Johnston, "U.S. Talks With Britain, Portugal on Use of Bases," *Los Angeles Times*, January 25, 1980, p. A1.

¹⁸⁴ Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, pp. 163–164.

¹⁸⁵ Stuart and Tow, *The Limits of Alliance*, p. 133. See also David Brown, "Rapid Deployment Force Contemplated by British," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, July 7, 1980, p. 18.

to bilateral rather than NATO channels, where they could deal with the Americans as partners in the special relationship rather than one of thirteen European members of NATO.¹⁸⁶

Last but not least, the British disagreed with the way the Carter administration (and then the Reagan administration) made its case for a rapid deployment force. In the British view, the RDF should have been designed for multiple purposes, such as reinforcing Europe as well as responding to Southwest Asian contingencies. Had the United States done this, it “could have avoided creating the doubly negative perception that the [RDF] simultaneously diminished European security and represented a Western menace to Southwest Asian sovereignty.”¹⁸⁷ The American fixation on invasion scenarios led a British Defense Ministry official to comment, “Our contribution to stability may require a certain distancing from the muscular expression of power by the United States.” A Foreign Office official added, “We don’t want to get the British military capability out-of-area tarred with the RDF brush.”¹⁸⁸

With the British holding back, the French saw an opportunity. Like the Americans and the British, the French created their own rapid deployment force – the *Force d’action rapide* (FAR) – of about 47,000 military personnel, designed both to reinforce French forces in Germany and to carry out interventions outside Europe.¹⁸⁹ Giving the FAR a dual role was a shrewd move on their part, because it allowed them to discreetly strengthen their ties with the NATO command structure *and* put the Germans in their debt as well. On one hand, the FAR, the French claimed, gave France the opportunity of “participating earlier alongside the alliance” in a European conflict.¹⁹⁰ Such an action, Defense Minister Charles Hernu subsequently acknowledged, would of course require coordination with NATO military commanders.¹⁹¹ On the other hand, creating the FAR quite naturally led to talks between the French and West German governments regarding how the FAR could be used to defend Germany against an attack.¹⁹² The French were motivated by self-interest rather than altruism, but the Alliance grew stronger nonetheless. Monolithic unity isn’t always a good thing (witness the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in 1989); conversely, a little competition among allies isn’t necessarily bad.

And there was indeed competition, in the form of discreet but persistent attempts by the French to supplant the British as America’s most favored ally. Even as the British were keeping their distance from the Carter administration

¹⁸⁶ Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, pp. 163–164.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁸⁹ Jolyon Howorth, “Consensus of Silence: The French Socialist Party and Defense Policy Under François Mitterrand,” *International Affairs* 60 (Autumn 1984): 593–599. See also Stuart and Tow, *The Limits of Alliance*, p. 97; Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 169.

¹⁹⁰ General Jeannou Lacase, the French armed force chief of staff, quoted in Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 169. See also Lellouche, “Europe and Her Defense,” pp. 825–826.

¹⁹¹ Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 169.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 170.

and especially its requests for advance assurances about access to British bases, the French were in effect whispering in the Americans' ears that *France* was their most dependable ally; France was not constrained by antinuclear and/or anti-NATO protest movements; France was not reluctant to use its forces to intervene.¹⁹³ France, Pierre Lellouche noted, "is now the one European nation that shows the greatest readiness to safeguard her security in the face of new threats arising both in Europe and in the Third World. . . . France is now objectively, if not officially, closer to the Reagan Administration than any other European nation in facing up to the new realities of the international security environment."¹⁹⁴

The French did more than just say the right things; they also engaged in extensive, albeit informal, cooperation with the Americans in the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf region. Of all the European allies, the French maintained the largest military presence in the Indian Ocean, which they used as a way of ingratiating themselves to the Americans.¹⁹⁵ Sherwood notes very perceptively in this regard:

Despite its resistance to formal out-of-area cooperation, France maintained a wide range of global commitments and played a significant role in protecting interests consonant with those of the Alliance, especially in Africa and the Indian Ocean. Indeed, the French contribution to the promotion of Western interests often appeared to be in inverse proportion to the vociferousness of their public opposition to allied coordination. The more the French government criticized its superpower ally, the greater its domestic credibility. With such popular support, Paris was free to deal discreetly and constructively with Washington.¹⁹⁶

Indeed, it was one of the great ironies of the Cold War that France – which often seemed to go out of its way to demonstrate its independence by snubbing Washington – could aspire to be the savior of policies that Washington itself lacked the means to carry out. "[B]y its very public reticence and distance from open American initiatives," a well-informed journalist wrote, "France can discreetly carry out unpleasant tasks that the United States needs but is no longer capable of doing itself without provoking general outrage, at home and abroad."¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ The French also made these points in public. See, for example, French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson, "French Defense Policy and the United States," *Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 1983, p. 22.

¹⁹⁴ Lellouche, "Europe and Her Defense," pp. 827–828. See also Cheysson's comment that he was "stupefied" to see neutralism spreading in Britain, quoted in Richard Eder, "Mitterrand's First Steps: Desire for a Moral Imprint," *New York Times*, May 30, 1981, p. 3.

¹⁹⁵ See Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, pp. 167–168.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

¹⁹⁷ Two such missions were helping the Saudis to clear insurgents from the Great Mosque in December 1979 and helping Tunisia to repel a Libyan-supported armed incursion (Flora Lewis, "Giscard Gives French Foreign Policy a Gaullist Look," *New York Times*, March 25, 1980, p. A10).

The Afghanistan Case in Retrospect

The Alliance's "machinery," Stanley Hoffmann argued as the Afghanistan case was unfolding, "simply does not work well for...extra-European predicaments."¹⁹⁸ Seen in retrospect, however, the Afghanistan case suggests that this view is unduly pessimistic. While the European allies did not immediately accede to everything Washington asked of them, over time they did quite a lot.

Beginning in 1980, "the United States made out-of-area cooperation a high priority on the alliance agenda." Toward this end American officials sought "to use [the] NATO institutional and consultative mechanisms for the discussion and limited coordination of policy toward Southwest Asia." The Carter administration turned to NATO for "allied political sanction, financial compensation, and military contributions for its efforts to defend Western interests in the region."¹⁹⁹

On the whole, this effort turned out much better than was realized at the time. In addition to the various quick fixes and longer-term improvements already mentioned, the NATO allies committed themselves to provide more merchant shipping, more airlift capacity, and more overflight rights and en route access to support U.S. forces deploying to Southwest Asia.²⁰⁰ Some NATO members – most prominently, West Germany – took longer to agree than others, but even the Germans came around too.

Bonn agreed [by 1982] to implement new airspace access arrangements and related defense-burden-sharing measures to help Washington prepare a military response to a future Persian Gulf crisis should the occasion arise. Bonn and Washington also signed the U.S.-FRG wartime Host Nation Support Agreement (WHNS) in early 1982. The agreement represented West German compliance with a November 1980 request by the U.S. that FRG reserve units stand ready to provide logistical support and augment rear-area security if U.S. combat troops stationed in Europe were redeployed to the Middle East/Persian Gulf.²⁰¹

The Europeans, to be sure, were hardly enthusiastic partners in this effort. They wanted to preserve as many of the benefits of détente as they could; they also wanted to limit any new burdens on their recession-plagued economies and their deficit-prone national budgets. What the Europeans could not do was just ignore U.S. appeals for help, nor could they deny that the Soviet move into Afghanistan had put the latter in a better position to stir up trouble in Iran and Pakistan and maybe elsewhere. So the Europeans in effect tried to find things that they could do that would keep them in Washington's good graces while sparing détente and their economies too.

And this is by and large what happened – NATO members did what they were relatively well suited to do.

¹⁹⁸ Hoffmann, "The Crisis in the West," p. 41.

¹⁹⁹ Sherwood, *Allies in Crisis*, p. 149.

²⁰⁰ For details, see Stuart and Tow, *The Limits of Alliance*, pp. 97–98.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

Everything points to basically solid allied cooperation on Afghanistan. A limited trade embargo and grain embargo against the Soviet Union appears to be holding. The French are making a significant contribution by deploying their fleet in the Indian Ocean. The West Germans are helping bolster the economy of Turkey, a strategically important NATO ally In light of these and other actions, President Carter was able to say in this press conference that there now exists “a remarkable degree of unanimity” among the allies in the present crisis.²⁰²

This was not the kind of centrally planned and coordinated Alliance response that the “worst crisis ever” crowd apparently wanted and expected. But it was more – indeed, a lot more – than contemporary critics credited to the Alliance. And even though policy making within an alliance of democracies may at times seem unruly and slow and even directionless, such an alliance will likely exhibit hidden strengths compared with alliances in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In particular, as individual members search for actions that they can take that will be acceptable to both their allies and their electorates, there is likely to be a subtle but important competition among them, as some members strive for greater influence and/or prominence, and other members strive not to be left behind and thereby appear to be the laggard that lets the others down.

Competition, in turn, is likely to have unexpected payoffs. At the time the Afghan case was unfolding, the French were often portrayed as selfish and recalcitrant because of their 1966 decision to leave the NATO integrated command structure. Yet it was that very independence that left France free of antinuclear and anti-NATO protest movements, that gave the French leeway to maintain the largest permanent deployments in the Indian Ocean of all the European members, and that gave the government leeway to deploy French forces and engage in military-to-military cooperation with the United States and others. When the British hesitated in their response to the American request to agree in advance on steps to be taken in the event of a Southwest Asia contingency, the French saw an opening that they moved quickly to turn to their advantage. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, allies competed too, but for the most part this competition was aimed at thwarting each other’s schemes and undercutting each other’s attempts to grow stronger. In the Afghan case, competition among allies produced a stronger rather than a weaker alliance response. A European alliance did indeed crack and then collapse as a result of strains imposed during the 1980s, but it wasn’t NATO that collapsed; it was instead the Warsaw Treaty Organization that fractured from within.²⁰³

CONCLUSION

In the Suez case, the British and French did what they felt they had to do, informing Washington only after the fact, in no small part because “we were

²⁰² “Moscow and the Allies,” *Christian Science Monitor* editorial, February 15, 1980.

²⁰³ Wallace Thies and Monica Podbielski, “What Makes An Alliance Strong? NATO and the Warsaw Treaty organization in Retrospect,” *Military Review* 77 (July–August 1997): 130–135.

afraid that if we had let you know, you would have prevented us.”²⁰⁴ In the Afghanistan case, the Carter administration did what it thought was imperative – namely, proclaim a “Carter Doctrine” committing the United States to the defense of the Persian Gulf region, even if this should lead to war, a war that might engulf Europe too – without informing the Europeans beforehand, in no small part because it feared that European complaining and foot dragging would detract from the deterrent effect it was seeking.

In both cases, reticence was met with anger (the United States in 1956) and/or dismay (Europe in 1980), which became the basis for claims that the Atlantic Alliance was facing its greatest crisis ever and perhaps even dissolution. Yet in both cases, the healing process was already under way even as cries of crisis were multiplying. In the Suez case, Eden’s and Macmillan’s efforts to reestablish the special relationship with the United States and regain Britain’s place as America’s closest and most favored ally began on November 6 (the day the cease-fire was proclaimed), driven in large part by their need for a political success that they could use to retain (Eden) or solidify (Macmillan) their hold on their position as prime minister, and to improve their and their party’s chances of success in the next election.

In the Afghanistan case, the Carter administration opted to work within the NATO machinery, in particular sending Robert Komer to Europe in April 1980, where he was able to lay the foundation for agreement within the Defense Planning Committee (defense ministers, followed by foreign ministers) on a set of so-called quick fixes, which were to be implemented during 1980. This was followed by work on the so-called Phase Two measures, to be taken during 1981 and thereafter, which won the endorsement of the Defense Planning Committee during the next regularly scheduled ministerial meeting in December 1980. Claims that the Alliance was in its worst state ever, as was pointed out earlier in this chapter, generally took little account of the agreements reach in Brussels, either on the quick fixes to be made in 1980 or the longer term measures to be taken in 1981 and 1982. In effect, proponents of the claim that the Alliance was facing its worst crisis ever were reacting to the discussions that *preceded* agreement rather than to the agreement itself. Because of the sensitivity of the subject matter, such discussions can be and often are heated, just like discussions between representatives of the State and Defense Departments or between Congress and the executive branch. As in the Suez case, political self-interest proved to be a powerful stimulus to reaching an agreement. The U.S. side needed the Europeans’ help to bring credibility to the Carter Doctrine; the Europeans needed the United States to offset Soviet military power, which none of them could do on their own. Compromise, and an ongoing alliance, was what each side needed; and compromise, and an ongoing alliance, was what each side got. In the end, the “disagreements among allies” that were “excused [by the governments involved] as basically matters of tactics, not vital issues” turned out to be about tactics after all.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ French Premier Guy Mollet, quoted in Stuart and Tow, *The Limits of Alliance*, p. 82.

²⁰⁵ Graham, “NATO: Changing Alliance,” p. A16.

Nonmilitary Issues

The Atlantic Alliance, as explained in [Chapter 3](#), was created primarily to instill confidence in Western Europe, which at the time was sorely lacking in societies still recovering from the Second World War and fated to live in the shadow cast by Soviet military power. Even so, there was an expectation right from the start that the Alliance would be something more than just a military arrangement. The Preamble to the North Atlantic Treaty states that the parties to the treaty are determined to “live in peace with all peoples and all governments,” “safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples,” and “promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area.” Article Two promises that the parties will “contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, . . . eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and . . . encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them.”¹

These expectations of cooperation extending to nonmilitary as well as military issues were challenged during the 1980s and the 1990s, first by the hard feelings caused by the Reagan administration’s attempt to prevent European firms from participating in construction of a pipeline linking natural gas fields in the Soviet Union to Western Europe, and then by intra-NATO differences over how to respond to the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and especially to the war in Bosnia. Even though there was no military threat involved in either of these cases, the Soviet pipeline and the war in Bosnia were both widely said to have caused the Alliance’s worst crisis ever. These claims are investigated in the rest of this chapter.

¹ The text of the North Atlantic Treaty is reprinted in Escott Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947–1949* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), pp. 264–266.

THE SOVIET PIPELINE CRISIS

Background

The Soviet pipeline project had its origins in the détente years of the 1970s, when the Soviets approached Western European governments about building a natural gas pipeline from the Urengoy field in western Siberia to the Soviet Union's western border, where it would link up with the existing gas distribution network. Soviet gas exports to the West had begun in 1968, and in the early 1970s Ruhrgas, West Germany's biggest natural gas distributor, signed contracts with the Soviets that provided for delivery of up to 12 billion cubic meters (BCM) of Soviet natural gas per year until the year 2000. "From 1973 through 1980, the Soviets supplied Western Europe with 105 BCM of natural gas, of which Ruhrgas . . . bought 42 BCM. In 1980 alone, some 10 BCM of Soviet gas went to Ruhrgas."² In 1979 and 1980, the Soviets exported about 21 BCM of natural gas to Western Europe. When fully operational in the mid 1980s, the new pipeline would allow the Soviets to export as much as 60 BCM per year, depending on which configuration was selected and how much the Europeans were willing to buy.³

The pipeline project gained momentum in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, which toppled the Shah and his regime. Iran's revolutionary government canceled an arrangement negotiated by their predecessors that called for Iran to ship natural gas to the southern republics of the Soviet Union and the latter to send its own natural gas to Western Europe. To replace the lost gas, a West German delegation visited Moscow in January 1980 to discuss a version of the pipeline project that would have allowed the Soviets to export an additional 40 BCM of gas per year through two parallel pipelines. That version was subsequently scaled back to a single pipeline capable of carrying up to 30 BCM per year.⁴ By July 1980, the Soviet and West German governments were agreed in principle that the pipeline should be built and that "preliminary negotiations

² Norbert Welter, "Europe Ready to Finalize Huge Gas Deal with Soviet Union," *The German Tribune*, April 12, 1981, p. 6. See also Jonathan Stern, "Specters and Pipe Dreams," *Foreign Policy* #48 (Fall 1982): 21-23; John Tagliabue, "West Germans Planning Soviet Pipeline Talks," *New York Times*, July 5, 1980, p. 27; "Soviet Natural Gas for West Curtailed," *New York Times*, January 11, 1981, p. 5. Miriam Karr and Roger Robinson, Jr. trace the pipeline's origin to a Soviet-West German economic cooperation agreement signed in 1978 ("Europe's Big Gamble on Soviet Gas," *New York Times*, April 19, 1981, Sec. 3, p. 3).

³ Tagliabue, "West Germans Planning Soviet Pipeline Talks"; "Soviet Natural Gas for West Curtailed"; Miles Kahler, "The United States and Western Europe: The Diplomatic Consequences of Mr. Reagan," in *Eagle Defiant: United States Foreign Policy in the 1980s* ed. Kenneth Oye, Robert Lieber, and Donald Rothchild (Boston: Little Brown, 1983), p. 291.

⁴ Bruce Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 166-167; Murray Seeger, "Energy, Cash Bind Soviets, West Europe," *Los Angeles Times*, January 26, 1980, p. 1. See also Stern, "Specters and Pipe Dreams," p. 23; "Bonn Hopes Schmidt Visit Will Increase Soviet Trade," *New York Times*, June 30, 1980, p. A9; Tagliabue, "West Germans Planning Soviet Pipeline Talks," p. 28.

between the responsible agencies and industries of the two sides should be conducted.”⁵ The project received high-level approval when West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt met Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev later that month. Much of the rest of 1980 was devoted to working out who would supply and pay for what. “Under a deal about to be signed, West Germany will provide the pipes, the turbines and much of the money to bring the gas more than 3,000 miles from Siberia. That gas will then be pumped into a grid to boost supplies not only to West Germany but also to France, Italy, Ireland and Belgium, and later perhaps to Spain, Greece and Sweden.”⁶

In the United States, the outgoing Carter administration announced on November 18, 1980, that it had approved an export license that would allow Caterpillar Tractor to sell the Soviets two hundred bulldozers configured to serve as pipe layers.⁷ The administration offered two reasons for approving the sale: (1) the pipeline would diminish Western Europe’s “overall dependence on the increasingly volatile Middle East” and (2) a Japanese company, Komatsu, would make the sale if Caterpillar could not.⁸ The next day Soviet officials visited Caterpillar’s headquarters in Peoria, Illinois, to discuss purchasing earth-moving equipment, which did not require an export license.⁹ The incoming Reagan administration took a more skeptical view of the project, “but in his talks with [President-elect] Reagan last week [German Chancellor] Schmidt was told that the United States had no objection ‘in principle’ to the deal. Indeed, an American company was recently given a license to help lay the pipeline.”¹⁰

But while the Carter and Reagan administrations did not try to block the project, at least not at first, there was plenty of evidence that Europeans and Americans viewed it quite differently. The Europeans saw two advantages to be gained from building the pipeline. First, it would reduce their dependence on natural gas imports from North Africa (Algeria, and Libya) and the Middle East (Iran), none of which was considered a reliable supplier. Second, the pipeline was a gigantic public works project that would save thousands of high-paying jobs at a time of recession and rising unemployment. In West Germany, unemployment in July 1981 reached its highest level since 1954, which is why “key branches of the country’s industry are pressing to close a deal that would bring much-needed orders.”¹¹

⁵ Text of a communiqué issued in Moscow, quoted in Tagliabue, “West Germans Planning Soviet Pipeline Talks,” p. 27.

⁶ “Pandora’s Pipeline,” *The Economist*, November 29, 1980, p. 49.

⁷ The Soviets were planning to build six pipelines to carry gas westward from Urengoy, one of which would carry gas exported to Western Europe (Stern, “Specters and Pipe Dreams,” p. 22). It is unclear exactly where and how the Soviets intended to use the Caterpillar pipe layers.

⁸ The Commerce Department’s statement is quoted in Edward Cowan, “U.S. to Let Soviet Buy ‘Pipelayers,’” *New York Times*, November 19, 1980, p. D3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. D3.

¹⁰ “Pandora’s Pipeline.” See also Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, pp. 172–174.

¹¹ John Tagliabue, “Bonn Needs the Business Even More Than the Gas,” *New York Times*, August 16, 1981, Sec. 4, p. 3. See also Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, pp. 168–169.

On the U.S. side, Defense Department officials (under both Carter and Reagan) saw the pipeline not as a way of reducing Europe's dependence on Persian Gulf suppliers but rather as part of a Soviet strategy to neutralize Western Europe and ultimately to shatter the NATO alliance.¹² "If Western Europe ever comes to depend on the Soviet Union for economic security and prosperity," warned a January 1981 report prepared by the Washington-based Institute on Strategic Trade, "the Western alliance is doomed and NATO will be shattered without the Soviets having to fire a single shot."¹³ Stopping the pipeline, the report continued, "should be one of the first foreign policy actions of the incoming [Reagan] administration and time to do this is quickly running out." As a first step, the report suggested, the Reagan administration should withdraw the export licenses granted to Caterpillar Tractor and International Harvester, two U.S. firms that planned to participate in construction of the pipeline.¹⁴

The Europeans were aware that parts of the U.S. government took a dim view of the pipeline, but they expected the Reagan administration to go along with it nonetheless. At the July 1981 Ottawa summit of the Group of Seven (G-7) industrial democracies, President Reagan urged his European counterparts to consider alternative energy sources, such as natural gas from Norway and coal from the United States, before agreeing to finance the Soviet pipeline.¹⁵ Later that month, Secretary of State Alexander Haig told a Senate trade subcommittee that the administration was drafting specific proposals offering the Europeans access to alternative energy sources – including coal, nuclear, and non-Middle East sources of oil and gas – in an effort to prevent them from becoming excessively dependent on the Soviet Union.¹⁶ The day after Haig's appearance on Capitol Hill, however, Senator Charles Percy (R-IL), after meeting with Haig, announced that the Reagan administration had approved Caterpillar's request for a new export license that would allow it to sell to the Soviets one hundred

¹² Carter's Defense Department opposed Caterpillar's request for an export license for pipe-laying bulldozers (Cowan, "U.S. to Let Soviet Buy 'Pipelayers'").

¹³ The report, which was intended for President-elect Reagan's transition team, is quoted in the UPI dispatch, "Soviet Pipeline Called Threat to the West," *Washington Post*, January 9, 1981, p. A10. See also "Europe's Neck in a Noose," *The Economist*, February 21, 1981, pp. 13–14.

¹⁴ "Soviet Pipeline Called Threat to the West." See also "Soviet Natural Gas for West Curtailed." The Solar Division of International Harvester was planning to supply compressors for the pipeline.

¹⁵ "Putting Siberia on Ice?" *The Economist*, July 25, 1981, pp. 64–65; Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, pp. 183–188.

¹⁶ Clyde Farnsworth, "U.S. Pushes Soviet Gas Alternative," *New York Times*, July 29, 1981, p. 23. Those proposals were presented to the Europeans in November 1981 by a U.S. delegation led by Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs Myer Rashish (Clyde Farnsworth, "Europe-U.S. Energy Rift," *New York Times*, November 9, 1981, p. 26). Even before Rashish arrived in Bonn, Economics Minister Count Otto Lambsdorf told journalists, "I will make it clear that we are sticking to our gas import plans" (quoted in AP, "Bonn Insists on Soviet Gas," *New York Times*, November 5, 1981, p. 36).

pipe-laying tractors.¹⁷ “The decision to sell the pipe-laying equipment to Moscow,” a journalist predicted, “almost certainly will be cited by European leaders as justification for proceeding to build [the] pipeline.”¹⁸ The Reagan administration, *The Economist* concluded, “is reconciled to West Germany going ahead” with the pipeline.¹⁹ “It is not believed likely,” an American journalist based in Bonn added, “that the Reagan administration would attempt an outright veto.”²⁰ These predictions seemed quite prescient when, on September 29, 1981, a consortium of West German and French companies signed the first contracts to deliver and install twenty-two compressor stations for the pipeline, while Washington stood on the sideline watching.²¹ Two months later, when Ruhrgas signed a contract to import 10.5 BCM of Soviet gas annually for twenty-five years beginning in 1984, Washington’s reaction was limited to a State Department spokesman telling reporters that the United States had recently expressed its concern about the pipeline in talks with European officials.²²

Deeds are often said to speak louder than words, but in this case the Reagan administration’s words *and* deeds (or lack thereof) both suggested that it would not try hard to stop the pipeline. On October 14, 1981, Robert Hormats, assistant secretary of state for economic and business affairs, told a U.S. Senate subcommittee that “It is no secret that the United States has serious concerns about the pipeline.” But he added, “We recognize also that the final decision on the pipeline is Europe’s.” While the Reagan administration planned “to discuss with our European partners alternatives to Soviet gas,” the administration did not “regard this as an issue which should be resolved by the United States attempting to dictate what Europe should do.”²³

All in all, as 1981 drew to a close, the Reagan administration seemed resigned to the Europeans going ahead with the pipeline project.²⁴ After the

¹⁷ Terry Minsky, “White House Approves Caterpillar’s Sale of Pipeline-Laying Gear to Soviet Union,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 1981, p. 9. See also Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, pp. 204–205. Caterpillar had obtained a license from the Carter administration to sell the Soviets 200 pipe-laying tractors, but the sale had been held up while the Soviets tried to arrange financing. In February 1981, Caterpillar asked the Reagan administration to amend the export license. Senator Percy and House Minority Leader Robert Michel both supported Caterpillar, which had its headquarters and manufacturing plants in their home state of Illinois.

¹⁸ Minsky, “White House Approves Caterpillar’s Sale of Pipeline-Laying Gear to Soviet Union.”

¹⁹ “A Wavering Line on Russian Trade,” *The Economist*, August 15, 1981, p. 18.

²⁰ Tagliabue, “Bonn Needs the Business More Than the Gas.”

²¹ John Tagliabue, “Europeans in Pact on Soviet Gas,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1981, p. 33.

²² John Tagliabue, “Soviet in Accord on Sending Gas to Western Europe,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1981, pp. 1, 27; “Pipeline for Western Europe,” *Time*, December 7, 1981, p. 52.

²³ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, “Soviet-West European Natural Gas Pipeline,” *Current Policy* No. 331 (October 14, 1981), pp. 1, 5.

²⁴ See, for example, “Pipeline for Western Europe.” See also Alexander Haig’s comment that, by the time he became secretary of state, “President Carter had chosen not to oppose it and the Europeans had made massive financial and political investments in it . . . It was, quite simply, too late to say no” (*Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* [New York: Macmillan, 1984], pp. 252–253).

imposition of martial law in Poland on December 17, however, the Reagan administration responded with sanctions on Poland *and* the Soviet Union – the latter for instigating the Polish crackdown – in the form of a trade embargo on the sale of components and technology needed to build the pipeline. “Our allies in Europe,” Secretary of State Alexander Haig subsequently recalled, “were given five hours’ advance notification of the President’s action, a procedure that transformed the perfunctory to the curt.”²⁵ On January 8, 1982, General Electric was informed by the Commerce Department that \$175 million worth of turbine components, intended for sale to three European firms building compressor stations for the pipeline, would not receive an export license.²⁶ With the U.S. sanctions in place (and hurting U.S. firms²⁷), the Reagan administration urged the Europeans to follow its lead, by cutting off loans to finance the pipeline and/or refusing to sell to the Soviets the components needed to build it.²⁸ In the words of a senior U.S. diplomat, “we’ll see whether our allies are prepared to stand with us on this.”²⁹

The Europeans, however, were not at all prepared to follow the American lead on the pipeline. “Even though the American sanctions were not particularly harsh given earlier administration statements, the initial European response was less than enthusiastic: no government endorsed the American sanctions or hastened to impose its own.”³⁰ The Germans in particular were unwilling to sacrifice the pipeline (and the thousands of jobs that depended on

²⁵ Haig, *Caveat*, p. 254.

²⁶ GE was building turbine components in the United States for export to three European firms – John Brown Engineering of Great Britain, Nuovo Pignone of Italy, and AEG-Telefunken of West Germany – which were to provide the Soviets with 125 turbines, using designs licensed from GE. At the time the embargo was imposed, GE had already shipped enough parts to assemble 22 such turbines. A fourth European company, Alsthom-Atlantique of France, had a contract to supply more than 20 turbines, plus 40 sets of the same turbine components that GE was building in the United States. The Alsthom-made turbine components were intended as spares for the pipeline, or for use if the pipeline were extended. Regarding the U.S. embargo, see Reuters, “G.E. Cites U.S. Bar on Soviet Project,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1982, p. 23; Paul Lewis, “U.S. Asks Its Allies to Refuse Soviet Parts for Pipeline,” *New York Times*, January 11, 1982, pp. 1, 9; Clyde Farnsworth, “U.S. Insists on Export Bar Abroad,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1982, p. 31; Clyde Farnsworth, “Cabinet Divided on Soviet Gas Line,” *New York Times*, February 12, 1982, p. 34; Andrew Pollack, “Soviet Options on G.E. Rotor,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1982, p. 32. See also Kahler, “The United States and Western Europe,” pp. 290–291.

²⁷ In addition to GE, Caterpillar lost its license to sell pipe-laying tractors to the Soviets, who turned instead to Komatsu of Japan (Farnsworth, “U.S. Insists On Export Bar Abroad,” p. 31). Secretary of State Haig “never imagined that the President’s decision would be retroactive, requiring manufacturers to renege on existing contracts.” He blames the Commerce Department for this interpretation, and adds that, “Inexplicably, the Administration accepted this bureaucratic fiat” (*Caveat*, p. 254).

²⁸ “Soviets May Seek New Loans,” *New York Times*, January 8, 1982, p. 27; Lewis, “U.S. Asks Its Allies to Refuse Soviet Parts for Pipeline” p. 1; Clyde Farnsworth, “U.S. Will Press for More Curbs on Soviet Trade,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1982, p. 1.

²⁹ Quoted in Lewis, “U.S. Asks Its Allies to Refuse Soviet Parts for Pipeline.”

³⁰ Kahler, “The United States and Western Europe,” p. 291.

it) to make a point about Poland. On January 13, 1982, the West German government said it would not prevent German firms from finding alternative suppliers of the parts needed for the pipeline. British and French officials likewise made it clear that their countries would not consider shelving the pipeline unless something more serious happened in Poland. As explained by Lord Carrington, the British foreign secretary, halting the pipeline would be much more burdensome for Europe than for the United States, especially if the United States continued to sell grain to the Soviet Union.³¹

The Europeans agreed not to undercut the U.S. sanctions, “but their interpretation of that assurance was once again different from that of the Americans.”³² The Americans interpreted “not undercut” to mean limiting or, better still, cutting back on Europe’s role in the pipeline project, especially export credits to finance it. The Europeans interpreted “not undercut” to mean *not expanding* their role in the pipeline project, in effect leaving them free to continue doing everything they were already doing (or negotiating about) when the U.S. sanctions were imposed. On January 23, 1982, state-run Gaz de France signed a contract to buy 280 billion cubic feet of Soviet natural gas per year for twenty-five years, with deliveries to begin in 1984, even though Secretary of State Haig had appealed to the French government to delay signing and/or reduce the amount of gas to be imported from the Soviet Union as a sign of French displeasure with the imposition of martial law in Poland.³³ On February 10, a consortium of French banks announced it was extending an additional \$140 million credit to the Soviet Union to finance the purchase of French-made pipeline components. The new loan would cover the remaining 15 percent of the hard currency cost of the French share of the pipeline project, thereby relieving the Soviets of the burden of using any of their own hard currency reserves to fund what they were buying from France.³⁴

With the Europeans seemingly disregarding U.S. requests not to undercut the U.S. trade embargo, the Reagan administration hinted it might respond with coercion. On February 9, 1982, Lionel Olmer, undersecretary of commerce for international trade, told a House subcommittee on science and technology that the administration believed it could use U.S. export control laws to block the use of U.S.-made parts and designs by European subsidiaries or licensees of U.S. firms in the construction of the pipeline.³⁵ The next day, however, Secretary of

³¹ John Tagliabue, “Bonn to Honor Contracts for Siberian Gas Pipeline,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1982, p. 5.

³² Kahler, “The United States and Western Europe,” p. 291.

³³ Paul Lewis, “France Is Buying More Russian Gas Despite U.S. Fears,” *New York Times*, January 24, 1982, p. 1; Bernard Gwertzman, “U.S. Disappointed by Paris Decision,” *New York Times*, January 24, 1982, p. 11.

³⁴ Bernard Gwertzman, “Haig Opposes Continual Pressure on Europe Over Soviet Gas Deal,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1982, p. 1; Paul Lewis, “French Approve New Soviet Loan,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1982, pp. 1, 38. The new loan was at market rates and was neither subsidized nor guaranteed by the French government.

³⁵ Farnsworth, “U.S. Insists on Export Bar Abroad,” pp. 29, 31.

State Haig seemingly undercut Olmer, telling a news conference in Madrid, Spain that the United States should not use the imposition of martial law in Poland as an excuse to pressure the Europeans to cancel or cut back on the pipeline project. "Never before," Haig said with just a touch of hyperbole, "has there been such unanimity of views within the NATO alliance. First, with respect to the true nature of the events in Poland; second, with respect to the culpability of the Soviet Union in these events; and, third, with respect to the concertion [sic] of effort and policy in reaction to these events." Haig's approach was to bring the Alliance together to condemn Soviet actions in Poland, not split it apart by sanctioning one or more allies. "It is vitally important," he explained, "... that we do it in a consultative give-and-take way as we have approached this problem from the beginning and recognize that our European partners have their own imperatives as well and I do not think that the crisis in Poland should be seized upon to change the basic approach we already consistently followed from the outset."³⁶ The Europeans appear to have given more credence to Haig than to Olmer. Diplomatic sources in Paris told reporters that "French and West German officials have been heartened by signs that U.S. opposition to the pipeline is softening, with the Reagan administration putting more emphasis on preserving a united Western front toward the Soviet Union and Poland." As seen from Paris, the Reagan administration's chief concern "is not to stop the pipeline but to get European backing for a Western credit squeeze on the Soviet Union." If the Europeans agreed to such a squeeze, "the Reagan administration is expected to go along with the construction of American-designed equipment for the pipeline by European companies."³⁷

In retrospect, there were at least four reasons why the Europeans could and did believe that the Reagan administration would ultimately accept what they were doing regarding the pipeline. First, the administration was itself sharply divided over the pipeline issue, "with Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and [Secretary of State] Haig taking opposite positions in the National Security Council and Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige somewhere between the two."³⁸ At an NSC meeting on February 26, 1982, Weinberger argued that the administration should use legal and political means to stop European firms under license to GE from making the turbine rotors and other parts that GE was barred from supplying. Haig, in contrast, restated his position that preventing a rift in the Alliance was more important than blocking the pipeline. President Reagan contributed to the impression that internal divisions would limit what

³⁶ Quoted in Gwertzman, "Haig Opposes Continual Pressure on Europe over Soviet Gas Deal," pp. 1, 3. For more on the State Department's view, see Farnsworth, "Cabinet Divided on Soviet Gas Line," p. 34.

³⁷ "Common Market Waters Down Soviet Sanctions," *New York Times*, March 12, 1982, p. 4. The European companies involved are listed in note 26, above.

³⁸ Paul Lewis, "Gas Pipeline Is Producing Lots of Steam among Allies," *New York Times*, February 14, 1982, Sec. 4, p. 5. See also Farnsworth, "Cabinet Divided on Soviet Gas Line"; Dan Morgan, "Fueling a Conflict," *Washington Post*, February 16, 1982, p. A2; Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan to Study Pipeline Issue Today," *New York Times*, February 26, 1982, p. 3.

the United States might do by saying that he wanted to study the matter further before making a decision on stronger measures.³⁹ In the interim, the president sent a high-level mission to Europe, led by Undersecretary of State James Buckley, to discuss the pipeline issue. Soon thereafter, David Gergen, the White House director of communications, told reporters that the president had decided against any new U.S. attempt to disrupt the pipeline deal. White House officials added that the president's postponement of a decision made it less likely the administration would go all-out to prevent the pipeline project from going forward.⁴⁰

Second, senior officials from the Departments of State and Commerce on more than one occasion let it be known that the United States, while not favoring the pipeline, would not do much to oppose it either. Even before the NSC meeting at which President Reagan postponed a decision on the pipeline, Deputy Secretary of State Walter Stoessel told the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that "we do not plan to take any unilateral measures of our own to try to stop this pipeline."⁴¹ At the end of March 1982, Lawrence Eagleburger, undersecretary of state for political affairs, told journalists that there were no plans to impose new sanctions on either the Soviet Union or Poland beyond the steps already announced in December 1981.⁴² In mid-April, Commerce Department officials told reporters that the administration had decided to "avoid further conflict with European allies over a Soviet natural gas pipeline and will seek instead to establish common ground rules for East-West trade at the Versailles economic summit meeting" in June. "The Administration," the officials continued, "has already shifted its attention from trying to block construction of the line to reducing the availability and increasing the cost of new loans to Moscow. As part of the new focus, . . . no further attempts to block exports of construction equipment were under consideration." These officials conceded that the administration was still considering whether to extend U.S. export controls to the French firm Alsthom-Atlantique, which was using specifications and technology licensed from GE to make rotors and other parts for the gas turbines that would power the pipeline's compressor stations. But since "the application of such controls could have precipitated a major crisis with Paris while preparations were under way for the June 4 [G-7 summit] Conference in Paris," reporters were told that such action was very unlikely to be taken.⁴³

³⁹ "Reagan Said to Put off a Decision on Allies' Stand on Soviet Pipeline," *New York Times*, February 27, 1982, p. 4. See also Gwertzman, "Reagan to Study Pipeline Issue Today"; and Gwertzman, "Haig Opposes Continual Pressure on Europe Over Soviet Gas Deal."

⁴⁰ Hedrick Smith, "Bid to Cut Troops in Europe Weighed," *New York Times*, March 3, 1982, p. 4. See also "U.S. Delegation Visits Bonn to Press for Sanctions," *New York Times*, March 16, 1982, p. 7.

⁴¹ Quoted in Gwertzman, "Reagan to Study Pipeline Issue Today."

⁴² Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Aide Cautions on Soviet Credits," *New York Times*, March 31, 1982, p. 6.

⁴³ Clyde Farnsworth, "U.S. Shifts on Soviet Gas Line," *New York Times*, April 16, 1982, pp. 29, 38.

Third, during the first half of 1982 the Europeans took steps to reduce their prospective dependence on Soviet gas imports, thereby mitigating one of the Reagan administration's chief concerns about the pipeline. In April, two German and two Canadian firms formed a joint venture to develop, liquefy, and ship Canadian natural gas to West Germany, thereby lessening German dependence on imports from the Soviet Union, which the Reagan administration had warned about.⁴⁴ In May, the Dutch dropped their plan to buy up to 70.6 billion cubic feet of natural gas per year from the Soviets (because the Soviets didn't buy any Dutch products for the pipeline).⁴⁵ As a hedge against overreliance on Soviet natural gas, the Dutch announced at the end of May 1982 that their Groningen reserves would constitute a strategic reserve that would be available to other West European states. The Norwegians announced that they planned to make large new investments to develop their own gas reserves, which would lessen Europe's dependence on Soviet gas.⁴⁶ "To guard against blackmail, France plans a strategic stockpile of Algerian natural gas that would last for six months. West Germany has arranged for emergency supplies from the Netherlands and Italy has built a new pipeline under the Mediterranean for Algerian gas."⁴⁷ Finally, at the Ruhrgas annual news conference in June 1982, Klaus Liesen, chairman of the company, acknowledged that "West European countries involved in the [pipeline project] would purchase as much as 25 percent less gas than originally planned because of lowered estimates of energy needs tied to the recession and increased conservation."⁴⁸

Fourth, while the Europeans were taking steps to address one of Washington's two principal concerns about the pipeline – reducing their dependence on the Soviet Union – Secretary of State Haig was arranging a bargain on the other, namely, the hard currency loans that would be offered to the Soviets to finance the pipeline. On May 21, Haig reportedly told an NSC meeting in Washington that a deal was in place: the United States would drop its opposition to the pipeline, and in return the Europeans would agree to restrain future credits to the Soviet Union.⁴⁹ The rest of the Reagan administration certainly acted as if a deal were in place. The Commerce Department (at the subcabinet level) had already made a preliminary determination that the GE–Alsthom licensing agreement – entered into before President Reagan had imposed sanctions in December 1981 – should be allowed to stand. The State Department cabled that

⁴⁴ John Tagliabue, "Germans to Tap Arctic Gas," *New York Times*, April 21, 1982, p. 29.

⁴⁵ Reuters, "Dutch to End Soviet Pact," *New York Times*, May 4, 1982, p. 36.

⁴⁶ Paul Lewis, "A Soviet Project Tempts Europe," *New York Times*, May 30, 1982, Sec. 3, p. 7. U.S. support for the Norwegian initiative is described in "A Bid to Ease Europe's Dependence on Soviet Gas," *Business Week*, June 7, 1982, p. 50.

⁴⁷ Paul Lewis, "Gas Pipeline Is Producing Lots of Steam among Allies," *New York Times*, February 14, 1982, Sec. 4, p. 5.

⁴⁸ Quoted in John Tagliabue, "Ruhrgas Says Soviet Is Sure on Gas Line Despite U.S. Curb," *New York Times*, June 8, 1982, p. 33.

⁴⁹ Farnsworth, "Soviet Pipeline Is Challenged," *New York Times*, May 24, 1982, p. 22. See also Lewis, "A Soviet Project Tempts Europe."

information to U.S. missions abroad, which relayed it to allied governments. “So the U.S. could be embarrassed and charged with inconsistency if the preliminary determination were reversed in the last-ditch fight by the pipeline hawks.”⁵⁰

More important, both prior to and during the Versailles economic summit, through background briefings and leaks to the press, U.S. officials repeatedly claimed that their goal was to strike a deal on the pipeline.⁵¹ And once the summit was over, there were additional claims that a bargain had indeed been struck.⁵² Not everyone in the administration *liked* the bargain struck at Versailles,⁵³ but the administration appeared prepared to live with it nonetheless.⁵⁴ This time it was the Europeans’ turn to overplay their hand. French President François Mitterrand stated publicly that the bargain struck at Versailles would have no practical effect on French policy, while German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was said to have told colleagues and journalists that the Versailles agreement was a mere sop to the American president. President Reagan, for his part, was said to feel betrayed, not only by the Europeans but also by his own State Department, which had not tried hard enough to obtain the results he wanted.⁵⁵ Hence on June 18, 1982, the president not only refused to ease the

⁵⁰ Clyde Farnsworth, “Soviet Pipeline Is Challenged,” *New York Times*, May 24, 1982, p. 22. See also Paul Lewis, “A Soviet Project Tempts Europe,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1982, Sec. 3, p. 7.

⁵¹ See, for example, Farnsworth, “Soviet Pipeline Is Challenged”; Lewis, “A Soviet Project Tempts Europe”; Paul Lewis, “Reagan to Seek Curbs on Trade with East Bloc,” *New York Times*, June 1, 1982, p. 1; Hedrick Smith, “President Is Said to Focus on Curbing Credit for Soviet,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1982, p. 7.

⁵² See, for example, the excerpt from the joint statement issued at the summit, quoted in Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, pp. 182–183. Josef Joffe notes that “the leaders of the seven Western industrialized powers agreed on the need for ‘commercial prudence’ in their affairs with the Soviet Union, which should also be constrained by obeisance of their common ‘politics and security interests’” (“Europe and America: The Politics of Resentment (Cont’d),” in *Foreign Affairs America and the World*, 1982 ed. William Bundy [New York: Pergamon, 1983], pp. 573–574). Miles Kahler, “The United States and Western Europe,” p. 297, 299, notes that the United States also won European consent to improved controls on exports of strategic goods and an exchange of information of East–West economic transactions. See also Leslie Gelb, “U.S. Hardens Curbs on Soviet Gas Line,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1982, pp. 1, 25; “U.S. Move on Pipeline Is Assailed,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1982, p. 23; Leslie Gelb, “Haig-Clark Feud Emerges over Foreign Policy,” *New York Times*, June 22, 1982, p. 10.

⁵³ See, for example, the description of National Security Adviser William Clark’s reaction to the bargain, in Gelb, “Haig-Clark Feud Emerges Over Foreign Policy.” For Haig’s view of these events, see *Caveat*, pp. 308–309.

⁵⁴ At the conclusion of the economic summit, President Reagan told reporters that a decision on lifting the trade embargo would be made once he had returned to Washington (Tagliabue, “Ruhrgas Says Soviet Is Sure on Gas Line Despite U.S. Curb”). While the summit was under way, other administration officials had said that European agreement on cutting back export credits would forestall further U.S. attempts to block the pipeline (Gelb, “U.S. Hardens Curbs on Soviet Gas Line”).

⁵⁵ Leslie Gelb, “Reagan Is Seeking Ways to Moderate Poland Sanctions,” *New York Times*, July 9, 1982, pp. 1, 4; “Trouble in the Pipeline,” *Time*, July 12, 1982, p. 41; Kahler, “The United States and Western Europe,” pp. 297–298; Joffe, “Europe and America: The Politics of Resentment (Cont’d),” p. 574.

ban on the sale of U.S. oil and gas equipment and technology to the Soviet Union that had been imposed in December 1981 in response to martial law in Poland, he also extended the sanctions to include foreign subsidiaries of U.S. firms and foreign firms producing equipment for the pipeline under licenses obtained from U.S. firms.⁵⁶

In Europe, the initial reaction to the extended sanctions was relatively mild, in part because the White House announcement was made on a Friday afternoon,⁵⁷ by which time ministries in Europe were shutting down for the week-end. No official declarations were issued in Paris, Rome, or London, at least not immediately.⁵⁸ On Sunday, June 20, a high-ranking West German diplomat attending a Common Market foreign ministers' meeting in Luxembourg commented, "The understanding, as we see it, was that trade with the East was to be pursued under the principle of economic reasonableness, and signed contracts would be respected. This seems a breach of that understanding."⁵⁹ The next day, the West German government spokesman, Klaus Bölling, described the government's reaction as one of "concern" and "dismay," and labeled the sanctions "a contradiction of what was agreed on and discussed" at the economic summit.⁶⁰ Not until Tuesday, June 22, did European foreign ministers weigh in collectively with a statement, most of which was devoted to complaining about a U.S. decision to levy countervailing duties on European steel exports to the United States. The sanctions were dismissed as "an extraterritorial extension of United States jurisdiction which in the circumstances is contrary to the principles of international law."⁶¹

Why the Pipeline Issue was Thought to be NATO's Worst Crisis Ever

On June 24, 1982, Lionel Olmer – the undersecretary of commerce who two months earlier had told a gathering of international bankers in Boca Raton, Florida that, "we are not seeking to cut off all trade with the Soviet Union," only "to ensure that such trade is conducted on a prudent basis"⁶² – described for reporters the procedures his department would use to enforce the expanded sanctions. Foreign firms that violated the sanctions, Olmer explained, could be barred from purchasing merchandise or information from the United States. In

⁵⁶ A prominent example of the former was Dresser France, a subsidiary of Dresser Industries. Among the latter were John Brown Engineering (Britain), Alsthom-Atlantique (France), Nuovo Pignone (Italy), and AEG-Telefunken (West Germany). For more on how this dispute developed, see Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, pp. 193–196.

⁵⁷ Gelb, "U.S. Hardens Curbs on Soviet Gas Line," p. 1.

⁵⁸ John Vinocur, "Bonn Asks U.S. Shift on Gas Ban," *New York Times*, June 22, 1982, p. 31.

⁵⁹ Quoted in "U.S. Move on Pipeline Is Assailed," *New York Times*, June 21, 1982, 23.

⁶⁰ Vinocur, "Bonn Asks U.S. Shift on Gas Ban."

⁶¹ John Tagliabue, "Europeans Protest Steel and Gas Curb," *New York Times*, June 23, 1982, p. 27. See also Kahler, "The United States and Western Europe," p. 299.

⁶² Quoted in Clyde Farnsworth, "U.S. Cites Soviet Loan Risks," *New York Times*, April 27, 1982, p. 33.

extreme cases, he added, criminal penalties could be imposed, including fines up to \$100,000.⁶³ Olmer's remarks provoked an angry reaction from the Europeans, whose criticisms of President Reagan's apparent reversal on the sanctions issue were essentially four in number.

First, the Europeans were angered by the way the extended sanctions were imposed. In their view, they "got no inkling from the American delegation at the economic summit conference in Versailles, France earlier [in June] that a new crackdown was coming."⁶⁴ Many on the European side "are even angrier now because they feel they were misled during the long ascent to recent summits [in Versailles and Bonn] and by the sweeping assurances Mr. Reagan gave during his visit."⁶⁵

Second, the Europeans were angered by what they saw as extra-legal action by the United States. Chancellor Schmidt "was tremendously resentful about 'extraterritoriality and retroactivity,'" and he wasn't the only European who felt that way.⁶⁶ President Reagan, *The Economist* commented, "is trying to compel American companies and their licensees [in Europe] to renege on perfectly legal contracts," signed before the president first imposed sanctions on Poland and the Soviet Union in December 1981.⁶⁷ "We in Europe," the British minister of trade, Peter Rees, added, "cannot and will not accept the right of the United States to extend its jurisdiction outside of its territory."⁶⁸

Third, "the fact that the European Community [EC] recently agreed to raise interest rates on export credits – meeting, at least in part, Administration [concerns] that the EC has been subsidizing exports with cheap credits – only makes the Europeans angrier about the pipeline embargo."⁶⁹

Fourth, the sanctions were imposed at a time when unemployment in Europe was already high – 8.7 percent in Britain, France, Italy, and West Germany as a group, compared to 5.9 percent in 1980⁷⁰ – even as the Reagan administration was offering to sell the Soviets millions of tons of grain in order to prop up

⁶³ Clyde Farnsworth, "U.S. Threatens Strict Penalties for Soviet Sales," *New York Times*, June 24, 1982, pp. 1, 37.

⁶⁴ Clyde Farnsworth, "Dispute over Soviet Gas Sales to Europe," *New York Times*, June 26, 1982, p. 6. The next day, Farnsworth attributed this accusation to West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt ("Rising Trade Barriers Stir Memories of a Depression," *New York Times*, June 27, 1982, Sec. 4, p. 3).

⁶⁵ Flora Lewis, "Home from the Tour," *New York Times*, June 27, 1982, Sec. 4, p. 23. The Versailles summit was for leaders of the G-7 industrialized democracies; the Bonn summit was a NATO meeting.

⁶⁶ George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), p. 137. See also Haig, *Caveat*, pp. 303–304.

⁶⁷ "How to Embargo Russia," *The Economist*, July 17, 1982, p. 11.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Clyde Farnsworth, "On U.S. Leverage Overseas," *New York Times*, July 17, 1982, p. 19.

⁶⁹ "Europe Gets Ready to Strike Back," *Business Week*, July 19, 1982, p. 50.

⁷⁰ Paul Lewis, "A Soviet Project Tempts Europe," *New York Times*, May 30, 1982, Sec. 3, p. 7. "Trouble in the Pipeline," *Time*, July 12, 1982, cites a European Community unemployment rate of 9.5 percent.

American farmers' incomes, which is what the Europeans were trying to do for their own depressed industries.

For all these reasons, the Europeans responded to the expanded sanctions with deeds of their own as well as angry words. On June 30, the British trade secretary, Lord Cockfield, signed an order under the Protection of Trading Interests Act of 1980 that gave Prime Minister Thatcher's government the legal power to prohibit British companies from complying with the U.S. sanctions, an action that was subsequently cited as "the first firm expression of defiance by any of the West European nations affected by the ban."⁷¹ On July 21, Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany told an interviewer that Western Europe could not accept a measure that "extends U.S. sovereignty to Common Market countries."⁷² The next day, the office of French Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy issued a statement that said that President Reagan's order had caused "undue commercial damage to European companies" and that it was ordering French companies to fulfill their contracts with the Soviet Union despite President Reagan's ban on the use of technology licensed from the United States for the pipeline.⁷³ The Italian foreign ministry issued a similar statement on July 24, saying that "signed contracts will be honored" by the Italian companies supplying equipment for the pipeline.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, both parties were busy adding fuel to the fire in the form of inflammatory comments about each other's policies. The day before Mauroy's office announced that French companies were being ordered to defy the U.S. embargo, French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson told a French television audience that a "progressive divorce" was developing between the United States and Western Europe. "We no longer speak the same language," Cheysson continued. "There is a remarkable incomprehension, and that is grave. The United States seems totally indifferent to our problems. It is the major ally and the world's biggest country and we don't even talk any more."⁷⁵ The problem, however, was not that the parties weren't talking; it was what they were saying to each other. The U.S. ambassador to France, Evan Galbraith, responded to the statement issued by Mauroy's office by saying that West European companies would find it "difficult to continue to do business in the United States if they flagrantly violate American law." To drive home

⁷¹ Reuters, "Britain Fights Embargo," *New York Times*, July 1, 1982, p. 41; James Feron, "Mrs. Thatcher Faults U.S. on Siberia Pipeline," *New York Times*, July 2, 1982, p. 1.

⁷² Quoted in Flora Lewis, "France Defies Ban by U.S. on Supplies for Soviet Pipeline," *New York Times*, July 25, 1982, p. A1. Schmidt made this comment while visiting Houston. The next day, he told CBS News that "The pipeline will be built, and the British, the French, the Germans and other Europeans will stick to the agreement which their firms have been making with the Soviets" (Reuters, "Schmidt Expects Others to Follow French Lead," *New York Times*, July 23, 1982, p. A6).

⁷³ Lewis, "France Defies Ban by U.S. on Supplies for Soviet Pipeline."

⁷⁴ AP, "Italy Also Defies U.S. Ban on Parts for Soviet Pipeline," *New York Times*, July 25, 1982, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Lewis, "France Defies Ban by U.S. on Supplies for Soviet Pipeline."

the point, Galbraith mentioned the possibility of fines and even criminal penalties against the directors of European firms that violated the U.S. embargo.⁷⁶

The more heated the language employed by officials on both sides of the Atlantic, the more alarming the assessments offered by journalists and other observers. The extension of the sanctions in June had elicited relatively mild assessments: “another rough ride” in inter-allied relations,⁷⁷ “serious friction within the alliance,”⁷⁸ a “public row.”⁷⁹ But by the time Foreign Minister Cheysson made his “progressive divorce” comment, the situation suddenly seemed much worse. “Six weeks after the seven-nation economic meeting of heads of state at Versailles,” James Goldsborough wrote in mid July, “it is safe to say that relations among Europeans, Americans and Japanese are at their lowest point in recent history, some say the lowest point in postwar history.”⁸⁰ How would we know this really was an all-time low and not just run-of-the-mill “transatlantic tensions”?⁸¹ Goldsborough cited several indicators to make his point, among them the “harsh” tone of the argument and “open economic warfare” among the allies. Especially worrisome was the Reagan administration’s apparent failure to understand the changing relationship between Western Europe and Eastern Europe, which “only accelerates the decomposition” of the “Atlantic relationship.”⁸²

Goldsborough was not alone in calling attention to what seemed like a looming catastrophe. As seen by Flora Lewis, it was the sheer number of “larger issues” involved, “so many . . . that there is a widespread sense in Europe that the alliance has never been so frayed.”⁸³ Hedrick Smith cited a “developing split in the West, which [Reagan administration officials] acknowledge is one of the worst since World War II.”⁸⁴ “In the pecking order of disputes within the Atlantic Alliance,” Jonathan Stern wrote in 1982, “the construction of the gas pipeline between western Siberia and Western Europe

⁷⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Flora Lewis, “Home from the Tour,” *New York Times*, June 27, 1982, Sec. 4, p. 23.

⁷⁸ “The Pipeline Is Lost; Poland Isn’t,” *New York Times*’ editorial, July 2, 1982, p. 26.

⁷⁹ “Trouble in the Pipeline,” *Time*, July 12, 1982, p. 41.

⁸⁰ James Goldsborough, “Warfare among Allies,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1982, p. 27. See also James Goldsborough, “The Roots of Western Disunity,” *New York Times Magazine*, May 9, 1982, pp. 48ff.

⁸¹ The “transatlantic tensions” phrase is from “Europe Gets Ready to Strike Back,” *Business Week*, July 19, 1982, p. 50.

⁸² Goldsborough, “Warfare among Allies.”

⁸³ Flora Lewis, “Allies Ask, If Carter Was Bad, Is Reagan Worse?” *New York Times*, July 25, 1982, Sec. 4, p. 2. See also her comment that “Relations between the United States and Western Europe appear to have reached their lowest point in years, perhaps since the Atlantic alliance was founded in 1949” (France Defies Ban by U.S. on Supplies for Soviet Pipeline).

⁸⁴ Hedrick Smith, “Pipeline Dispute: Reagan Aims to Punish Soviet,” *New York Times*, July 24, 1982, p. 5. See also the comment by a “White House expert” that the pipeline issue “has caused the most disruption in the alliance in twenty years,” quoted in “Soviet Cards,” *Time*, August 9, 1982, p. 9.

has become second only to the planned deployment of new theater nuclear weapons in Western Europe.”⁸⁵ Regardless of the reason(s) cited, from July 1982 on the conventional wisdom was that the pipeline crisis was “one of the most emotional and dangerous disputes to rock the Western alliance in the entire postwar period.”⁸⁶

If these observers were right about the damage inflicted on the Alliance (“open economic warfare,” “accelerates the decomposition,” and so on), it *should* have been visibly decaying during 1982.⁸⁷ So why didn’t the Alliance collapse? Indeed, if the pipeline crisis was as severe as these observers claimed, why did it disappear from view almost immediately once the U.S. sanctions were lifted, as they were in November 1982?⁸⁸ What else was happening that might have lessened the severity of the pipeline crisis? These questions are the subject of the next section.

What Actually Happened?

The counterfactual question, why didn’t the Alliance collapse, is especially relevant because there was no shortage of pretexts and provocations that in an earlier age could have been and often were seized upon to justify deserting a troublesome partner or goading it to leave. The Europeans went ahead with the pipeline even though American officials repeatedly asked them not to. The Americans tried to inflict harm on European firms building the pipeline, even though unemployment in Europe was at a post-World War II high and European leaders practically pleaded with their American counterparts not to interfere with the project. At Versailles, the Europeans “thought they had bought off Washington with a declaration of good intentions. And President Reagan thought that he had extracted a commitment against further credit

⁸⁵ Stern, “Specters and Pipe Dreams,” p. 21. See also Ellen Frost and Angela Stent, “NATO’s Troubles with East-West Trade,” *International Security* 8 (Summer 1983): 179–200, esp. p. 179.

⁸⁶ “A Deal in the Pipeline,” *Time*, November 22, 1982, p. 77. For a similar assessment, see Josef Joffe, “West’s ‘Linkage’ Policy Merely Unchains Soviet Power,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 1, 1983, p. 22. President Reagan’s first secretary of state, Alexander Haig, called it “the most serious squabble within NATO in recent memory” (*Caveat*, p. 241); Haig’s successor, George Shultz, called it a “poisonous problem” (*Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 135).

⁸⁷ There were some who believed the Alliance *was* decaying for all to see – for example, Robert Tucker, “The Atlantic Alliance and Its Critics,” *Commentary* 73 (May 1982): 72; William Pfaff, “Reflections: The Waiting Nations,” *The New Yorker*, January 3, 1983, p. 58.

⁸⁸ A revealing indicator in this regard is the end-of-year assessments by Josef Joffe and Christoph Bertram in the 1982 and 1983 editions of *Foreign Affairs: America and the World*, respectively. Joffe devoted seven of twenty-two pages to the pipeline issue, while Bertram’s article contains not a single reference to it. Paul Johnson’s overview of the 1980s likewise contains not a single reference to the pipeline crisis. On these points, see Joffe, “Europe and America: the Politics of Resentment (Cont’d),” pp. 568–590; Christoph Bertram, “Europe and American in 1983,” *Foreign Affairs: America and the World*, 1983 ed. William Bundy (New York: Pergamon, 1984), 616–631; Paul Johnson, “Europe and the Reagan Years,” in *Foreign Affairs: America and the World 1988/1989* 68 (#1, 1989): 28–38.

subsidies for the Soviets.”⁸⁹ President Reagan felt betrayed by the way the Europeans made light of his concerns about the pipeline post-Versailles. The Europeans felt double-crossed by the way the extended sanctions were applied – no consultation in advance, not even a warning of what the president was about to do. The historical record pre-1939 is filled with instances of statesmen seizing on similar disappointments to get rid of a troublesome ally. Yet in the pipeline case, NATO members not only endured these and other slights, they worked diligently to overcome them.

A good understanding of the pipeline case thus requires us to address two issues. First, why did the pipeline dispute escalate to the point of open confrontation? If an alliance of democracies really does have hidden strengths compared to pre-1939 alliances, why didn’t those strengths prevent or at least dampen movement toward confrontation? Second, what happened once the confrontation had occurred? What allowed the parties to overcome their differences on the pipeline issue?

Concerning the first of these, the pipeline case does indeed support the claim that an alliance of democracies has hidden strengths that make it more resilient and thus more durable than other alliances. When the Reagan administration first imposed sanctions on Poland and the Soviet Union in December 1981, the Europeans responded with a disconnect between words and deeds – they *said* they would not undercut the U.S. sanctions, but their actions suggested otherwise – that could have led to a confrontation with the United States. As explained earlier, a confrontation was avoided, at least during the first half of 1982, in no small part because officials from the U.S. State Department and to a lesser extent the Commerce Department worked diligently to prevent one from occurring, aiming instead for a bargain that would recognize U.S. concerns about the pipeline while letting the project – and the thousands of jobs in Western Europe that depended on it – go forward. And there *was* an informal bargain struck during the run-up to the G-7 economic summit that was then ratified by the leaders gathered at Versailles.⁹⁰ It may not have been the bargain that President Reagan and others in his administration wanted, but there was a bargain nonetheless.⁹¹ President Reagan’s extension of the sanctions in June 1982 appears in retrospect as the action of a chief executive who either was not fully aware of what his subordinates in the State and Commerce Departments had done on his behalf and/or a chief executive who disliked what State and Commerce had done but was unwilling to expend the time

⁸⁹ Joffe, “Europe and America: The Politics of Resentment (Cont’d),” p. 574.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 574; Kahler, “The United States and West Europe,” p. 297.

⁹¹ As described by Haig, “the United States would bolster the [French] franc on a case-by-case basis in return for restraint by the other governments on future credits to the Soviet Union Though the pipeline question was not covered in the exchange, it was implicitly understood that the United States would not apply retroactive, extraterritorial pipeline sanctions. A solution was now in sight” (*Caveat*, p. 309).

and attention needed to compel them to act in ways more attuned to his preferences.⁹²

What happened after the sanctions were extended in June 1982 offers additional support for the claim that an alliance of democracies is better suited to ride out a storm than the great power alliances of an earlier age. The extension of the sanctions produced acrimonious exchanges between Americans and Europeans, which contemporary observers seized on to support their claims that this was the Alliance's worst crisis ever.⁹³ But even as it seemed self-evident to those same observers that this time the end might well be in sight, there was also a great deal going on behind the scenes that ultimately rendered the pipeline issue "solvable."

First, unlike the great powers of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, whose foreign policies were often the product of one or a few individuals, governments in the NATO countries are political conglomerates within which power is shared by executive and legislative branches. Executive departments are staffed by career services and presided over by presidents, prime ministers, and cabinet ministers, along with their many deputies and assistants, not all of whom work well together and who often disagree on what can or should be done. Actions by the executive are invariably scrutinized – and second-guessed – by legislators, both those already in the majority and wanting to stay there, and others who aspire to become a majority, supported by their own assistants and staff members. What this means in practice is that governments in the NATO countries are rarely monolithically united behind any one policy position. Competition within and between the legislative and executive branches is the norm, not the exception. When leaders stumble, as they invariably do, actual and prospective rivals are quick to mount a challenge. Policies can be and are changed, and sometimes even reversed, depending on who gets involved and how well they play whatever cards they hold.

Second, democracies are not impervious to criticism from allies – indeed, the need to stand for reelection makes their leaders sensitive to what their counterparts in other democracies are saying about them and their policies. When NATO members disagree, journalists find out almost instantly, and they are not reluctant to disseminate what they have learned. In the NATO countries, controversy has the effect of *widening* the circle of participants, which gives the Alliance's friends and admirers (of which there are many) opportunities to get involved and thus to press for policy change. All of these attributes figured

⁹² Leslie Gelb, at the time an exceptionally well-informed journalist, noted that "It was not clear whether Mr. Reagan himself had agreed to or had understood" the bargain struck at Versailles – namely, the U.S. would take no further action against the pipeline and in return the Europeans would limit credit subsidies to the Soviet bloc ("Reagan Is Seeking Ways to Moderate Poland Sanctions," *New York Times*, July 9, 1982, p. 4). Flora Lewis made a similar point in "Anybody Listening?," *New York Times*, July 15, 1982, p. 27.

⁹³ See the references in notes 80 through 87 in this chapter. See also Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, p. 195.

prominently in the way the NATO countries interacted in the aftermath of President Reagan's extension of the sanctions in June 1982.

As recounted by Leslie Gelb and others, the Reagan administration was already reconsidering its policy toward the pipeline in late-June 1982, just ten days after the extended sanctions had been announced and roughly a month *before* the first "worst crisis ever" claim appeared in print regarding the pipeline issue. The urge to reconsider was apparent at an "explosive" meeting of cabinet-level officials at the White House on June 27, 1982, at which U.S. Trade Representative Bill Brock and others argued that the extended sanctions were proving to be a disaster for U.S. relations with its European allies. The Europeans were expecting President Reagan to *ease* the sanctions after the Versailles summit, not extend them to include U.S. subsidiaries and licensees in Europe. At the meeting on June 27, Brock reportedly said that "the United States was being accused of duplicity, that the Western Europeans felt they had been double-crossed, that the decision had been made without warning and consultations, and that the Western Europeans would place the blame for increasing unemployment on the United States."⁹⁴ Brock was supported at the June 27 meeting by Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige and Secretary of State Haig, although the latter was then just hours from submitting his resignation.⁹⁵ In the aftermath of the meeting, Gelb described President Reagan as "searching for ways to ease economic sanctions against Poland and the Soviet Union, including a scaling back of the ban on equipment for the new gas pipeline from Siberia to Western Europe."⁹⁶

Haig resigned as secretary of state in part because he could not convince President Reagan to forego the expanded sanctions. Haig's successor, George Shultz, shared his opposition to the use of trade as a political weapon, but Shultz avoided a confrontation with supporters of the expanded sanctions (most prominently, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and National Security Adviser William Clark). Instead, Shultz argued that an overall policy agreement with the Europeans would be a more effective way to pressure the Soviets, thereby allowing the president to drop the sanctions but without seeming to be weak or reversing himself. Shultz was pursuing essentially the same bargain that Haig thought he had achieved at Versailles, but Shultz did so more deftly than Haig, who irritated the president and those closest to him (like Clark and Weinberger) by exaggerating what he had accomplished.⁹⁷ And Shultz had more cards to play than did Haig. For one thing, the Europeans' reaction to the expanded sanctions stung – really stung. There *had* been an

⁹⁴ This is Gelb's paraphrase of Brock's remarks, "Reagan Is Seeking Ways to Moderate Poland Sanctions," p. 4. See also "Sanctions Whipsaw the Alliance," *Business Week*, August 9, 1982, p. 21; Steven Rattner, "Europeans Felt They Had Assurances on Gas and Steel," *New York Times*, August 29, 1982, Sec. 4, p. 3.

⁹⁵ Gelb, "Reagan Is Seeking Ways to Moderate Poland Sanctions."

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* See also "Second Thoughts on the Pipeline," *Time*, July 19, 1982, p. 36.

⁹⁷ Haig's overconfidence is discussed by Gerald Seib and Art Pine, "Allies' Pipeline Discord Could Hinder Progress on Defense and Trade," *Wall Street Journal*, September 17, 1982, p. 1.

informal bargain discussed prior to and then agreed on at the Versailles G-7 summit, which was upset by unilateral action that came without warning and was at variance with the letter and spirit of what President Reagan's aides had been telling the Europeans (and the press too) both before and during the summit. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher visited Washington shortly after the sanctions were tightened, and while there she "vehemently protested the move. A surprised Reagan responded: 'But I thought you could live with it.' Thatcher made clear that she could not."⁹⁸ Many of Reagan's subordinates found the sanctions hard to live with too, like the anonymous U.S. official who told a journalist, "When I talk to the Europeans about what's happening, I feel like crawling behind the desk."⁹⁹

Second, Shultz was helped by the fact that criticism of the expanded sanctions came from more than just the Europeans. On August 10, the House Foreign Affairs Committee by a vote of 22-12 approved and sent to the floor of the House a bill that would repeal all of the sanctions imposed by President Reagan regarding equipment meant for the Soviet gas pipeline. Seven Republicans joined fifteen Democrats in voting for the bill. The bill was sponsored by Representative Paul Findley (R-IL), who claimed that the sanctions had driven the unemployment rate in parts of his district – home to manufacturing plants owned by Fiat-Allis Construction Machinery and Caterpillar Tractor – to 18 percent.¹⁰⁰ The Reagan administration could never figure out how to sanction European firms without hurting American firms too. And anything that hurt American firms annoyed the congressional delegations from the states where their headquarters and factories were located. The sanctions also energized probusiness groups like the National Association of Manufacturers that would otherwise be strong supporters of a conservative Republican president.¹⁰¹ Congress never did overturn the sanctions, but there was sympathy within it for the Europeans' position.¹⁰² Legislators understand pork barrel spending, and the pipeline was nothing if not a gigantic public works project. The longer the sanctions remained in place, the more trouble they were likely to stir up for the administration in its dealings with Congress.

Third, Shultz was appointed secretary of state just as concern about the Alliance was peaking on both sides of the Atlantic. Officials in Washington

⁹⁸ "Second Thoughts on the Pipeline." Mrs. Thatcher was subsequently quoted as saying President Reagan "didn't quite realize how serious" the British viewed the sanctions issue when they discussed it during her visit to the United States in June 1982 ("Ruptures in the Pipeline Policy," *Time*, September 13, 1982, p. 14).

⁹⁹ Quoted in Clyde Farnsworth, "Collision Is Near on Soviet Pipeline," *New York Times*, August 12, 1982, p. 35.

¹⁰⁰ Kenneth Noble, "Curbs on Pipeline Set Back in House," *New York Times*, August 11, 1982, pp. 1, 32. Regarding Congressional Republicans' opposition to the sanctions, see Bernard Gwertzman, "Lifting of U.S. Sanctions," *New York Times*, November 15, 1982, p. 8.

¹⁰¹ See, for example, the letter from Alexander Trowbridge, chairman of the N.A.M., to President Reagan, quoted in Farnsworth, "Collision Is Near on Soviet Pipeline."

¹⁰² The repeal bill passed by the House Foreign Affairs Committee was defeated on the floor of the House, 206-203 (Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, p. 207).

knew that the French were intent on defying President Reagan's extension of the sanctions. They knew this because the French ambassador to the United States, Bernard Vernier-Palliez, informed the State Department of France's intent roughly a month before Prime Minister Mauroy's office went public with the announcement that French companies were being ordered to defy the sanctions.¹⁰³ Even so, Foreign Minister Cheysson's "progressive divorce" comment caught the Reagan administration by surprise, in no small part because the administration was already looking for an exit from the sanctions morass and thus inclined to believe its partners understood that its intentions were good.¹⁰⁴ Cheysson's comment allowed Shultz to cast his effort to change U.S. policy in terms of saving the Alliance; it also galvanized others to act in ways that aided Shultz' efforts. Even before Cheysson made his comment, German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt – who agreed with the French but did not want to provoke the Americans – had discussed with Dutch Prime Minister Andreas van Agt trading off new restrictions on loans to the Soviets in return for a partial lifting of the U.S. sanctions.¹⁰⁵ When Cheysson made his "progressive divorce" comment, Schmidt was in Houston, on a tour of the United States that ended in northern California, where he met with Shultz in San Francisco, after which they went on vacation together.¹⁰⁶ It certainly didn't hurt Schultz's efforts that he was on such good terms with a key player like the chancellor. Conversely, Schmidt and Schultz were strongly motivated to ease the pipeline dispute lest the atmosphere become "so poisoned" that the Europeans would be reluctant to go through with the INF deployments, which were scheduled to begin in 1983.¹⁰⁷

But even though Shultz held a stronger hand and played his cards more deftly than Haig, policy change rarely happens swiftly in a democracy, especially in the United States, where there are lots of points at which an intended change of course can be blocked or at least delayed. What this meant in practical terms is that the extended sanctions were still in place when, during the last week of July, the French government quietly ordered Alsthom-Atlantique to supply the forty rotor kits that it had contracted to provide before the initial sanctions had been imposed in December 1981.¹⁰⁸ On August 2, 1982, the British trade secretary, Lord Cockfield, invoked the Protection of Trading Interests Act of

¹⁰³ Steven Weisman, "U.S. Is Considering Imposing Penalties for Ban Violations," *New York Times*, July 23, 1982, p. A6. See also Smith, "Pipeline Dispute: Reagan Aims to Punish Soviet."

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Smith, "Pipeline Dispute: Reagan Aims to Punish Soviet."

¹⁰⁵ "Second Thoughts on the Pipeline."

¹⁰⁶ Lewis, "France Defies Ban by U.S. on Supplies for Soviet Pipeline"; Reuters, "Schmidt Expects Others to Follow French Lead," *New York Times*, July 23, 1982, p. A6. See also Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 137–138.

¹⁰⁷ Smith, "Pipeline Dispute: Reagan Aims to Punish Soviet."

¹⁰⁸ Paul Lewis, "The French Rotor Maker That Defied Reagan," *New York Times*, August 1, 1982, Sec. 3, p. 8; David Brand, "Europe Faces Tough Pipeline Choices," *Wall Street Journal*, August 24, 1982, p. 33.

1980 to order four British companies to honor contracts related to the Soviet pipeline.¹⁰⁹ On August 23, the French Ministry of Research and Industry announced that it had ordered Dresser France, a subsidiary of the U.S. firm Dresser Industries, to fulfill its contract to deliver twenty-one compressors for the Soviet pipeline. A French freighter was to pick up the first three compressors at the port of Le Havre on August 24, 1982. Dresser France had stopped work on eighteen incomplete compressors on June 22 in the wake of President Reagan's extension of the sanctions to include European subsidiaries of U.S. firms. The French government was now ordering Dresser France to ship the three completed compressors and to get on with assembling and shipping the other eighteen. In the United States, Commerce Department officials told journalists that shipping the compressors would constitute a violation of the extended sanctions, but refused to say what the U.S. response would be if the compressors were indeed shipped.¹¹⁰

And yet, even as Washington and Paris were moving toward confrontation, each was also signaling restraint, using both words and deeds. Concerning the former, Foreign Minister Cheysson backed away from his "progressive divorce" claim almost immediately after making it. The very next day he was quoted as saying, "In every good matrimony, one talks about a divorce," while the Foreign Ministry demonstrated impressive hair-splitting skills by adding that if a divorce was "progressive," that meant it had not yet taken place.¹¹¹ President Reagan too went out of his way to play down the idea of a feud with France, telling a television interviewer that President Mitterand was merely going forward with a contract inherited from his predecessor, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.¹¹²

Both sides' actions likewise suggested a desire not to let matters get out of hand. The French government refrained from ordering Alsthom to produce any of the rotors that were supposed to be supplied by GE itself, in effect respecting the Reagan administration's right to control what U.S. companies did. When the Soviets suggested that Alsthom build *all* the rotors needed for the pipeline, the French balked, "arguing they have a perfect right to fulfill a contract signed before the Reagan ban," but fearing "that their case would be weakened if they signed a new contract after it."¹¹³ In Washington, President Reagan's advisers "recommended that any enforcement of the sanctions be limited to

¹⁰⁹ Steven Rattner, "Britain Defying U.S. Sanctions in Soviet Project," *New York Times*, August 3, 1982, p. 1. The four companies were John Brown Engineering, and three subsidiaries of American firms: American Air Filters, Baker Oil Tools (UK), and Smith International (North Sea). See also "Between Reagan and a Hard Place," *The Economist*, August 7, 1982, p. 55.

¹¹⁰ Thomas Lueck, "Dresser to Obey French, Defy U.S.," *New York Times*, August 24, 1982, pp. 31, 36. See also "France Orders Dresser to Deliver Pipeline Gear," *Wall Street Journal*, August 24, 1982, p. 33.

¹¹¹ Richard Eder, "But Ends Up Piquing Allies All Over Europe," *New York Times*, July 24, 1982, p. 5.

¹¹² "Imbroglia over a Pipeline," *Time*, August 2, 1982, p. 30.

¹¹³ Lewis, "The French Rotor Maker That Defied Reagan." See also Brand, "Europe Faces Tough Pipeline Choices."

‘administrative actions’ that would bar European violators from buying goods in the United States. But they urged the president to avoid more provocative measures, such as court orders or criminal prosecution of offending companies and their executives.” Those same advisers also recommended that the United States pursue new talks with the Europeans on the whole range of East–West issues. “Such a move would be a clear signal that the administration wants to make a fresh start at hammering out a common allied position on relations with the Soviet Union.”¹¹⁴

Also of interest is the way both sides tried to stall for time, apparently to allow negotiations to go forward. The French ambassador in Washington told the State Department in June that the French government would order French companies to defy the expanded sanctions, but the public announcement to that effect didn’t come until a month later, on July 22.¹¹⁵ The August 23 order to Dresser France to fulfill its contract for compressor stations was issued only after the French government “had been negotiating for weeks with the Dresser subsidiary” over the terms of the order, and the formal “requisition” wasn’t issued until August 25, apparently to give the French time to assess Washington’s reaction to the announcement of the order.¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, the loading of the three finished compressors, which was supposed to occur on August 24, was delayed for unexplained reasons until August 26, apparently to give more time to discuss the issue.¹¹⁷ “A compromise is always possible,” French Industry Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement commented on August 25. That same day, Mitterand’s spokesman, Jacques Attali, told a reporter, “Possibly the crisis of which you speak is not as grave as you think it is.”¹¹⁸ It was only after the ship carrying the compressors left Le Havre that the Commerce Department issued a thirty-day “denial order” that temporarily barred Dresser France (and Creusot-Loire too) from purchasing and/or receiving goods and services of any kind from the United States. Even as the order was being issued, an anonymous administration official told reporters that the sanctions could still be dropped if the Europeans agreed to stiffer controls over credits to the Soviet Union.

¹¹⁴ Felix Kessler and Jeffrey Birnbaum, “U.S. Seeks to Enforce Pipeline Sanctions, But Hasn’t Made Decision in Dresser Case,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 25, 1982, p. 3. On the limited nature of the steps taken by the Reagan administration, see also Clyde Farnsworth, “Judge Backs U.S. Bid to Penalize Company on Soviet Pipeline Sale,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1982, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ See the references in notes 103 and 104 in this chapter.

¹¹⁶ Felix Kessler and Jeffrey Birnbaum, “U.S. Seeks to Enforce Pipeline Sanctions, but Hasn’t Made Decision in Dresser Case,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 25, 1982, p. 3; Bernard Gwertzman, “U.S. to Penalize Those Who Aid Siberia Pipeline,” *New York Times*, August 26, 1982, pp. 1, 32.

¹¹⁷ Gwertzman, “U.S. to Penalize Those Who Aid Siberia Pipeline”; Reuters, “Delay in Loading,” *New York Times*, August 26, 1982, p. 32; “Compressors Leave Le Havre for Soviet,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1982, p. 27.

¹¹⁸ Reuters, “Delay in Loading.”

Reporters were also told that Secretary of State Shultz was trying to steer events in such a way as to limit the damage to the Alliance.¹¹⁹

The idea of a compromise was floated again on August 27, when senior Reagan administration officials said the United States was prepared to drop the sanctions against European firms if other means could be found to bring equivalent economic pressure to bear on the Soviet Union.¹²⁰ The sanctions themselves were partly symbolic. Dresser France already had everything it needed to fulfill its contract for compressors for the pipeline. The sanctions “won’t affect the pipeline order at all,” a Dresser Industries (U.S.) vice-president said. Dresser France officials “don’t even need to ask us a question at this point” to complete the order, the vice-president continued. The Commerce Department’s denial order was only for thirty days, although the order itself was renewable.¹²¹

Additional evidence of the urge to reconcile was apparent in press leaks describing the advice President Reagan was receiving from cabinet members. On August 30, Secretary of State Shultz and Secretary of Commerce Baldrige were said to be urging the President to impose less severe penalties on the British firm John Brown Engineering, which was also building compressors for the pipeline, than on Dresser France and Creusot-Loire.¹²² On August 31, four senior officials (Shultz and Baldrige, plus Commerce Undersecretary Olmer and Treasury Secretary Donald Regan) were said to have urged the president to soften the sanctions by limiting them to oil and gas equipment, as opposed to barring purchases of all products and services from the United States.¹²³ Trade Representative Bill Brock added his voice to those urging reconciliation, telling reporters that “There are areas of compromise available. We should now sit down and discuss [with the Europeans] the whole strategic relationship.”¹²⁴ On September 1, Treasury Secretary Regan seemingly

¹¹⁹ Clyde Farnsworth, “Government Bars Two French Concerns from U.S. Trading,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1982, pp. 1, 41. Dresser France built the compressors as a subcontractor for Creusot-Loire, which is why both firms were sanctioned. Regarding Secretary Shultz’s intent, see Gwertzman, “U.S. to Penalize Those Who Aid Siberia Pipeline.”

¹²⁰ Leslie Gelb, “U.S. Is Said to Seek Substitute Curbs on Soviet Economy,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1982, p. 1.

¹²¹ Michael Blumstein, “Dresser Says Unit Can Finish Order,” *New York Times*, August 30, 1982, p. 19. However, if the sanctions lasted longer than a few months, Dresser France would likely have to shut down because it could not receive technical specs and engineering assistance from its parent, Dresser Industries. On this point, see “A Delivery That May Be Dresser-France’s Last,” *Business Week*, October 18, 1982, pp. 50–51. Commerce Undersecretary Lionel Olmer drew attention to the temporary nature of the sanctions in an interview with Clyde Farnsworth, “Q & A: The Washington Rationale For Sanctions,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1982, Sec. 4, p. 3.

¹²² Clyde Farnsworth, “Two in Cabinet Said to Ask Eased Curb in British Dispute,” *New York Times*, August 31, 1982, p. 1. The rationale was that denial of access to the U.S. economy would likely ruin John Brown PLC, which had numerous subsidiaries doing business in the United States.

¹²³ Clyde Farnsworth, “Reagan Aides Said to Propose Easing Pipeline Sanctions,” *New York Times*, September 1, 1982, pp. 1, 39.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

preempted both the president and the Commerce Department by announcing that the sanctions were indeed being lessened, to cover only the purchase of oil and gas equipment and technology in the United States.¹²⁵

In the meantime, the British were doing some stalling of their own. As of early August, John Brown Engineering had already built six turbines for the pipeline, using rotors and other parts supplied by GE before the sanctions were first imposed in December 1981. The company could have shipped the six completed turbines during August, but instead it held back until September. As in the Dresser France case, loading the ship that would carry the turbines to the Soviet Union took longer than expected, and sanctions weren't applied until the ship left Glasgow harbor. Prime Minister Thatcher was reportedly "outraged" over the sanctions – the unemployment rate in Scotland, where the John Brown factory was located, was about 25 percent, and she could hardly order a factory employing 1,700 workers in an economically depressed region to cease operations without dire political consequences. Her government accordingly signaled its defiance by ordering two British companies to fulfill their pipeline contracts or be fined.¹²⁶

Once again, what in a different era might have proved a "last straw" provocation instead became an occasion to try to patch things up. On September 6, even as John Brown was preparing to load its completed turbines on a Soviet-bound ship, Treasury Secretary Regan invited the Europeans to submit proposals for resolving the pipeline issue.¹²⁷ Shortly thereafter, the Commerce Department, in a gesture aimed directly at the British, moved to limit the sanctions by ruling that they did not apply to secondary suppliers like Rockwell Valves, Walter Kidde PLC, and Andrew Antennas, even though all three were selling items intended for the Soviet pipeline.¹²⁸

Congress too was growing increasingly impatient on the sanctions issue. On September 24, House Minority Leader Robert Michel (R-IL) and eleven other House members (six Republicans and five Democrats) sent a letter to their House colleagues calling the sanctions a "costly failure."¹²⁹ About a week later,

¹²⁵ Robert Hershey, Jr., "Regan Asserts U.S. Will Sharply Ease Pipeline Sanctions," *New York Times*, September 2, 1982, p. 1; Gerald Seib and Art Pine, "U.S. Confirms It Will Soften Pipeline Curbs," *Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 1982, p. 19; Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, p. 196.

¹²⁶ Steven Rattner, "Brown Engineering: Pipeline Stakes Big Concern For British Concern," *New York Times*, August 20, 1982, p. 36; Farnsworth, "Two in Cabinet Said to Ask Eased Curbs in British Dispute," p. 44; AP, "British Pipeline Supplier to Be Penalized by U.S.," *New York Times*, September 10, 1982, p. 29; Jon Nordheimer, "Britain, Angry at U.S., Again Defies Sanctions," *New York Times*, September 11, 1982, p. 19; "The U.S. Bends on Pipeline Sanctions," *Business Week*, September 13, 1982, p. 31.

¹²⁷ AP, "Regan Asks Pipeline Solution," *New York Times*, September 7, 1982, p. 33.

¹²⁸ Clyde Farnsworth, "U.S. Is Acting to Limit Impact of Pipeline Curb," *New York Times*, September 17, 1982, pp. 33, 34. Rockwell Valves was the French subsidiary of the U.S. firm Rockwell International. Walter Kidde PLC and Andrew Antennas were British subsidiaries of the U.S. firms Kidde, Inc., and Andrew Corporation. See also Nordheimer, "Britain, Angry at U.S."

¹²⁹ AP, "House Letter On Sanctions," *New York Times*, September 25, 1982, p. 31.

Michel tried to overturn the sanctions by legislating an end to them. He failed, but his effort drew 57 Republicans along with 146 Democrats.¹³⁰

With the prevailing political winds blowing more and more against the sanctions, the State and Commerce Departments made a more or less concerted effort to resolve the issue once and for all. In late September, Shultz met in New York with the foreign ministers of Britain, France, and Italy and a West German minister of state during which they discussed a more coordinated allied policy on trade with the Soviet Union; in early October, Shultz attended a NATO foreign ministers meeting just outside Montreal, Canada, where he discussed principles intended to guide trade with the Soviet Union. Sources in the U.S. delegation told reporters there was “enthusiastic agreement” at the meeting regarding the Shultz-proposed principles but difficulty agreeing on the language that would end the sanctions.¹³¹ Meanwhile the Commerce Department was doing what it could to stay out of Shultz’s way. On September 29, the German firm A. E. G. Kanis began loading two gas turbines onto a ship in Bremen for export to the Soviet Union.¹³² In three previous cases – Dresser France, John Brown, and Italy’s Nuovo Pignone – sanctions were applied as soon the ships carrying the embargoed items cleared the harbor. But when A. E. G. Kanis shipped its turbines, the Commerce Department responded by saying it would impose sanctions at some future point. In this case, the sanctions were not applied until October 5, “an unusual delay compared with previous cases” but also timed to avoid being imposed while Shultz was meeting with his NATO counterparts in Canada (October 2–3).¹³³

There is perhaps no better illustration of the resilience of an alliance of democracies than what came next. On October 15, President Reagan announced that the United States was prepared to sell the Soviet Union up to 23 million tons of grain. If the Soviets agreed during November to buy the entire amount, moreover, the president would guarantee delivery for six months.¹³⁴ The Europeans had repeatedly made plain that they considered it hypocrisy for the United States to sell grain to the Soviet Union even as their own firms were being sanctioned for doing business with the Soviets, yet

¹³⁰ Irwin Molotsky, “Pro-Pipeline Bid in House Narrowly Fails,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1982, p. 3.

¹³¹ Bernard Gwertzman, “Shultz Meets Allies on Soviet Trade,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1982, p. 3; “NATO Ministers, Seeking Consensus, Skirt Pipeline Issue,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 4, 1982, p. 7; Michael Kaufman, “NATO Seeks Accord over Soviet Trade,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1982, p. 1; Bernard Gwertzman, “U.S. Bids Allies Shun New Soviet Gas Deals,” *New York Times*, October 22, 1982, pp. 31, 39. For Shultz’ account of this meeting, see *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 140–141.

¹³² Reuters, “Ship Loading Gas Turbines,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1982, p. 40.

¹³³ Reuters, “NATO Foreign Ministers Are Meeting in Canada,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1982, p. 14; John Tagliabue, “Pipeline Project Affirmed by Kohl,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1982, p. 4; “Sanctions Placed On Two Concerns in West Germany,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 6, 1982, p. 4. Mannesman Anlagenbau was the other German firm sanctioned.

¹³⁴ Seth King, “President Offers Big Grain Deal to Soviet Union,” *New York Times*, October 16, 1982, p. 1.

President Reagan made the offer anyway.¹³⁵ The Europeans could have taken offense, for example, by refusing to consider the draft trade plan distributed by U.S. officials in early October, when Shultz was meeting with his counterparts both in New York and at the NATO foreign ministers meeting in Canada. The U.S. plan, offered as a way of lifting the sanctions regarding the Soviet gas pipeline, called for a review of Alliance strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union intended to identify specific pressure points that could be used as leverage against the Soviet Union.¹³⁶ The Europeans may have been annoyed by the U.S. offer to sell more grain to the Soviets, but they agreed nonetheless to talks with the United States intended to follow-up on the agreement in principle at the NATO foreign ministers meeting in Canada earlier in the month. Some of the Europeans even excused what the Reagan administration had done, such as Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, who said, "It is as valid for [the Americans] to protect their interests as it is for us to protect our interests. It's like that among good friends, isn't it?" Some said they had no interest in belaboring the issue (a cabinet-level official in Bonn), while others simply remained silent (the French foreign ministry had no comment).¹³⁷

The talks in question were held in Washington during the latter half of October, during which U.S. officials and ambassadors of the European allies and Japan attempted to "redefine both Western economic policy toward the Soviet bloc and Western economic cooperation."¹³⁸ Once the talks had begun, it was the United States that appeared most intent on a quick resolution, in part because the White House hoped that an agreement would bolster the chances of Republican candidates in the November 2 midterm elections.¹³⁹

State Department officials told reporters that there had been broad agreement among NATO foreign ministers at their meeting in early October that the United States would drop the sanctions if all the allies agreed on a common approach to East-West trade that included more restraints on high-tech exports to the Soviet Union, denying the Soviets government-subsidized export credits, and refraining from signing any new natural gas contracts pending completion

¹³⁵ " 'We're supposed to give up all these contracts while the Americans go on selling grain to the Russians,' said one British official with more than a trace of rancor in his voice" (Rattner, "Europeans Felt They Had Assurances on Gas and Steel").

¹³⁶ Clyde Farnsworth, "U.S. Gives Allies Soviet Trade Plan," *New York Times*, October 17, 1982, pp. 1, 8. Farnsworth cites two administration officials who claimed that Shultz and Baldrige hoped to use European agreement to discuss the U.S. plan to persuade President Reagan to lift the sanctions immediately, but they were unable to do so due to renewed internal strife in Poland.

¹³⁷ John Vinocur, "Europe Reacts Mildly to Grain Decision," *New York Times*, October 19, 1982, p. 3. See also Reuters, "Common Market Seeks U.S. Trade Talks," *New York Times*, October 18, 1982, p. 3.

¹³⁸ Reuters, "Italian Calls Pipeline Threat to NATO Unity," *New York Times*, October 24, 1982, p. 10.

¹³⁹ Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Seeks Accord with Allies on End of Pipeline Curbs," *New York Times*, October 30, 1982, pp. 1, 22.

of a study of energy alternatives for Europe.¹⁴⁰ Translating that agreement into words on paper proved tortuously slow, in large part because of the variety of interests that had to be taken into account. Lawrence Eagleburger, undersecretary of state for political affairs, met with the ambassadors of the G-7 states plus the Danish ambassador (representing the European Economic Community [EEC]) and the EEC's ambassador to Washington on October 22, and then privately with the French ambassador on October 23–24, to resolve issues specific to France. The results of those meetings were then discussed in Brussels on October 25 by the EEC foreign ministers, and the results of *that* session were then discussed with Eagleburger in Washington on October 29.¹⁴¹ There was another negotiating session in Washington on Monday, November 1 (the eve of the U.S. midterm elections), but no significant progress was made. So on Tuesday, November 2, State Department officials went public, blaming the French for the lack of progress to date. As seen from Washington, the French were insisting that they be able to subsidize export credits in order to remain competitive internationally. The French were also objecting to U.S. efforts to bar exports of certain high-tech items, especially those related to oil and gas exploration. Lastly, State Department sources accused the French of believing – wrongly – that President Reagan was so eager for an agreement prior to the U.S. election that he would settle for a bland document.¹⁴²

The potential for something to go wrong (again) was certainly there. “What is particularly annoying to State Department officials is that Secretary of State George P. Shultz came away from a meeting of North Atlantic Treaty Organization foreign ministers outside Montreal on October 3 believing he had an agreement in principle on a new approach to East-West issues that would present a united alliance on economic policy toward the Soviet Union.”¹⁴³ But instead of failure, there was a renewed effort to reach agreement. On November 3, Italian Prime Minister Spadolini said he would try to persuade President Mitterand to accept the U.S. position on the pipeline, which Spadolini interpreted as allowing the Europeans to honor contracts already signed. Eagleburger scheduled another negotiating session for November 4.¹⁴⁴

Publicly, the Europeans played hard to get. On November 5, British Prime Minister Thatcher and French President Mitterand told a joint news conference that they could not make any additional concessions in return for the lifting of U.S. trade sanctions. Mitterand in particular took a hard line, telling reporters that it was not possible to negotiate the nonnegotiable.¹⁴⁵ Privately, they were

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Bernard Gwertzman, “U.S. Charges Allies Block Accord on Pipeline,” *New York Times*, November 3, 1982, pp. 1, 42.

¹⁴³ Ibid. See also Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 141.

¹⁴⁴ Lynn Rosellini, “Italy Backs U.S. Stand on Pipeline,” *New York Times*, November 4, 1982, p. 42.

¹⁴⁵ John Vinocur, “London and Paris Unwilling to Bend on Pipeline Issue,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1982, pp. 1, 4.

more forthcoming. The same day that Thatcher and Mitterand told reporters they could concede no more, Eagleburger was meeting with their and other European ambassadors in Washington, during which the Europeans presented a revised formula for clearing up the remaining disagreements.¹⁴⁶ Within another week, an agreement was reached and soon thereafter the U.S. sanctions were dropped.¹⁴⁷

The way the pipeline affair ended was itself testimony to the fleeting nature of a so-called worst crisis ever. The affair ended badly, almost comically. President Reagan announced during his nationwide radio address on Saturday, November 13, that he was lifting the sanctions because the United States and its allies had reached “substantial agreement” on an overall economic strategy toward the Soviet bloc. “We’ve reached an agreement with our allies which provides for stronger and more effective measures.” As a result, the president continued, “there is no further need for these sanctions and I am lifting them today.”¹⁴⁸

Within hours of President Reagan’s radio address, the foreign ministry in Paris released a statement saying that France was “not a party to the agreement announced this afternoon in Washington,” apparently in an attempt to avoid the appearance of having made concessions to the United States to have the sanctions lifted.¹⁴⁹ The next day, November 14, the French “flatly contradicted President Reagan’s statement that he was lifting Soviet pipeline sanctions because Western European governments had agreed to new curbs on trade with the Soviet Union.” A foreign ministry spokesman told reporters, “Progress has been made in these talks but no definite conclusions have been reached, and we consider it useful to continue the discussions. President Reagan’s announcement of a new East-West trade agreement is judged premature by the ministry.”¹⁵⁰ When the White House insisted, on November 15, that there was indeed substantial agreement on the part of France and the other European allies on a new economic policy toward the Soviet Union, President Mitterand repeated the French position that President Reagan’s announcement had been premature and “did not correspond to reality, as far as France is concerned.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ “U.S. Reports New Progress,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1982, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ Bernard Gwertzman, “U.S.-Allied Accord on Soviet Pipeline Described As Near,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1982, pp. 1, 30; Bernard Gwertzman, “Reagan Lifts the Sanctions on Sales for Soviet Pipeline; Reports Accord with Allies,” *New York Times*, November 14, 1982, p. 1; John Vinocur, “Few New Pledges in Pact, Allies Say,” *New York Times*, November 14, 1982, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ Gwertzman, “Reagan Lifts The Sanctions on Sales for Soviet Pipeline.” See also Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, p. 197.

¹⁴⁹ Gwertzman, “Reagan Lifts the Sanctions on Sales for Soviet Pipeline.” See also Bernard Gwertzman, “Lifting of U.S. Sanctions,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1982, p. 8.

¹⁵⁰ Paul Lewis, “France Denies Trade Pact Was Reached,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1982, p. 8; Gwertzman, “Lifting of U.S. Sanctions.”

¹⁵¹ “‘Substantial Agreement’ Reached with Allies, White House Insists,” *New York Times*, November 16, 1982, p. 1.

The Reagan administration was not about to cut the French any slack on this issue. On November 16, administration officials told reporters that, on Friday, November 12, W. Allen Wallis, the State Department's undersecretary for economic affairs, had held "what was expected to be the final meeting with the ambassadors of the governments conducting the negotiations" on a new economic policy toward the Soviet Union. "The only unanswered question, administration officials said, was whether the four-page document outlining the allies' approach to economic dealings with the Soviet Union should be published in full." The ambassadors from Britain, Canada, Italy, Japan, and West Germany all agreed with the U.S. side on publishing the document, but the French embassy in Washington was unable to obtain a response from Paris on the question of publishing the text. At about 11:00 A.M. on Saturday, November 13, Undersecretary Wallis telephoned Jacques Attali, President Mitterand's personal adviser, who said Mitterand had some problems with the agreement and wanted a delay. The problems, Attali is alleged to have said, were minor and could be resolved in an hour's discussion. President Reagan himself then placed a call to President Mitterand, whom Attali said was in his office, but Mitterand did not come to the phone nor did he return the call. Instead, three hours after President Reagan had announced the lifting of the sanctions, the foreign ministry in Paris issued its statement saying that France was "not a party" to the agreement. That same Saturday afternoon, at about 5:00 P.M. (Washington time), the French embassy in Washington telephoned the State Department and asked for a 6:00 P.M. appointment to explain the French position. "William P. Clark, the White House national security adviser, recommended to the Acting Secretary of State, Kenneth W. Dam (sitting in for the Secretary, George P. Shultz, who was en route to Moscow), that he tell the French that, on directions from the White House, they would not be received."¹⁵²

This is precisely the sort of petty behavior that, during the 2003 dispute over war with Iraq, would be cited repeatedly as evidence of the Alliance's latest, greatest crisis ever, and even of its impending collapse.¹⁵³ But in November 1982, the pipeline dispute was winding down, not heating up. Less than three weeks after the events of mid November appeared in print, the pipeline affair was the subject of post-mortems rather than continued angry exchanges.¹⁵⁴ The pipeline crisis came to an end because the Reagan administration decided to jettison a policy that had simultaneously irritated the European allies, congressional Republicans, and business groups like the National Association of Manufacturers, not to mention the *New York Times* editorial page. Once the

¹⁵² This paragraph is based on Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Says Paris Protest Came Only at 11th Hour," *New York Times*, November 17, 1982, pp. 29, 32. See also Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 142. The French were against any linkage between lifting the sanctions and agreement on a new regime for trade with the Soviet Union.

¹⁵³ See Chapter 1.

¹⁵⁴ See, for example, Paul Lewis, "Despite East-West Chill, Trade May Grow," *New York Times*, December 5, 1982, Sec. 4, p. 3.

administration decided to cut its losses, it had a corollary interest in seeing the pipeline dispute fade as quickly as possible. With the Commerce Department estimating that U.S. companies had lost \$2.2 billion in orders due to the administration's sanctions, any rehashing of the past (aside from highlighting the perfidy of the French) would only remind voters of things that the administration would prefer not to call to mind.¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

About a month after the Reagan administration and the French government sparred over the issue of who had agreed to what and when, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz and French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson announced that they had reached agreement on specific projects aimed at coordinating allied strategy on economic relations with the Soviet Union. "Mr. Cheysson, who seemed to go out of his way to encourage the impression that he and his 'friend, George' had few problems in the long day of talks that Mr. Shultz also held with President François Mitterand, said that Mr. Shultz had spoken for both of them in outlining the studies" to be done.¹⁵⁶ As this vignette suggests, what is perhaps most amazing about the so-called pipeline crisis is that it ended with a whimper rather than a bang and was all-but-forgotten so quickly. The Reagan administration, after all, had tried to hurt what it saw as wayward allies, and it did so at a time when the Soviet Union's principal foreign policy goal was "to detach West Germany from Western Europe and Western Europe from the United States without losing control over Eastern Europe Nothing could have served Soviet aims better than the Reagan administration's heavy-handed attempt to delay seriously or even block the Soviet-West European pipeline project after it had been concluded."¹⁵⁷

In the pre-1939 era, statesmen often looked for an opportunity to undercut or even harm an ally. They were also frequently on the lookout for an excuse that would allow them to rid themselves of an unwanted or overbearing partner; alternatively they often tried to provoke an unwanted ally into breaking the alliance. The Soviet pipeline case reveals no shortage of provocations arising on both sides of the Atlantic. Even before the pipeline dispute reached its peak after the U.S. sanctions were extended, Robert Tucker judged that "Never before have so many developments occurred any one of which must be expected to put the Alliance under considerable strain."¹⁵⁸

If, however, the Alliance really was "visibly unraveling today," as Tucker claimed,¹⁵⁹ then why wasn't one of these provocations seized on to bring it

¹⁵⁵ "U.S. Trade Official Sees Little Lasting Effects of Pipeline Curbs," *New York Times*, November 15, 1982, p. 8; Lewis, "Despite East-West Chill, Trade May Grow."

¹⁵⁶ Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. and France Agree on Strategy for Handling Trade with Moscow," *New York Times*, December 15, 1982, pp. 1, 4. See also Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 144.

¹⁵⁷ Pierre Hassner, "The Shifting Foundation," *Foreign Policy*, #48 (Fall 1982): 11.

¹⁵⁸ Tucker, "The Atlantic Alliance and Its Critics," pp. 63–64.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

to an end? Quite the contrary, the pipeline case is replete with the sort of behavior – for example, delaying tactics, aimed at preventing rash acts; reticence, when an inflammatory comment might have been made; conciliatory gestures, when an angry riposte might seem called for; and ultimately, a decision by the Reagan administration to cut its losses, followed by reconciliation – that the gloom and doom crowd has a hard time explaining. Was the Alliance really unraveling, or were its critics exaggerating (again)?

THE BOSNIAN CIVIL WAR

Background

The Yugoslavia that was cobbled together after the Second World War was an unwieldy amalgam of six republics (Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Montenegro) and two autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina), both of which were nominally part of Serbia. There were a lot of weak links in this particular chain, but one of the weakest was Bosnia–Herzegovina, where a Muslim plurality coexisted uneasily with large Serb and Croat minorities. Still, the whole rickety contraption held together, at least as long as the founder of postwar Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, was alive to awe or intimidate potential secessionists into submission. The death of Tito in 1980, however, and then the collapse of communist rule elsewhere in Eastern Europe a decade later, effectively “destroyed the fabric which had held the country together.” The federal system collapsed, and newly elected nationalist leaders in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia set a course that led to war.¹⁶⁰

The fighting in Yugoslavia proved to be a test for which none of the principal Western international organizations was well prepared – not the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE),¹⁶¹ not the European Community,¹⁶² not the UN, and not NATO. The CSCE’s limits “were all too apparent: it is too inclusive (38 nations) and it operates on the basis of unanimity. Thus Yugoslavia could itself block any CSCE role And so the most the CSCE could do in this case was pass a vague mandate to the EC.”¹⁶³ The EC at first attempted to hold Yugoslavia together but then, under pressure from Germany, “recognized Croatia [and Slovenia] before it was necessary to do so.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Hugh Miall, *Shaping a New European Order* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994), p. 93. See also Catherine Kelleher, *The Future of European Security* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1995), p. 50.

¹⁶¹ Later renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

¹⁶² Later renamed the European Union (EU).

¹⁶³ Gregory Treverton, “The New Europe,” *Foreign Affairs: America and the World 1991/1992* 71 (#1, 1992): 103. See also Miall, *Shaping a New European Order*, p. 93; Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 50.

¹⁶⁴ Miall, *Shaping a New European Order*, pp. 93–94. See also Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 51.

As seen by Joffe and others, recognizing Croatia and Slovenia was the fateful step that made war over Bosnia inevitable. "If Serbia could not dominate all of Yugoslavia," Joffe wrote, "then Greater Serbia was the second-best solution."¹⁶⁵ Slovenia escaped largely unscathed, mainly because it had no Serb minority to speak of. Slovenia was also the EC's first attempt at mediation, and a cease-fire there was achieved so easily that EC members were led to overestimate what they could do elsewhere. The Slovenian case suggested to the EC's leaders that they could achieve similar results in Croatia and Bosnia, but those two had sizable Serb minorities, making them a more difficult test than ethnically homogeneous Slovenia.¹⁶⁶

In Croatia, the fighting intensified during the summer and fall of 1991, "as the Croats gradually lost territory to Serbian militias and the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army."¹⁶⁷ While the EC tried to broker peace through a conference at The Hague chaired by former British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, the Serbs seized control of about one-quarter of newly independent Croatia. After Bosnia declared independence in March 1992, Serbs and Croats alike seized large chunks of the country in anticipation of a partition that would lead to a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia too. By the end of 1992, about 70 percent of Bosnian territory was under Serb control.¹⁶⁸

After the fighting spread to Bosnia, the EC for all practical purposes handed the lead role over to the UN, "the only body with real expertise and experience in managing this type of conflict." The United States and its European allies, working through the UN and other international organizations, arranged for humanitarian aid and a series of peace conferences intended to prevent the conflict in Bosnia from spreading, for example, to Macedonia, but the badly named United Nations Protective Force (UNPROFOR) proved to be neither protective nor forceful.¹⁶⁹ As the war in Bosnia dragged on and reports of atrocities there mounted, there were more and more calls for the one seemingly effective Western security organization – namely, NATO – to become more deeply involved.

The Alliance, however, following the lead of its largest member, the United States, acted as if its highest priority was to keep out of the way. Like the EC, the United States had first tried to shore up the Yugoslav federation, and when that failed the George H. W. Bush administration condemned the violence and delayed formal recognition of the seceding republics. "Then it declared that the United States had no vital interests at stake that would require direct American involvement."¹⁷⁰ In their first major statement on the Yugoslav civil war, in November 1991, the Alliance's heads of state and government likewise said

¹⁶⁵ Josef Joffe, "The New Europe: Yesterday's Ghosts," *Foreign Affairs: America and the World* 1992/1993 72 (#1, 1993): 31. See also Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, 116.

¹⁶⁶ Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 115.

¹⁶⁷ Treverton, "The New Europe," p. 103.

¹⁶⁸ Joffe, "The New Europe: Yesterday's Ghosts," p. 31; Treverton, "The New Europe," p. 104.

¹⁶⁹ Miall, *Shaping a New European Order*, pp. 94–95.

¹⁷⁰ Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 113.

only that they were “deeply concerned” about the situation there, deplored the “tragic loss of life,” and urged “all parties to cooperate fully with the EC.”¹⁷¹

As these statements indicate, the conflict in Yugoslavia – a civil war as well as an out-of-area problem – was initially and not unreasonably categorized by the Alliance as someone else’s responsibility. That someone else was – again, not unreasonably – the EC, which had seized on Yugoslavia as a European problem that could and should be solved by Europeans.¹⁷² NATO foreign ministers announced in June 1992 that the Alliance would not launch peace-keeping ventures on its own authority, but it would accept peacekeeping assignments, initially from the CSCE and then from the UN, with participation to depend on the willingness of individual NATO members to become involved.¹⁷³ Deferring to the EC, however, soon proved politically unsustainable. Joffe notes laconically that 1992 “was not a good year for Europe,”¹⁷⁴ and the “horrors in Bosnia” were a large part of the reason why.¹⁷⁵ NATO’s initial efforts in this regard, however, were aimed not at peace enforcement nor at intervention in an ongoing civil war, which would have “far exceeded the political consensus within NATO then or since.” Instead, the hope was to reach a political settlement of some kind, followed by an intervention to uphold that settlement. Toward that end, warships from the NATO countries patrolled the Adriatic to enforce the U.N.-mandated economic sanctions against the former Yugoslavia, and NATO aircraft monitored, but did not attempt to enforce, a U.N.-imposed no-fly zone over Bosnia.¹⁷⁶

While campaigning for the presidency in 1992, candidate Bill Clinton’s rhetoric “promised some hope for more U.S. activism and leadership, [but] President Clinton . . . discovered by early 1993 that few good options were left for either a peaceful or an interventionist solution.”¹⁷⁷ In effect, during his first two years in office, President Clinton did little more regarding the former Yugoslavia than his predecessor, the first President Bush. “Within the Alliance, American aloofness was initially welcomed Even the British told Washington that Yugoslavia was Europe’s business.”¹⁷⁸ Clinton’s first secretary of state,

¹⁷¹ David Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance’s New Roles in International Security* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 192–193.

¹⁷² Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jacques Poos, speaking as the chairman of the EC Council of Ministers on June 28, 1991, announced that this was “the hour of Europe,” and that “if one problem can be solved by the Europeans, it is the Yugoslav problem. This is a European country and it’s not up to the Americans and not up to anybody else” (quoted in Yost, *NATO Transformed*, p. 193). Regarding NATO’s “hands-off approach,” see Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 117.

¹⁷³ Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 117; Yost, *NATO Transformed*, p. 193. The willingness to accept a CSCE mandate was announced in June 1992, and then extended to the UN in December 1992.

¹⁷⁴ Joffe, “The New Europe: Yesterday’s Ghosts,” p. 29.

¹⁷⁵ Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 66.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 118.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁷⁸ Elizabeth Pond, *The Rebirth of Europe*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1999), p. 59.

Warren Christopher, made “one half-hearted attempt to promote the idea of ‘lift and strike’ – lifting the arms embargo on the outgunned (Muslim) Bosniaks and striking their Serb besiegers from the air without putting any GIs in harm’s way on the ground – but when he meet a lukewarm response, he retreated.” As of the start of 1994, NATO was essentially a “minor actor” in the Yugoslav wars.¹⁷⁹

A turning point in the Alliance’s involvement in the war for Bosnia occurred in February 1994, when a Bosnian Serb mortar attack on Sarajevo’s central market killed sixty-eight civilians and wounded many more. This atrocity convinced the NATO allies that the only way to prevent more such outrages was to start acting as if they really meant the assorted declarations and statements that they had been issuing about the terrible events in the former Yugoslavia. Already in April 1993, the NATO countries had agreed to monitor a UN-imposed no-fly zone over Bosnia; and in August 1993, they had endorsed a U.S. plan for retaliatory air strikes intended to halt the Serbs’ shelling of Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital.¹⁸⁰ Finally, the NATO countries acted to give meaning to those plans. When on February 28, 1994, the Bosnian Serbs again defied the no-fly zone over Bosnia, NATO warplanes shot down four Serb aircraft (the Alliance’s first-ever use of deadly force). That same month, NATO issued an ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs who were besieging Sarajevo – withdraw their heavy weapons from around Sarajevo, or NATO would destroy them from the air. The NATO ultimatum was issued only after the UN authorized air strikes on Serb positions, and “UNPROFOR commanders on the ground were given primary authority to call down air strikes if they deemed it necessary.”¹⁸¹ In April 1994, that authority was finally put to use, and NATO followed through with air strikes against Serb targets that violated UN-established weapons exclusion zones or that shelled safe havens established by the UN.¹⁸² By the spring of 1994, NATO was actively involved in peacemaking in many areas of the former Yugoslavia.¹⁸³

Why Bosnia was Thought to be NATO’s Worst Crisis Ever

Observers disagreed on precisely *when* Bosnia became the Alliance’s worst crisis ever, but there was no shortage of judgments that it was indeed the worst, or at least the worst since Suez in 1956. In Christoph Bertram’s view, “the seeds for the deepest crisis in NATO history” were sown in 1991 and

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 59–61. See also Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 118.

¹⁸⁰ Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 118.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 119. See also Thomas Mowle, *Allies at Odds: The United States and the European Union* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 119.

¹⁸² Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 119; Yost, *NATO Transformed*, pp. 194–195.

¹⁸³ NATO’s role in the former Yugoslavia is described more fully by Gregory Schulte, “Former Yugoslavia and the New NATO,” *Survival* 39 (Spring 1997): 19–42.

1992, when the EC “eagerly sought to prove its crisis management capabilities” and a “relieved Bush administration was only too delighted to defer the matter to Europeans.”¹⁸⁴ For James Gow, the nadir came in February 1993, when disagreements over how to pursue a negotiated peace left “US-European – especially US-UK relations – in their worst condition since the Suez crisis of the 1950s.”¹⁸⁵ Lawrence Kaplan’s account suggests mid 1993, when “it seemed that Americans and Europeans had not been so divided since the Suez debacle of 1956.”¹⁸⁶

NATO’s resort to force in February and April 1994 “restored its credibility,” but the effect was only temporary.¹⁸⁷ The stresses and strains on the Alliance worsened as 1994 progressed, several observers argued, albeit for different reasons. Rob de Wijk claimed the “transatlantic relationship reached an all-time low” in November 1994, due to disagreements over intelligence sharing and whether to lift the arms embargo so the Bosnian Muslims could acquire more and better weapons to offset those available to the Bosnian Serbs, who could draw on the stockpiles of the former Yugoslav national army.¹⁸⁸ “I can recall no time,” Jim Hoagland wrote in mid November 1994, “when the gap between talk and the ability to act was greater in NATO affairs, or when public perceptions were more at variance with the ideas on the minds of NATO’s key figures.”¹⁸⁹ Paul Cornish too suggested that the “transatlantic security partnership . . . endured its most serious assault in November 1994 when, as a result of congressional pressure, the Clinton administration announced that it would no longer enforce the UN arms embargo on the Bosnian government.”¹⁹⁰ That announcement inspired *The Economist* to ask whether this “bombshell” constituted the Alliance’s “first

¹⁸⁴ Christoph Bertram, *Europe in the Balance: Securing the Peace Won in the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1995), p. 78. See also pp. 18–19 for Bertram’s explanation why the Bosnia crisis was different from the “good many crises” that NATO had already survived.

¹⁸⁵ James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 245.

¹⁸⁶ Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), p. 118. This was *after* Secretary of State Warren Christopher had tried and failed to persuade the Europeans to endorse President Clinton’s proposed policy of “life-and-strike,” and *before* NATO members subsequently agreed to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia and strike Serb artillery units that were shelling Sarajevo.

¹⁸⁷ Stephanie Anderson, “EU, NATO, and CSCE Responses to the Yugoslav Crisis: Testing Europe’s New Security Architecture,” *European Security* 4 (Summer 1995): 349, quoted in Yost, *NATO Transformed*, p. 195.

¹⁸⁸ Rob deWijk, *NATO on the Brink of the New Millennium: The Battle for Consensus* (London: Brassey’s, 1997), p. 111, quoted in Yost, *NATO Transformed*, p. 195.

¹⁸⁹ Jim Hoagland, “NATO: A Sweet, But Misleading, Song,” *Washington Post*, November 15, 1994, p. A19. See also Anthony Lewis, “The End of NATO,” *New York Times*, November 28, 1994, p. A17.

¹⁹⁰ Paul Cornish, *Partnership in Crisis: The US, Europe and the Fall and Rise of NATO* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997), pp. 2–3.

formal parting of the ways” and the “beginning of a rift that fatally weakened” NATO.¹⁹¹

By December 1994, the conventional wisdom was that Bosnia was straining the Alliance almost to the breaking point. James Goldgeier notes that “As Secretary of State Christopher prepared for his NATO foreign ministers meeting on December 1, his team’s main objective was dispelling notions that Bosnia was ripping the alliance apart and preventing success in other areas.”¹⁹² At his press briefing that same day, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke told reporters, “I understand completely why the press has been filled in the last week with stories saying that Bosnia is wrecking NATO. But it is just not so. Bosnia is wrecking Bosnia.”¹⁹³ Why was Bosnia allegedly “wrecking NATO”? To many observers, the answer was obvious – Americans and Europeans were saying bad things about each other. “What is incontrovertible,” Jim Hoagland wrote at the start of December, “is that the past two weeks have seen the most open clashes between American and European officials since the 1956 Suez crisis.”¹⁹⁴ “The level of bitter recriminations over Bosnia within the Atlantic Alliance,” Henry Kissinger wrote in mid-December 1994, “is unparalleled since the Suez crisis of nearly four decades ago. Only this time there is no unifying threat to impose a sense of urgency to the quest for unity.”¹⁹⁵ Elizabeth Pond too cited “recriminations among the NATO allies,” although in her view the worst of it came in 1995 rather than 1994.¹⁹⁶ In effect, Bosnia was the Alliance’s worst crisis ever because Americans and Europeans were unable to agree on what to do about it; and as their frustrations mounted, they said nasty things about each other, sometimes in public¹⁹⁷ but more often while informally talking to journalists who promptly published alarmist articles highlighting the

¹⁹¹ “Patching Up NATO,” *The Economist*, November 19, 1994, quoted in Cornish, *Partnership in Crisis*, p. 3. Stanley Sloan cites a “deepening crisis” during the second half of 1994, “U.S. Perspectives on NATO’s Future,” *International Affairs* 71 (April 1995): 222.

¹⁹² James Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1999), p. 86

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 86. Holbrooke himself subsequently dated the low point to the spring of 1995, when “it had become commonplace to say that Washington’s relations with our European allies were worse than at any time since the 1956 Suez crisis” (Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* [New York: Modern Library, 1999], p. 361).

¹⁹⁴ Jim Hoagland, “When the World Won’t Behave,” *Washington Post*, December 4, 1994, p. C1.

¹⁹⁵ Henry Kissinger, “Expand NATO Now,” *Washington Post*, December 19, 1994, p. A 27. See also Zbigniew Brzezinski, “NATO – Expand or Die?” *Washington Post*, December 28, 1994, p. A15.

¹⁹⁶ Pond, *The Rebirth of Europe*, p. 62. In February 1995, Richard Burt told an audience at the Munich security conference that, “the NATO alliance is facing its worst crisis of the last 25 years” (quoted in Rick Atkinson, “U.S. and Europe Seek Stability but Wrangle over Bosnia,” *Washington Post*, February 5, 1995, p. A29). See also Michael Dobbs, who suggests the crisis stage wasn’t reached until July or August of 1995 (“New U.S. Role in Bosnia Is Welcomed in Europe,” *Washington Post*, September 1, 1995, p. A28).

¹⁹⁷ For example, in July 1995 “British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind publicly accused French President Jacques Chirac of advocating impractical military solutions to the current crisis” (Fred Barbash, “London Rebuts Paris Bosnia Stand,” *Washington Post*, July 16, 1995, p. A25).

“most serious breach of trust” and the “gravest challenge yet” to NATO’s survival.¹⁹⁸

On the other hand, no one ever said Bosnia was going to be easy. As early as 1992, Treverton identified Yugoslavia as “a problem without a solution,” itself a relatively mild comment compared to Joffe’s description of the former Yugoslavia as “an explosive concoction of warring tribes and nations.”¹⁹⁹ It’s hardly surprising that NATO members would disagree over what to do about it. Nor is it surprising that their frustrations would rise as the days became months and months became years and still the carnage dragged on. What’s missing from the books and journal articles and op-ed pieces devoted to Yugoslavia/Bosnia is evidence suggesting that even one NATO member came close to the crisis threshold – namely, feeling indifferent between staying in and getting out. On the contrary, what stands out in retrospect regarding the Alliance’s response to Bosnia and other contemporary issues (e.g., launching the Partnership for Peace, forging a new relationship with Russia, preparing the way for expansion) is not just that these issues were overcome, but that the Alliance managed to solve all of them, albeit over a period of years rather than months, and at a time when prominent Realist scholars were predicting that it would soon disintegrate before our eyes.²⁰⁰

What Actually Happened?

There was, to be sure, plenty of name calling regarding Bosnia, and it came from both sides of the Atlantic, not just one. As described by an American journalist, Americans talk about “‘stiffening the resolve’ of the Europeans,” while Europeans “accuse the Americans of ‘leading from behind’ and being willing to fight to ‘the last European soldier.’ The French rail at Anglo-Saxon ‘spinelessness,’ while the British and Americans make no secret of their resentment of Gallic ‘bluster.’”²⁰¹

In retrospect, it is hardly surprising that observers, especially journalists, should have fixated on what seemed to be terrible strains within the Alliance. High-ranking policy makers encouraged this fixation by making apocalyptic statements about the disasters that would follow if others did not accept their advice concerning what should be done about Bosnia. In February 1993, for example, German Defense Minister Volker Rühle said that if German crews did not participate in monitoring the no-fly zone over Bosnia, it could be “the

¹⁹⁸ For example, William Drozdiak, “U.S. and Europe in Serious Rift over Bosnia War,” *Washington Post*, November 27, 1994, p. A1; Rick Atkinson, “U.S., Europe: The Gap Is Widening,” *Washington Post*, February 8, 1995, p. A22.

¹⁹⁹ Treverton, “The New Europe,” p. 105; Joffe, “The New Europe: Yesterday’s Ghosts,” p. 30.

²⁰⁰ For example, John Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War,” *International Security* 15 (Summer 1990): p. 5; Kenneth Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” *International Security* 18 (Fall 1993): pp. 75–76.

²⁰¹ Michael Dobbs, “Shifting the Burden No Longer an Option for U.S. in Bosnia,” *Washington Post*, July 16, 1995, p. A27.

beginning of the end” of NATO.²⁰² Three months later British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd told Parliament that “We must not allow the Atlantic Alliance to fracture” on the issue of whether to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian government.²⁰³ In November 1994, President Clinton’s national security adviser, Anthony Lake, responding to incoming Senate majority leader Robert Dole’s (R-KS) statement that lifting the Bosnia arms embargo would be a high priority for the Republican Congress, said that doing so “could lead to the most serious rift in NATO at least since the Suez crisis in 1956 and perhaps in its history.”²⁰⁴ And in July 1995, as NATO members debated whether and when to launch an air war against the Bosnian Serbs, the British ambassador to Washington, Robin Renwick, characterized Bosnia as “a graver crisis than any we have yet faced.”²⁰⁵

But even as the strains caused by disagreements over Bosnia were seemingly mounting, there were some less newsworthy but nonetheless important developments that were also taking place. For one thing, the early 1990s was a time when cooperation between France and the rest of the Alliance was growing, not declining. “Many of the day-to-day surface irritations remained,” but there were also “many advances, almost all related to increasing French concern about the widening war in Yugoslavia and the lack of an effective European response. There was now French involvement in NATO advance planning for Bosnia, a clarification of the interim WEU-NATO relationship . . . , and a French return – for the first time since 1966 – to participation in NATO’s Military Committee for discussions on Bosnia and peacekeeping.”²⁰⁶

Second, the NATO countries were able to transmute this latest worst crisis ever into a resounding success (the Dayton peace agreement) in no small part because democracies are willing to change rather than stick with policies that aren’t working. In democracies, incumbents either replace failing policies with new ones or face having to defend their mistakes in the run-up to the next election. Hence, in an alliance of democracies, change is preferable to inertia because policies that are failing will undermine the incumbents’ chances in the next election. The Europeans initially proclaimed Yugoslavia their problem and asked the Americans to stand aside, but when the EC proved unable to solve the problem on its own, the Europeans encouraged the Americans to jump in. The Clinton administration promoted the idea of lift-and-strike, but then let the matter drop, albeit for a time, when the Europeans protested. The French were initially among the most vocal opponents of lift-and-strike because they feared it would bring Serb retaliation against their

²⁰² Quoted in Steve Vogel, “German Defense Cuts Worrying NATO,” *Washington Post*, February 13, 1993, p. A27.

²⁰³ Quoted in Daniel Williams, “White House Faces Test of Its Global Leadership,” *Washington Post*, May 2, 1993, p. A37.

²⁰⁴ Quoted in William Drozdiak, “Dole Places Bosnia Atop Senate Agenda,” *Washington Post*, November 30, 1994, p. A30.

²⁰⁵ Quoted in Dobbs, “Shifting the Burden No Longer an Option for U.S. in Bosnia,” p. A27.

²⁰⁶ Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 67.

own soldiers serving with the UNPROFOR in Bosnia, but as the war dragged on they shifted toward a harder line against the Bosnian Serbs, especially after President Mitterand gave way to Jacques Chirac.²⁰⁷ Put differently, at a time when the prevailing view of alliances suggested that NATO should be withering before our eyes, the Alliance was actually progressing from sanctions monitoring in the Adriatic and supporting UNPROFOR operations in Bosnia; to conflict prevention activities²⁰⁸; to enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia, including downing Serb aircraft in February 1994; and then air strikes aimed at Serb forces besieging Sarajevo.

Third, all of the policy shifts mentioned previously were politically sensitive, sometimes explosively so. Why didn't the acrimony cumulate over time? Put differently, why didn't the Alliance collapse under the strains imposed by arguing essentially the same issues over and over again? To answer these questions, consider how NATO members framed the Bosnia issue. A good example in this regard would be Secretary of State Warren Christopher's May 1993 trip to Europe, during which he attempted to persuade the Europeans of the merits of switching to a policy known as lift-and-strike. When the Europeans demurred, the Clinton administration deferred to them rather than press the issue further. On May 17, administration officials told journalists that "the administration was no longer lobbying strongly for Clinton's plan." The reason why, those same officials continued, was that "disagreements with Europe would now take second place to American concern over Atlantic unity. 'We are not prepared to break up the U.S.-European alliance in the post-Cold War period over the issue,' one official said."²⁰⁹ The U.S. officials who rated the Alliance more important than any particular policy were themselves echoing a view expressed a few months earlier by a "senior EC official," who told a journalist that, "Nobody dares to imagine where the world would be without the Atlantic Alliance."²¹⁰

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, lots of statesmen could and did imagine what the world would be like without a certain alliance or a particular ally, especially if they expected that their state would be the one to conquer and dismember the ally in question. Hence they had few qualms about sacrificing an alliance in order to pursue a particular policy. In the Bosnia case, in contrast,

²⁰⁷ See, for example, William Drozdiak, "U.S. Rejects French Plea for Tougher Bosnia Action," *Washington Post*, January 25, 1994, p. A14. See also Thomas Lippman and John Goshko, "Gap Remains in U.S.-France Dispute," *Washington Post*, January 28, 1994, p. A19.

²⁰⁸ Specifically, sending verification personnel to Bulgaria to reassure the Serbs that there were no Bulgarian troop movements along the border with Serbia, and conducting overflights and surveillance of Hungarian airspace, intended to gather intelligence for missions in support of UNPROFOR but also to deter Serb air attacks on Hungarian towns (Kelleher, *The Future of European Security*, p. 118).

²⁰⁹ Daniel Williams and Eugene Robinson, "Clinton Yields to Europe on Balkans Moves," *Washington Post*, May 18, 1993, pp. A1, A17.

²¹⁰ William Drozdiak, "U.S.-European Alliance Plagued by Trade, Security Conflicts," *Washington Post*, February 13, 1993, p. A20.

the Alliance was deemed more important than any particular policy; hence, policies were changed so that the Alliance could remain.

There was, of course, a dark side to Clinton's willingness to defer to the Europeans on lift-and-strike. When a superpower defers to its smaller allies on an issue as charged as Bosnia, accusations of spinelessness or duplicity are sure to follow, and they certainly did in this case.²¹¹ And there *are* risks in deferring to allies, just as there are risks for being overbearing. "The danger is not of a spectacular alliance collapse," a British official told an American journalist. "The danger is a hollowing-out of the relationship. What is missing with the [Clinton] administration is the constant, boring day-to-day dialogue on key questions that enables us to know exactly what we mean when a moment of action or crisis comes. That dialogue stopped months ago in Yugoslavia."²¹² Another allied diplomat put it this way: "The disagreement about Bosnia is so large that we have basically stopped talking to or even shouting at one another. Now we present our positions, disagree and then shrug as if to say, 'What else could you expect?'"²¹³ Here again, though, some perspective is essential. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, statesmen had no difficulty *not* talking to their allies. But in an alliance of democracies, not talking loses its allure very quickly. The reason is that, in democracies, politicians get reelected and political appointees get promoted to better jobs in return for *doing something*. It's hard to campaign for elective office and/or audition for higher appointive office when your most recent "accomplishment" is "didn't do anything." It would be even harder to campaign for elective or appointive office with a political résumé that included "presided over the collapse of NATO." The "hollowing-out of the relationship" that some predicted never did occur, and it is both interesting and informative to ponder the reasons why.

In this regard, it's hardly surprising that the *Europeans*, after decades of dependence on the United States for protection against the Soviet Union, might believe that preserving the Alliance was more important than winning an argument over an issue like lift-and-strike, but why should American officials have felt this way? Why *did* the Clinton administration defer to the views of its smaller allies? Why didn't it just ignore them and do whatever it wanted? These questions are worth considering because Realist writers have argued repeatedly that superpowers have the freedom to chart their own course, unlike the great powers of post-1870 Europe, for whom fear of isolation drove them to chain themselves to allies, even allies they neither liked nor trusted.²¹⁴ Suffice it to say

²¹¹ See, for example, Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Clinton: Awash Abroad," *Washington Post*, June 3, 1993, p. A25; Jim Hoagland, "Fumbling for a Foreign Policy," *Washington Post*, June 14, 1993, p. A19; Jim Hoagland, "The Trust Gap," *Washington Post*, July 1, 1993, p. A23.

²¹² Quoted in Hoagland, "The Trust Gap," p. A23.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ See, for example, Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," pp. 149-155; Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44 (Spring 1990): 137-168.

here that the Clinton administration behaved in very un-Realist fashion in its handling of the Bosnia issue.

At a meeting at the White House on November 28, 1994 – at a time when the conventional wisdom was that NATO was in its worst shape since Suez in 1956 and being torn apart by disagreements over Bosnia – the Clinton foreign policy team concluded that “The nearly two-year-old U.S. policy of trying to mesh force with diplomacy had to be abandoned.” Despite a personal appeal from President Clinton to French President Mitterand, “the French government rebuffed a U.S. proposal to launch NATO air strikes against Serb forces threatening the Muslim enclave of Bihac in northwestern Bosnia.” The dispute over Bihac “threatened to make a mockery of an impending meeting of [NATO foreign ministers], where both the British and French were furious with the U.S. for its tough position toward the Serbs.” In effect, the participants in the White House meeting decided that the administration’s policy – a “marriage of force with diplomacy” – “was headed for divorce.” The United States would no longer “badger and cajole reluctant allies to cooperate in using NATO air power against the Bosnian Serbs. Instead, the U.S. would go along with the Europeans’ preferred diplomatic route in seeking a cease-fire and, ultimately, a peace agreement.” The Clinton administration made this change because it preferred “to answer the question ‘Who lost Bosnia?’ than ‘Who lost NATO?’” “There wasn’t any way to compromise,” an administration official explained afterward. “Continuing to argue the point carried risks far beyond Bosnia. It really goes to the heart of the Atlantic Alliance.”²¹⁵

For reasons explained previously, however, deferring to allies was one thing; not talking was something quite different. As things turned out, the Americans and their European counterparts continued to argue the point, during which the Europeans proved no more impervious to the points made by their American ally than the Americans had proved when it was the Europeans insisting that the Americans reconsider the merits of lift-and-strike. It would take months rather than days to get everyone on the same page, but get there they did. As David Yost points out, “When the Bosnian Serbs began taking UNPROFOR troops hostage in May 1995, the only choice was to conduct an emergency withdrawal or to intervene to impose a settlement.”²¹⁶ Pre-1939 allies had routinely left one another to find their own way out of a messy situation, but not so the Clinton administration. In June 1995, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Walter Slocombe told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House International Relations Committee in June 1995 that “We cannot simply leave our allies in the lurch when our help would be critical.”²¹⁷ And when the Bosnian Serbs launched another particularly bloody artillery attack on Sarajevo

²¹⁵ Ruth Marcus and John Harris, “Behind U.S. Policy Shift on Bosnia: Strains Within NATO,” *Washington Post*, December 5, 1994, pp. A1, A26. See also Daniel Williams, “In Policy Switch, U.S. Puts Bosnia Aside to Preserve Alliance,” *Washington Post*, November 30, 1994, p. A32.

²¹⁶ Yost, *NATO Transformed*, p. 199.

²¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 337 (note 32).

in August 1995, NATO responded with an air war. The British and the French, formerly the principal opponents of an air war that might lead to reprisals against their troops on the ground, not only joined in the air war but also took pains to highlight their support of an option they once scorned. “We support the American plan,” in the words of a senior French official. “There can be no peace in the Balkans unless Washington is fully engaged.”²¹⁸ Instead of abandoning each other, the NATO allies launched a successful coercive air campaign, waged largely but not entirely by U.S. aircraft, to compel the Serbs to release their hostages, accept a cease-fire, and participate in the Dayton peace negotiations.²¹⁹ In the aftermath of the success at Dayton, NATO provided its first international peacekeeping force – the Implementation Force (IFOR), later renamed the Stabilization Force (SFOR) – which has successfully kept the peace in Bosnia and remains there to this day.

Conclusion

The conventional wisdom during the Cold War was that the Alliance required a Soviet threat to hold it together. Take away the Soviet threat, Realist writers warned, and the Alliance would fade away – perhaps not immediately, maybe not even quickly, but fade away it would.²²⁰ The Bosnia case suggests the conventional wisdom likely was wrong. Even without the Soviet Union, NATO members were able not just to cobble together a belated intervention but to act in unprecedented fashion – first use of deadly force, first out-of-area operation, first use of German forces outside the FRG, and so on.

Bosnia, of course, was hardly a no-fault intervention. The Americans, for example, could be and were faulted for spending years dodging responsibility by hiding behind an unwarranted fatalism that viewed Bosnia as someone else’s problem. Consider, for example, the comments of three successive secretaries of state:

- *James Baker*: There was “an undercurrent in Washington, often felt but seldom spoken, that it was time to make the Europeans step up to the plate and show they could act as a unified power.”
- *Lawrence Eagleburger*: “Until the Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats decide to stop killing each other, there is nothing the outside world can do about it.”

²¹⁸ Quoted in Michael Dobbs, “New U.S. Role in Bosnia Is Welcomed in Europe,” *Washington Post*, September 1, 1995, p. A28.

²¹⁹ For more on Operation Deliberate Force, see Carl Cavanagh Hodge, *Atlanticism for a New Century* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2005), p. 49. U.S. aircraft flew 2,318 sorties (65.9 percent) of a total of 3,515.

²²⁰ As Kenneth Waltz put it, “NATO’s days are not numbered, but its years are” (“The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” p. 76).

- *Warren Christopher*: Bosnia is “a problem from hell for which one cannot expect a solution from anyone.”²²¹

The Europeans could be faulted too. When their own efforts proved inadequate, their instinctive reaction was to blame the Americans, something they kept on doing even as Richard Holbrooke and other American officials were brokering a settlement during the Dayton peace negotiations. “One cannot call it an American peace,” French Foreign Minister Hervè de Charette grumped afterwards. “The fact is that the Americans looked at this affair in ex-Yugoslavia from a great distance for nearly four years and basically blocked the progression of things.”²²²

There is, however, an enormous difference between sniping at an ally and crossing the crisis threshold – namely, feeling indifferent between staying in an alliance and getting out. There is no convincing evidence that any NATO member was even thinking about leaving over Bosnia. Yes they tried to shift the blame to each other, but neither the Americans nor any of the Europeans were prepared to see the Alliance fall apart over Bosnia. At key moments, Europeans and Americans alike reaffirmed that the Alliance was more important than any particular policy. Most important, the Bosnia case offers additional evidence of how wrong the conventional wisdom can be. In December 1994, a senior U.S. official offered a striking prognosis for the Alliance: “There will be a lot of bitterness and hard feelings for some time to come. It is like a virus that has entered the body of NATO. We just don’t know when symptoms of disease will appear.”²²³ But what exactly was the disease that was being diagnosed? NATO members would continue to argue with one another and even shout at one another, yet within about nine months of this comment they would effectively impose an end to the fighting in Bosnia through Operation Deliberate Force, their three-week air war against the Bosnian Serbs. They then sponsored the Dayton peace agreement, which finally brought peace to Bosnia. The Implementation Force (IFOR), intended to enforce the Dayton agreement, was NATO’s first-ever ground force operation, first-ever deployment out-of-area, and first-ever joint operation with Partnership for Peace and other non-NATO countries.²²⁴

IFOR, moreover, did more than “prove that NATO could actually stop conflicts in Europe. It also demonstrated that NATO and Russia could work together.”²²⁵ IFOR and its successor, the Stabilization Force (SFOR), also “helped to advance the adoption of new NATO procedures, involving all sixteen allies in the direction and conduct of military operations. Clearly, this has strengthened NATO’s political and military cohesion and has paved the way

²²¹ All three quoted in Mowle, *Allies at Odds*, p. 121.

²²² Quoted in Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 318.

²²³ Quoted in Marcus and Harris, “Behind U.S. Policy Shift on Bosnia: Strains Within NATO,” p. 26.

²²⁴ Yost, *NATO Transformed*, p. 195.

²²⁵ Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*, p. 96.

toward a future NATO command structure in which all the allies, or a significant proportion, can respond to new missions.”²²⁶ One such future mission would present itself in Kosovo a few years hence, but that’s a subject for a different book.²²⁷

²²⁶ Emil Kirchner, “Second Pillar and Eastern Enlargement: The Prospects for a European Security and Defense Identity,” in *Two Tiers or Two Speeds* ed. James Sperling (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 50.

²²⁷ At present, the best available is Ivo Daalder and Michael O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO’s War to Save Kosovo* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2000). See also Wallace Thies, “Compellence Failure or Coercive Success? The Case of NATO and Yugoslavia,” *Comparative Strategy* 22 (July–September 2003): 243–267.

Why NATO Endures

April 4, 2009, marks the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty. The grand alliance that toppled Napoleon lasted less than a decade; the alliance that defeated Hitler crumbled in fewer than five years. Why has the Atlantic Alliance lasted so long? Why this alliance and not others?

I said in the Preface that I would use this book to develop two themes. The first is that NATO, for various reasons, became something very different than the military alliances formed by the great powers prior to the Second World War – so different that it does not fit well in an all-inclusive category labeled “alliances.” The second is that NATO, as an alliance of democracies, possesses hidden strengths that have enabled it to overcome – not just once but again and again – the kind of internal disputes that destroyed virtually all previous and many contemporary alliances. Taken together, these two themes suggest that an alliance of liberal democracies should exhibit behaviors very different from those found in alliances with only one or no democracies.

In the rest of this chapter, I revisit these two themes in order to highlight the new knowledge about alliances in general and NATO in particular that this approach makes possible.

WHY NATO IS DIFFERENT

Alliances are among the oldest and most enduring phenomena of international relations, but the reasons why they form, their intended duration, and their organizational structure have changed greatly over the past several centuries. The scholarly literature on alliances is enormous and often very insightful, but Realist writers in particular cling to the notion that there is some generic quality that makes an alliance regardless of when it was created or where it might be found. In the generic view, an alliance “associates like minded actors in the hope of overcoming their rivals.”¹ Alternatively,

¹ George Liska, *Nations in Alliance*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), p. 3.

alliances are “arrangement[s] for security cooperation between two or more sovereign states”²; or “arrangements that sovereign states enter into with each other in order to ensure their mutual security.”³ An obvious problem with this approach is that treating alliances as tools for mutual cooperation, mutual security, and benefits for all is to lose sight of the fact that many alliances have been formed by states intent *not* on helping each other but on cheating, abusing, and then abandoning one another. The review in [Chapter 2](#) suggests that statesmen such as Napoleon, Metternich, and Bismarck, and later, Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini, viewed their allies as darkly as their enemies and thus treated them as tools to be used and then discarded or as dupes to be swindled and then abandoned. The states that formed the Atlantic Alliance, in contrast, viewed each other not as dupes and fools but rather as valued partners in a collective effort intended to last essentially forever. These differences in outlook, in turn, help account for a host of differences between pre-1939 alliances and the Atlantic Alliance.

In this regard, pre-1939 alliances were often little more than temporary arrangements created to address a particular need – typically to launch an attack or repel one – after which they were disbanded or rendered inoperative.⁴ The Atlantic Alliance, in contrast, was intended to be both permanent and open ended, as evidenced by the deliberate omission of a terminal date from the North Atlantic Treaty and the permissively worded provisions for consultations in Articles 4 and 9. Pre-1939 alliances were for the most part agreements to pursue simultaneously what were in essence separate national interests. They were thus drafted as narrowly as possible so as not to preclude the parties’ pursuit of short-term advantages wherever they might arise, even at the expense of their current “allies.” The Atlantic Alliance, in contrast, was intended to promote cooperation among its members that would be both intensive and extensive, as symbolized by the commitment in Article 3 to “continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid” and the inclusion of Article 2 with its provisions for cooperation in nonmilitary endeavors. Policy coordination among the members of pre-1939 alliances was often limited to fighting separate wars against the same foe. The Atlantic Alliance, in contrast, was formed by members sharing a common heritage, common values, and common interests, backed by a willingness to pool their resources in peacetime as well as wartime for the sake of defending and advancing those common values and interests.

In [Chapter 2](#), I identified three elements of the political environment within which states exist that seemed especially promising as independent variables within a theory of alliance behavior intended to explain why alliances have

² Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 12.

³ Joseph Nye, Jr., *Understanding International Conflicts*, 6th ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), p. 39.

⁴ Hans Morgenthau, “Alliances in Theory and Practice,” in *Alliance Policy in the Cold War* ed. Arnold Wolfers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1959), p. 191n. See also Robert Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1968), pp. 25–28.

functioned so differently in different historical eras: (1) the distribution of capabilities, (2) the scope and pace of warfare, and (3) the presence or absence of divisive ideologies. Changes in these three independent variables can be used to explain changes in two dependent variables: the alliance policies of the leading states, and the vulnerability (or lack thereof) of alliances to periodic crises. In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, I used this approach to explore three issues central to a theory of alliance behavior: (1) What motivates states to form alliances? (2) What determines the urgency that statesmen attach to lining up allies for their state? (3) What determines the extent of cooperation among allies? The discussion in the rest of this section is intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive of the possibilities for deductive theorizing about alliances.⁵

Consider first the role of the distribution of capabilities in shaping alliance policies. In a multipolar system, statesmen must be alert to two kinds of threats: the danger of isolation in the face of a hostile alliance bent on subduing their state and the danger that a series of small gains might add up to an insurmountable advantage for another state, even a state with which they happen to be allied. Taken together, these two suggest that statesmen in a multipolar system will be quick to form alliances, both to secure their state against external threats and to pursue gains for their state in the struggle for preeminence. They will also watch their allies warily to make sure that their partners do not gain more from the alliance than their own state, lest the increased power of an ally be turned against them in the next round of the competition. Alliances will thus be the principal means by which states will contend for advantage in a multipolar system, but they will also be limited in their ability to serve as instruments for coordinating the policies of their members, because the members will likely react instinctively in ways obstructive of common action whenever an ally's gains seem likely to outstrip their own.⁶ In a multipolar system, alliances will be quick to form because statesmen fear isolation, but they will also be prone to fall apart because allies will watch each other warily for signs that one member is benefiting more than the rest. *How quickly* they fall apart will depend in part on the scope and pace of warfare at a particular moment in time.

During the eighteenth century and for much of the nineteenth, the ability of states to increase their military power by mobilizing domestic resources was on the whole very limited, due to the underdeveloped state of military technology and the need to restrict the size of armies so as not to interfere with the growth of expanding economies. The formation of alliances was thus the only way to quickly augment national power, but the all-against-all character of the struggle for power and empire waged by the great powers prior to the Second World War meant that there was nothing particularly *mutual* or *cooperative* about the

⁵ Here I draw on Wallace Thies, "Randomness, Contagion and Heterogeneity in the Formation of Interstate Alliances," *International Interactions* 16 (#4, 1991): 346–349.

⁶ Suggested by Walter Dorn, *Competition For Empire, 1740–1763* (New York: Harper, 1940), pp. 144–145.

way allies dealt with each other. Because the members of these alliances viewed today's allies and enemies alike as long-term rivals in the struggle for predominance, they sought to limit each other's gains, thwart each other's ambitions, and frustrate each other's schemes. The slower the pace of military operations and the less the damage that a state could expect to suffer during the early stage of a war, the quicker statesmen will be to abuse and/or abandon an unruly partner, particularly if there are other powers with which an alliance might be formed. Conversely, the wider and faster the anticipated scope and pace of military operations during wartime, the greater the urgency that states will attach to having allies lined up in advance of the next war and the more solicitous they will be of their allies' concerns, so as not to be caught alone and vulnerable at the start of the next war.

In a bipolar system, in contrast, allies will also watch each other, albeit less warily and for different reasons. Under bipolarity, freedom of movement will likely be severely restricted because the basic alliance commitment is structurally ordained.⁷ Freedom of movement may also be distasteful if the cleavage between the superpowers is ideological in character. From the perspective of the smaller states, no other state or group of states can take the place of the bloc leader as the guarantor of their independence. Hence they are likely to remain within an existing alliance, even as they criticize the bloc leader's actions – which they fear may lead either to (1) abandonment or (2) entrapment in an unwanted war⁸ – and seek to evade its demands for greater political and military support. For the bloc leader, criticism from and burden shirking by the smaller members are likely to be tolerable within wide limits, since some support is better than none, and only by outright defection could a smaller member pose a threat to the bloc leader. As a result, the latter is likely to be tolerant of devious and/or petulant behavior by its smaller allies.⁹ Hence in a bipolar system, alliances will likely be more stable and longer-lived than in a multipolar system, even though stability may be obscured by constant bickering and complaining among the members of each bloc.

Cooperation among allies should also be more extensive under bipolarity than would be the case in a multipolar system. The disparity in power between the superpowers and the middle-ranking states is so great in a bipolar system (and even more so in a unipolar system) that the latter are no longer rivals with the former in the struggle for preeminence. Hence it should be easier for the members of rival alliances to pool their armed forces, establish unified military commands, and coordinate their policies over a wider range of issues than would be the case in a multipolar system. This is not to say that allies will agree on everything, only that it will be easier for them to work together on a broader range of issues than is the case for allies in a multipolar system.

⁷ Glenn Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36 (July 1984): 483–484, 489. See also Glenn Snyder, "Alliance Theory: A Neorealist First Cut," *Journal of International Affairs* 44 (Spring–Summer 1990): 103–124.

⁸ Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," pp. 466–468.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 485.

The impact of the third factor, the presence or absence of divisive ideologies, can best be seen by comparing and contrasting the competition for allies before and after the Second World War. During the eighteenth century and much of the nineteenth century, the absence of ideological issues meant that every other great power could be considered a potential ally, while the near-equality in power among them meant that no one of them had a decisive edge over the others as a prospective partner. Alliance policies were necessarily flexible so that statesmen could pursue advantages wherever and whenever they might appear. Dazzling reversals of alignment were relatively common, and allies simply abandoned each other whenever their demands became too onerous or a better opportunity appeared elsewhere. The limited size and mobility of armies and the general practice of not fighting in winter made it safe to abandon an ally whose demands had become excessive or whose performance had fallen below expectations. Prior to 1870, wars were generally slow-motion affairs in which national existence was not at stake, only the control of a province or two along the frontier.¹⁰

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the industrial revolution had greatly increased both the productivity of national economies and the share of national resources that could be devoted to military purposes. At the same time, the perfection of mobilization systems meant that a state's manpower resources were more readily convertible into military power than in the past. The greater speed with which events moved in wartime was made plain for all to see by the Prussian victories in the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars. As a result, statesmen grew more fearful of isolation, and they made greater efforts than in the pre-1870 era to line up allies in advance of the next war and to coordinate plans for the military campaigns that they and their partners promised to launch in the event of war. The greater speed with which events moved during wartime and the greater destructiveness of military operations meant that statesmen also were more concerned to hold on to the allies they had already secured. As more and more states were drawn into the network of alliances and as statesmen tried harder to hold on to their allies, there were fewer opportunities to form new alliances, which accounts for the appearance of seemingly durable blocs like the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente during the years before the First World War.

By 1945, changes in the scope and pace of warfare meant that alliance arrangements would have to be worked out to an unprecedented degree prior to the start of another war if they were to offer their members much hope of being shielded from another cycle of occupation and liberation. More important, the bipolar power structure that emerged after the war and the ideological gulf that separated the Soviet Union from the states of the West combined to deprive statesmen of whatever flexibility they had previously enjoyed in the selection of alliance partners. The disparity in power between the superpowers and the rest of the former great powers and the emergence of divisive ideological issues meant that statesmen were no longer free to engage in the kind of reversal of alliances that had taken place as late as the early years of the Second World War – namely,

¹⁰ The Napoleonic Wars are an exception here (see [Chapter 2](#)).

the Nazi–Soviet Pact in 1939, followed two years later by the German invasion of the Soviet Union. For the states of Western Europe, only the United States could fill the role of protector against the Soviet Union; no other state or group of states could take its place in this respect.

As a result of these changes in the competitive environment, several of the alliances organized after the Second World War, especially those formed in Europe, proved more durable and more integrated than any that had previously existed. The emergence of a bipolar power structure meant that most of the pre-1945 great powers were no longer able to compete in the struggle for supremacy with the United States and the Soviet Union, while the ideological cleavage that characterized the early years of the Cold War meant that alliance members were more conscious of ideals and goals held in common than ever before. After 1945, the cost of abandoning an ally was very high and the availability of replacement allies very low. The alliances organized in Europe after the Second World War were thus intended to be permanent, and NATO in particular has exhibited considerable resilience and durability in the face of a rapidly changing technological environment.

These three independent variables – the distribution of capabilities, the scope and pace of warfare, and the presence or absence of ideological issues – are also very useful for explaining the vulnerability or lack thereof of alliances in different historical eras to periodic “crises.” To illustrate this point, I again compare and contrast the behavior of allies in different three periods – specifically, pre-1870, 1871–1945, and post-1945.

In the pre-1870 era, the wars waged by the great powers of multipolar Europe were generally slow-motion affairs fought for limited objectives, which meant that advance arrangements were usually unnecessary and that there was no great penalty to being caught at the start without allies. The near-equality in power meant that no great power had a decisive advantage over the others as a potential ally, while the absence of divisive ideological issues meant that virtually every other great power was a potential ally, provided it was offered a sufficiently tempting bribe. As a result, states competed for allies by offering a larger share of the spoils of war than that offered by rivals. In a world in which alliance formation was essentially a bidding contest, states sought to split rival alliances by offering a better deal. Defections were frequent, and alliance policies were both flexible and almost completely outward looking, as states sought to keep open lines of communication with *all* of the other great powers, even the members of a rival alliance. It was not uncommon for allies to become enemies and enemies to become allies. Alliances were by and large ad hoc affairs created to launch an attack or repel one. They were also brittle and short-lived; defections fostered a climate of mistrust in which arrangements to pool armed forces under a unified command were virtually nonexistent.¹¹ Since the costs of abandoning

¹¹ The exception here would be the Fourth (and final) Coalition against Napoleonic France, which did establish a unified command, albeit one that was hamstrung due to rivalries and suspicions among the members (see [Chapter 2](#)).

an ally were low and new allies almost always available, states switched partners frequently and coalitions formed and re-formed as new issues arose. All of this effectively devalued the worth of any one alliance, which is why pre-1870 alliances were never said to be in crisis. These alliances didn't last long enough for their members to become indifferent between staying in and getting out. Instead, these alliances were simply discarded once they had served the limited purposes for which they had been formed.

The Prussian victories over Austria and France in 1866 and 1870, respectively, convinced soldiers and statesmen alike that advance arrangements would be necessary if alliances were to be militarily effective, thereby setting off a scramble to line up allies in which all of the European great powers participated. But treaties of alliance were still drawn as narrowly as possible. Each great power sought the support of allies for its own quarrels while seeking to limit the support extended to allies pursuing their own agendas. Each also sought to keep open lines of communication to the members of rival camps, which meant that rivals in Europe could be allies in Asia or Africa; allies in Europe could be rivals in colonial disputes. This pattern of cross-cutting alignments was gradually replaced between 1890 and 1914 by the division of Europe into two camps, but even so military coordination among allies remained low and provisions for the integration of armed forces nonexistent. These alliances were never said to be in crisis, even though Italy's restlessness within the Triple Alliance is suggestive of a state that had indeed grown indifferent between staying in and getting out. Alliances like the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente were never said to be in crisis despite the propensity of their members to cut deals with the members of a rival alliance (or at least think about how they might do so) because double-dealing was considered *normal behavior* for a great power. Put differently, all of the great powers sought to manipulate and control their allies while thwarting their allies' efforts to do the same to them.

The immense destructiveness of the Second World War convinced American and European statesmen that advance arrangements, including the integration of allied forces under centralized command, would be essential if the Atlantic Alliance were to be militarily effective. At the same time, the ideological divide between East and West and the great disparity in power between the superpowers and other states virtually eliminated the flexibility that statesmen had previously enjoyed. The cost of abandoning an ally was now very high; the availability of new allies, very low. Alliance policies became almost completely inward looking: larger members exhorted smaller ones to increase their defense efforts while refraining from duplicating the technologically advanced forces of the superpowers. The smaller members for their part argued that the bigger and richer members could better afford to devote a larger percentage of GNP to defense (an international version of progressive taxation). In effect, NATO members were stuck with one another even as the irritations engendered by integrated armed forces and demands for support in conflicts outside of Europe served as constant annoyances. This explains the recurrence of periodic crises, as NATO members were forced to confront, almost annually, the kind of issues that pre-1945 allies had simply run away from.

WHY NATO ENDURES

In a 1995 article, Stanley Sloan asked rhetorically, “What does the disaster in Bosnia suggest about the future utility of the [Atlantic] Alliance?”¹² One of the hallmarks of the NATO-in-crisis literature, as we saw in Chapter 1, is the unseemly haste with which it jumps to the conclusion that past failings are an augur of future disaster. Sloan’s question fits comfortably within this genre by implying that, in NATO, things often get worse but rarely do they get better. In retrospect, this was a surprising position to take, because there was by then nearly four decades of experience suggesting that an alliance of democracies would have an unusually strong ability to recover from any missteps.

In this regard, I suggested in Chapter 1 that an alliance of democracies would have hidden strengths that would enable it to endure despite near-constant internal wrangling and recriminations. These hidden strengths, in turn, would take the form of strong self-healing tendencies not found in alliances with only one or no democracies. These self-healing tendencies can be grouped into two categories: the attraction felt by democracies to working closely with each other and the internal workings of democracies that enhance their suitability as long-term allies.

Concerning the former, I argued in Chapter 1 that the urge to work together will always be strong among liberal democracies because they both need and want the approval and support of other liberal democratic states. When democracies work together, their elected leaders can and frequently do cite this cooperation to legitimize their policies in the eyes of their electorates.¹³ Alternatively, NATO members will change their policies for the sake of preserving the alliance among them.¹⁴ This affinity felt by democracies for working together is perhaps most apparent in the staying power exhibited by NATO despite the loss of its principal opponent. “Why has NATO enjoyed such staying power? Until the 1990s the easiest, historically most potent answer was: the Soviet threat.”¹⁵ But even as the Cold War ended and the Soviet threat disappeared, NATO endures. It endures in no small part because, as the most

¹² Stanley Sloan, “U.S. Perspectives on NATO’s Future,” *International Affairs* 71 (April 1995): 218.

¹³ For example, the eagerness exhibited by Eden and then Macmillan for reconciliation with the United States in the aftermath of Suez. Note also how the George W. Bush administration in the United States has cited the presence of a “coalition of the willing” in Iraq as evidence that its policies are sensible and deserving of support from the Congress and the American people.

¹⁴ For example, the Reagan administration’s change of position on the natural gas pipeline issue, and the Clinton administration’s abandonment of its preferred policy of “lift and strike” during the Bosnian civil war (both discussed in Chapter 7). For other examples of U.S. officials modifying their own policies to accommodate the European allies, see Michael Mastanduno, “Trade as a Strategic Weapon: American and Alliance Export Control Policy in the Early Postwar Period,” *International Organization* 42 (Winter 1988): 121–150; Thomas Risse-Kapfen, *Cooperation among Democracies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Sloan, “U.S. Perspectives on NATO’s Future,” p. 219. See also Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance* (Boston: Twayne, 1988).

successful alliance ever created, NATO has become a symbol of what can be accomplished when democracies work together. As long as there is a NATO, its members can use it to share burdens and thus free up resources for uses other than defense. They can also use it to legitimize their policies and win public support. Last but not least, they can use appeals to Alliance solidarity to gain leverage in their dealings with one another – leverage that would be lost if they acted the way the NATO-in-crisis literature suggests they want to or will act.

Second, NATO members are living proof of the systems theorists' claim that "we can never do merely one thing."¹⁶ There are always multiple issues at stake among them, making them reluctant to abandon a good working relationship on one issue because of pique over the handling of another. In 2002 and 2003, the United States and France vigorously contested the merits of invading Iraq. But even as their dispute over Iraq was played out in public, they both supported an expanded role for NATO in the international peacekeeping force in Afghanistan¹⁷; they supported a UN Security Council resolution lifting sanctions on Iraq¹⁸; and their intelligence services shared information as part of the Bush administration's global war on terror.¹⁹ In subsequent years, their intelligence services cooperated to mount covert operations against al-Qaeda²⁰, their foreign ministries issued joint warnings to Iran regarding the latter's uranium enrichment program²¹, and their UN delegations sponsored Security Council resolutions intended to halt Syria's meddling in Lebanon.²²

Third, as the U.S.–France case suggests, just because some NATO members disagree on one or even several issues doesn't mean they all disagree about everything or even about a lot of things. Members who disagree about one issue at present are unlikely to push those disagreements too far because they don't want to jeopardize (1) their relations with the members that are not much involved in the latest intra-NATO spat and (2) the uncontroversial parts of their relationship with those with whom they do disagree. Indeed, NATO members are likely to be protective of the noncontroversial parts of their relationship, in the sense of insulating the noncontroversial parts from whatever disagreement happens to exist among them.

¹⁶ Garrett Hardin, quoted in Robert Jervis, *System Effects* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 10.

¹⁷ Vernon Loeb, "U.S. Urges NATO to Expand Role in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, February 21, 2003, p. A20.

¹⁸ Keith Richburg, "U.S.-French Ties Take Step Forward," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2003, p. A16.

¹⁹ Karen DeYoung, "Bush Lauds French Role in War on Terror," *Washington Post*, May 30, 2003, p. A19.

²⁰ Dana Priest, "Help from France Key in Covert Operations," *Washington Post*, July 3, 2005, pp. A1, A16.

²¹ Robin Wright, "U.S., France Warn Iran On Nuclear Program," *Washington Post*, October 15, 2005, p. A10.

²² Robin Wright, "U.S., France to Introduce U.N. Resolutions Against Syria," *Washington Post*, October 19, 2005, p. A16. See also David Ignatius, "Bush's New Ally: France?" *Washington Post*, February 1, 2006, p. A23.

The NATO-in-crisis literature, in contrast, by and large overlooks these self-healing tendencies because it focuses almost entirely on how NATO crises *begin* and especially on the anger and recriminations exhibited by the members most intensely involved. So why *do* NATO crises wax, wane, and then fade from view? Why hasn't one of them been used as a pretext to escape from quarrels with meddlesome allies? The members of pre-1939 alliances had few qualms about dumping allies who had outlived their usefulness. But those alliances rarely contained more than one liberal democratic member. To understand why NATO members behave differently than the members of pre-1939 alliances, it helps to consider the internal attributes of the democracies that make up the Atlantic Alliance.

Within the NATO countries, political power is shared by separate branches of government. Within the executive branch, power is further diffused to assorted departments, agencies, offices, and the individuals who lead them. Within the legislative branch, parliamentary committees, front-benchers, and even back-benchers all have a say (to a greater or lesser degree) in what policy should be. This diffusion of power encourages – indeed, mandates – habits of consultation and cooperation among those who share power with others and thus can accomplish little on their own; it also greatly benefits NATO as a whole. *Within* democracies, consultation and cooperation are more than just bureaucratic rituals. In the absence of consultation and cooperation, the people's business is left undone, governments fall, elections are lost, and ambitious politicians sent off to early – and involuntary – retirement. *Among* democracies, the soldiers, civil servants, and political leaders who grow to maturity and pursue careers in a democratic political culture find it natural to consult and cooperate with their counterparts in other NATO governments just as they do with colleagues in their own countries.

Consultation and cooperation are not guarantees of harmony, or even placidity. As Klaus Knorr recognized roughly fifty years ago, democracies are known to vent their problems with one another, at times very thoroughly. But precisely because venting is normal both within and among NATO members, “disruptive forces” lead not to collapse but to “remedial reactions.”²³ What sets NATO apart from so many previous alliances is *not* the absence of disagreements among its members but the ability to act in concert *despite* disagreements among its members. “If allies are to act in concert only when their views are identical,” Anthony Eden wrote in his memoirs, then “alliances have no meaning.”²⁴ Authoritarian regimes, in contrast, are often hostile to the kinds of consultations and compromises that NATO members routinely undertake.²⁵

²³ Klaus Knorr, “The Strained Alliance,” in *NATO and American Security* ed. Klaus Knorr (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 8.

²⁴ Quoted in Alfred Grosser, *The Western Alliance* (New York: Continuum, 1980), p. 137.

²⁵ Ernst Haas and Allen Whiting, *Dynamics of International Relations* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1956), pp. 182–183. See especially their discussion of relations among the Axis allies, pp. 179–180.

Consultation and cooperation are necessary but not sufficient conditions for a successful, long-term alliance. Why don't divergent views lead to misunderstandings, deadlock, and even paralysis?²⁶ Unlike autocracies, in which an entrenched leadership can make the same dumb mistakes more than once,²⁷ there is a Darwinian quality to policy making in democracies. In democracies, ambitious strivers with new ideas are always appearing on the scene. Because candidates for elective and appointive office must convince their electorates and their political bosses, respectively, that they are worthy of high responsibility, they constantly scrutinize the past for examples of mistakes that they pledge to avoid and/or correct. In this way, democracies learn, adapt, and change. Not everyone may agree that the *correct* lessons have been learned, but democracies do learn from past mistakes.

In democracies too, even the most skillful political leader eventually reaches the end of their term, loses an election, decides to retire, or is replaced in anticipation of losing their touch with the electorate. This too counts as a strength and a very considerable one at that. In democracies, changes of government are a regular occurrence, thereby providing opportunities to reexamine old policies and develop new ones. In the Netherlands, to cite one example, Prime Minister Andreas van Agt was unable to persuade his own Christian Democrat Party, much less the Dutch parliament, to endorse production and deployment of U.S.-owned-ground launched cruise missiles on Dutch soil. His successor, Ruud Lubbers, was more successful in this regard.²⁸ The point is not that Lubbers was smarter or cleverer than his predecessor but that new Ruud Lubbers are *always* turning up in the NATO countries. Democracies regularly renew and reinvigorate their governments by allowing new, more energetic, and/or more patient leaders to rise to the top. NATO as an alliance of democracies benefits greatly from this regular infusion of new talent, which has allowed it to persevere and in that way overcome obstacles that other alliances might find impossible to overcome.

Part II of this book was intended as a test of the "hidden strengths" argument. The six case studies examined in [Chapters 5, 6, and 7](#) were chosen because each was widely said to be a very severe test, or even NATO's greatest crisis ever. Pre-1939 alliances often collapsed the first time their members experienced a serious disagreement. Any alliance capable of withstanding not just a few but six allegedly mortal dangers could surely be said to have more resilience and restorative powers than traditional alliances.

The case studies do indeed suggest that NATO, as an alliance of democracies, has repeatedly demonstrated an ability to overcome the kind of intense

²⁶ Recall in this regard the superficial consultations between the German and Austrian military staffs prior to World War I, which fostered misunderstandings that contributed to the Austrian defeat at the hands of the Russians at Lemberg in 1914, discussed in [Chapter 2](#).

²⁷ See, for example, the discussion of German foreign policy between 1890 and 1914 in Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In," *International Security* 25 (Spring 2001): 121–125.

²⁸ See [Chapter 5](#).

disagreements that likely would have proven fatal for some other alliance. Time after time, ambitious politicians found it in their interest to take steps to shore up the Alliance. As we saw in [Chapter 5](#), the vulnerability problem that was supposedly the source of the crisis over Soviet missile advances had been foreseen by various individuals and organizations in the United States years before the Alliance was said to be in crisis. More important, the vulnerability problem was foreseen in no small part because the division of responsibility for national security issues between the executive and legislative branches and, within the executive branch among a variety of semi-autonomous civilian and military agencies, encouraged ambitious individuals to seek out problems that could be solved on their watch, both because they wanted their tenure to result in good policy and because solving problems is a good way to ensure an upward career trajectory.

Because the vulnerability problem was foreseen, the Eisenhower administration's responses to it *preceded* by as much as two years the judgments by observers such as Klaus Knorr, Henry Kissinger, and Roger Hilsman that the Alliance was wracked by a potentially fatal crisis. In effect, those observers were responding not to an actual deterioration in the Alliance's position vis-à-vis its principal opponent but to controversies unleashed by steps taken to head off any such deterioration. Those steps were controversial because they were forward looking, in the sense of intending to solve a problem that loomed in the distance but was not quite here yet, and in democracies there will always be room for disagreement over costly steps taken in anticipation of some future danger. Reasonable people can and do disagree over the necessity of such steps, especially when those steps threaten to consume resources that could be spent some other way, and in democracies they surely will disagree because institutional rivalries and partisan politics all but guarantee that the legislative and executive branches – alternatively, civilians and military officers – will see these issues in different ways.

The Soviet missiles crisis is also suggestive of important differences between the Atlantic Alliance and pre-1939 alliances. The members of the latter often treated their allies like prospective victims – to be duped, swindled, and then abandoned. Among NATO members, in contrast, statesmen who must regularly face the voters to stay in office seem almost instinctively to grasp the need to shore up support for their policies among their allies too. Eisenhower's administration was sensitive to the concerns of the European allies and tried hard to find ways to accommodate them. In the case of the vulnerability problem dramatized by Soviet missile advances, Eisenhower's administration had begun to worry about the mutual deterrence issue years before the suicide-or-surrender dilemma was being proclaimed in the open literature as one of the reasons why the Alliance was in crisis. Nor were the Americans the only ones concerned to accommodate their allies. As we saw in [Chapter 5](#), the Adenauer government in West Germany adjusted its own preferences and policies to better match those of the United States. With Americans and Germans solicitous of each other's needs, the political shocks that arose as Germany rearmed

led *not* to the Alliance's collapse but rather to vigorous efforts on both sides of the Atlantic to repair any damage done. In Washington, moreover, solicitousness for allies extended beyond the bilateral relationship with West Germany to include other allies like British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, whose government was offered U.S.-made Thor intermediate-range ballistic missiles in March 1957, months before *Sputnik*, and French President Charles de Gaulle, who in December 1959 received Eisenhower's personal assurance that France could have the same dual-key missile arrangement given to the British.²⁹

In the LRTNF/INF case, also discussed in [Chapter 5](#), the Carter administration got off to a bad start in part because of its apparent willingness to bargain away long-range cruise missiles of interest to the European allies and in part because of its clumsy handling of the enhanced radiation weapon, also known as the neutron bomb. Having made these mistakes, the Carter administration was eager to do something that would dispel the impression among the European allies that it was insensitive to their concerns. It thus saw the LRTNF/INF issue as a political as well as a strategic problem. Solving political problems means cutting political deals, which is something that statesmen in democracies must be good at if they hope to remain in office. The review in [Chapter 5](#) suggests that such deals were indeed cut, and when the time came to deploy Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles at the end of 1983, *all* of the recipient countries fell into place, despite all the predictions that doing so would impose strains that were greater than the Alliance could bear. Some members took longer than others in this regard (Belgium and the Netherlands), but in the end each host government found a formula that allowed it to go ahead.

Turning to the cases covered in [Chapter 6](#), what stands out in retrospect about the Suez case is the eagerness and determination with which the British approached the task of reconciling with the Americans. Despite his dismay with the way the Americans had treated him and his government while the Anglo-French intervention was under way, Eden's actions suggest that his highest priority once a cease-fire had been proclaimed was to be invited to Washington, where he could be seen conferring with Eisenhower about how to restore the Anglo-American "special relationship." Eden's telephone conversation with Eisenhower on November 7, during which he told Eisenhower he was ready to fly to Washington *that very evening*, speaks eloquently to the importance that he, and subsequently Macmillan, attached to restoring the relationship with the Americans.

Eden and Macmillan had good reasons to set their sights on regaining their previous standing in Washington. The special relationship was politically popular in Britain, as was Eisenhower himself. Macmillan proved enormously skillful at reconstituting the relationship with the Americans, but there are grounds for believing, as was argued in [Chapter 6](#), that whoever was Eden's

²⁹ Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 210.

successor would have acted as Macmillan did. Revenge for American perfidy may have been an appealing notion, but on almost every count it was inferior to what Macmillan chose – namely, reviving the special relationship. Revenge would have meant rehashing the past, which could only draw attention to the splits within the Conservative Party regarding Suez. More important, revenge would likely remind British voters of the failed attempt to retake Suez, and thus of Britain's diminished stature relative to the superpowers, whereas rebuilding the relationship with the Americans offered an opportunity to look ahead to new and politically popular achievements, especially sharing nuclear secrets and military cooperation in the Middle East. These in turn opened the door to ending conscription and reducing the size (and expense) of British armed forces, thereby freeing funds for other, vote-winning purposes, like better schools and housing and so on.

Politicians may be forward looking, but pundits, journalists, and academic commentators often are not. What is especially striking about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is the way various observers during the summer of 1980 were pronouncing the Alliance to be caught up in its greatest crisis ever *even after* NATO members had reached agreement on a package of measures designed to improve military readiness, with another such package to be considered later that year. As in the case of the Soviet missiles crisis during the 1950s, these observers were reacting not to a failure by the Alliance to take needed action, but to the noisy way in which NATO members reached agreement on what actions should be taken. Whenever NATO members ask each other to take steps that may be costly or risky or both, there are bound to be disagreements voiced by those who feel that they are being asked to do too much while their allies get away with doing to little. These sorts of disagreements are hardly exceptional. They are better understood as a normal feature of policy-making within an alliance of democracies represented by elected officials who have constituencies to satisfy and accomplishments to be achieved before they stand for reelection, and who may not be able to do either if the resources available for discretionary spending are consumed by defense programs needed to satisfy alliance commitments.³⁰

Nor is an occasional bit of friction among allies necessarily a bad thing. As was explained in [Chapter 6](#), the British disagreed with much of what the Carter administration was hoping to accomplish through its policies toward southwest Asia, like creating a Rapid Deployment Force. With the British holding back, the French saw an opportunity to score some points with Washington. Even as the British were being coy about how they would respond to a future U.S. request for access to British air and naval facilities en route to the Persian Gulf, the French were making an effort – discreetly to be sure, but an effort nonetheless – to convince the Americans that France was their best and surest ally, that France had no anti-NATO or nuclear peace movement to worry about,

³⁰ See also Wallace Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), Chapter 1.

that France was not reluctant to intervene militarily, and therefore France should displace Britain as America's most capable, most reliable, and most favored ally.

In the case of the Soviet pipeline crisis, officials from the U.S. Departments of State and Commerce worked diligently to limit the damage caused by the imposition of sanctions on the Europeans, aiming instead for a bargain that would acknowledge the Reagan administration's concerns about the pipeline but still allow the project to go forward. As in the Soviet missiles and LRTNF/INF cases, these efforts predated claims that the Alliance was in its worst state ever. As we saw in [Chapter 7](#), President Reagan's extension of the sanctions (in an executive order signed on June 18, 1982), was followed nine days later (and roughly a month *before* the first "worst crisis ever" claim appeared in print) by a White House meeting at which U.S. Trade Representative Bill Brock and others argued for a policy reversal on the sanctions issue, on the grounds that the United States was being accused of duplicity by European allies who felt double-crossed by the way the extension of the sanctions had been handled by the Reagan White House.

Democracies, as Brock's comments make clear, are not impervious to criticism from allies, not even when the target of the criticisms happens to be the largest, the most powerful, and the most indispensable member of the alliance. The Americans, as [Chapter 7](#) makes clear, were stung by the critiques offered by their European counterparts. Almost from the moment the extended sanctions were announced, the Reagan administration found itself on the defensive, in no small part because the Europeans' criticisms were echoed by members of Congress, including some from the President's own party.

More important, officials on *both* sides of the Atlantic instinctively grasped that the sanctions issue had to be resolved and the sooner the better. The Europeans were critical of U.S. policy, but they also looked for ways to make it easier for Washington to change course (for example, the French rebuffing a Soviet suggestion that a French firm build *all* of the rotor kits needed to complete the pipeline). Meanwhile in Washington, President Reagan's advisers repeatedly urged him to limit the impact of the sanctions while pursuing talks with the Europeans to resolve the issue. Talking through an issue is something that comes naturally to officials who rise to high-ranking posts in the democracies that make up the Atlantic Alliance. What stands out in retrospect about the pipeline crisis is how determinedly officials on both sides of the Atlantic pursued a mutually acceptable solution. What in an earlier age might have served as a kind of last straw (European governments ordering firms based in their homelands to defy Washington's orders, or the United States imposing sanctions on firms that might well go bankrupt without the work provided by the Soviet pipeline) were defused by classic techniques: delay confrontations to give more time for talks to succeed, bend the rules (the United States choosing not to extend the sanctions to include secondary suppliers), overlook actions that could be taken as slights (President Reagan's October 1982 offer to sell the Soviets millions of tons of grain even as European firms were being sanctioned

for honoring contracts signed long before the sanctions were imposed; President Mitterand's refusal to take a phone call from the White House when the final terms of an agreement were being hammered out).

In the case of the Bosnian civil war, the review in [Chapter 7](#) suggests that the NATO countries were able to overcome a seemingly unbridgeable chasm between Americans and Europeans over the merits of the Clinton administration's preferred policy of lift-and-strike in no small part because democracies are willing to change rather than stick with a policy that clearly is not working. In democracies, incumbents either replace failing policies with something better or court defeat in the next election. More important, the Bosnia case suggests that, among the democracies that make up the Atlantic Alliance, saving the Alliance is more important than saving any particular policy. NATO members who quarreled over the merits of lift and strike in 1993 were thus able to agree on using air power first to shoot down Serb aircraft violating the no-fly zone over Bosnia, then to target Serb weapons threatening Sarajevo, and finally to launch a coercive air campaign that subsequently made possible the negotiations in Dayton at which a peace settlement was finally reached.

How did the NATO allies manage to do all this? In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as was pointed out in [Chapter 7](#), statesmen often had no difficulty not talking to their allies (or lying to them when they did). In an alliance of democracies, in contrast, not talking quickly loses its appeal. Among NATO members, ambitious politicians get reelected and their appointees get promoted in return for *doing something*. And the record of our six cases suggests that if and when doing something can be framed in terms of saving the Atlantic Alliance, electorates are likely to approve. In both the pipeline case and the Bosnia case, officials on both sides of the Atlantic acted as if saving the Alliance was more important than saving any particular policy, even a policy that they themselves might have argued for. In the Suez case, Macmillan ran for reelection in 1959 as the prime minister who had restored Britain to its rightful place as America's closest friend and ally; his reward was a greatly enlarged majority in the House of Commons. Conversely, in both the 1950s and the 1980s, the Labor party in Great Britain and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in West Germany ran as opponents of NATO policies that espoused reliance on nuclear weapons for both deterrence and defense; their reward was multiple consecutive electoral defeats, leaving them in the minority for more than a decade in both cases.

THE IRAQ CRISIS REVISITED

It could, of course, be objected that five of the six cases considered in [Chapters 5, 6, and 7](#) occurred during the Cold War, while the Soviet Union still existed and its armed forces threatened, to one degree or another, all of the members of the Alliance. In this view, the self-healing tendencies discussed previously were largely epiphenomenal – a mere reflection of NATO members' need to

maintain a united front in the face of a clear and present danger posed by the Soviet Union.

The Bosnia case, and especially the willingness of individual NATO members to sacrifice long-held policy preferences for the sake of maintaining the Alliance, casts some doubt on the claim that the Alliance endured only because of the Soviet threat, but it is just one case, and one that coincided roughly with the transition to the post-Cold War world. To explore this issue further, I conclude this chapter by revisiting the case with which this book began – namely, the 2003 crisis over whether to invade Iraq. If an alliance of democracies really does have important self-healing tendencies, then we would expect to see political leaders in the NATO countries respond to the events of 2003 by modifying their positions on disputed issues in order to protect the Alliance that all value highly, by being protective of the noncontroversial parts of their relationship, by taking steps to shore up relations with allies, and by looking for new problems that could be solved jointly, in order to dispel any past unpleasantness. All of these actions were present in the way in which NATO members responded to the February 2003 dispute over whether and when to invade Iraq.

Concerning the first of these – modifying positions in order to safeguard the Alliance – the 2003 crisis over Iraq provides still more support for the claim made earlier that, between and among democracies, the urge to compromise is generally quite strong. As Robert Jervis points out, democracies are often inclined toward doing things in twos – namely, balancing or offsetting something unpleasant by linking it to something the target audience finds pleasing or more acceptable.³¹ On January 22, 2003, France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg blocked a NATO decision on a U.S. request for help in the event of war with Iraq, which was the inspiration for U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's derisive comment that their views did not matter much because they represented "old Europe."³² On February 9, the Belgian government announced it would veto a U.S. request that the Alliance provide military materiel that Turkey could use to defend itself in the event of war with Iraq, which it did on February 10, joined by France and Germany.³³ The recriminations that this action produced³⁴ both inspired and seemingly validated Henry Kissinger's claim that these events constituted "the gravest crisis in the Alliance since its creation five decades ago."³⁵ On February 12, however, French

³¹ Robert Jervis, "Complexity and the Analysis of Political and Social Life," *Political Science Quarterly* 112 (1997–1998): 589–590.

³² Keith Richburg, "NATO Blocked on Iraq Decision," *Washington Post*, January 23, 2003, pp. A1, A14.

³³ Peter Finn, "Belgium to Block NATO Military Aid for Turkey," *Washington Post*, February 10, 2003, p. A1; Peter Finn, "NATO Still at Impasse on Assisting Turkey," *Washington Post*, February 12, 2003, p. A18.

³⁴ See, for example, John Mintz, "French, German Plans on Iraq Get U.S. Scorn," *Washington Post*, February 10, 2003, p. A16.

³⁵ Henry Kissinger, "Role Reversal and Alliance Realities," *Washington Post*, February 10, 2003, p. A21. See also Chapter 1.

President Jacques Chirac telephoned Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer to promise French support for Turkey in the event of war.³⁶ The next day, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder announced that Germany would ship Patriot missiles to Turkey on its own initiative (one of the steps the United States had, a few days earlier, asked the Alliance to authorize). Chancellor Schroeder also reiterated that German AWACS³⁷ crews were available to help Turkey, that German armed forces had been performing extra security duty at U.S. bases in Germany (one of the steps American officials had asked their NATO counterparts to take), and that Germany had granted overflight rights to U.S. military aircraft en route to the Middle East.³⁸ On February 15, Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt offered to withdraw his country's veto of aid to Turkey if the Alliance made clear that such aid "does not imply participation of NATO in a military operation against Iraq."³⁹

These accommodating gestures, in turn, opened the door to a tactic for breaking the deadlock over a NATO role in aiding Turkey that would be familiar to politicians and statesmen alike – namely, moving the dispute to a more favorable venue. In this case, "NATO finally broke the deadlock by moving the discussion to the alliance's eighteen-member Defense Planning Committee, which does not include France. By then, Germany and Belgium had given in to pressure from [NATO Secretary General George] Robertson and others. The committee's decision on Sunday [February 17] allowed NATO to begin deploying AWACS radar surveillance planes, Patriot missile and chemical and biological defense units in Turkey."⁴⁰ The French knew full well the intent behind shifting the issue to the DPC, but they chose to stand aside.⁴¹

In effect, what was supposedly NATO's greatest crisis ever lasted less than a month and effectively ended when the three European members whose actions had so annoyed the Americans modified their policies to make them more acceptable to the other allies. How lasting were the effects of this alleged greatest crisis ever? It is telling in this regard that, on February 20, less than a week after the Belgians had fallen into line and the matter was seemingly resolved within the DPC, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell proposed that the Alliance take command of the international peacekeeping force in Afghanistan when the Dutch–German command then in place came to an end, which it would during the summer of 2003.⁴² Why pick that

³⁶ Reuters, "France Pledges to Defend Turkey," *Washington Post*, February 13, 2003, p. A32.

³⁷ An acronym for Airborne Warning and Control System (an aerial surveillance aircraft).

³⁸ Peter Finn, "Germany to Ship Missiles to Turkey," *Washington Post*, February 14, 2003, p. A23.

³⁹ Paul Geitner, "Belgium Offers Compromise on NATO Dispute," *Washington Post*, February 16, 2003, p. A24.

⁴⁰ Vernon Loeb, "U.S. Urges NATO to Expand Role in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, February 21, 2003, p. A20.

⁴¹ Philip Gordon, "The Crisis in the Alliance," *Iraq Memo*, #11, February 2003, p. 5.

⁴² Loeb, "U.S. Urges NATO to Expand Role in Afghanistan." See also Jim Hoagland, "Chirac's Temptation," *Washington Post*, February 27, 2003, p. A27.

moment to propose a new mission for the Alliance? Simply put, the United States needed help in Afghanistan and the best place to look for it was among the other democracies of the Atlantic Alliance. Conversely, what would have been accomplished by holding a grudge over what had been said and done during the preceding weeks? Holding grudges only reminds the voters and/or one's political patrons of things that didn't get done or, at least, didn't get done right away. In democracies, candidates for elective and appointive office prefer to accentuate the positive. For them, grudges are best dealt with in their memoirs.

These were the first steps toward reconciliation but they were not the last. On April 15, French President Chirac telephoned President Bush for their first conversation in more than two months, during which Chirac told Bush he was pleased the war in Iraq had been short and (apparently) successful, and that he (Chirac) was prepared to be "pragmatic" about postwar reconstruction in Iraq. That very same day, the French ambassador to the United States, Jean-David Levitte, amplified on the reasons why Chirac had called. The mood in Paris, Levitte said, is "let's turn this bitter page and think positively about what we have to do together." As described by Levitte, U.S.–French cooperation on international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, North Korea, and other issues "is excellent." Meanwhile, in Brussels, France dropped its objection to NATO taking command of the international security force in Afghanistan.⁴³

The ambassador's comments weren't the only indications that American and French officials were taking steps to insulate the more cooperative side of their relationship from the acrimony over Iraq. In May 2003, the United States and France, represented by their justice ministers, agreed to cochair a high-level working group of the G-8 countries to study how to use new biometric techniques to prevent forgeries of passports and other documents. "French-American cooperation never stopped," French Interior Minister (and future president) Nicolas Sarkozy explained. "Those disagreements [over Iraq] were real, but that does not necessitate disaccord [sic] on the fight against terrorism."⁴⁴ Two weeks later, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin echoed Sarkozy by telling a Paris news conference that he hoped for an end to the dispute with the United States over Iraq. "The best therapy is action. France's absolute priority now is to look to the future and address the challenges the world faces."⁴⁵

Even more interesting was the way the Germans responded to the dispute over Iraq. The Germans didn't like the idea of invading Iraq, but they also didn't like the idea of a breach with their most important ally, the United States.

⁴³ Karen De Young, "Chirac Moves to Repair U.S. Ties," *Washington Post*, April 16, 2003, pp. A1, A32.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Robert McCartney, "U.S., France to Lead Security Study," *Washington Post*, May 6, 2003, p. A16.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Keith Richburg, "U.S.-French Ties Take Step Forward," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2003, p. A16. The same day of de Villepin's news conference, French President Jacques Chirac telephoned President Bush again to discuss the agenda for the upcoming G-8 summit (*ibid.*).

Even before the fireworks over Iraq, the Germans were sending signals to the United States. On January 30, 2003, almost two weeks before France, Germany, and Belgium would act in unison to block (albeit temporarily) a NATO decision on aid to Turkey, a German diplomat told an American journalist, “We don’t want to add oil to the flames. It’s a difficult game and we don’t want to drift too much apart.”⁴⁶ On July 12, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer flew to Paris to explain to President Chirac that Germany would *not* block a U.S. proposal to shift the issue of aid for Turkey to the Defense Planning Committee, which France did not attend.⁴⁷ In May, German diplomats told journalists that it would be a mistake to presume that Germany would follow France and Russia if the latter two blocked a U.S.–British resolution on Iraq in the UN Security Council. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, the diplomats explained, was looking for a way to back the resolution, not oppose it.⁴⁸

In effect, just as the French had sought to take advantage of British reluctance during early 1980s to give the Americans any kind of blank check regarding access to British airfields,⁴⁹ so now were the Germans attempting to set themselves apart from the French and to remind the Americans (discreetly, to be sure, so not to antagonize the French) that Germany was still America’s closest friend on the continent of Europe. “Since the fall of Baghdad two months ago, the German government has made repeated public overtures to Washington to repair relations. Today, Defense Minister Peter Struck . . . renewed the effort, talking about ‘our American friends’ and the long history of cooperation between the two governments.”⁵⁰

A FINAL WORD

Writing at the start of the current century, Edward Luttwak proclaimed “an iron law of coalitions” – “formed to resist enemies, they do not long outlast them.”⁵¹ Such an “iron law” – which he claimed was already at work weakening the Atlantic Alliance from within – holds up reasonably well provided one’s focus is on any alliance *except* the Atlantic Alliance, which despite dozens of so-called crises since its founding in 1949 continues to exhibit a remarkable capacity for *outlasting* its foes if not for defeating them outright. Crises within the Alliance are often identified with critical comments, rude behavior, mutual

⁴⁶ Glenn Frankel and Keith Richburg, “8 Leaders in Europe Back Bush on Iraq,” *Washington Post*, January 31, 2003, p. A17.

⁴⁷ Hoagland, “Chirac’s Temptation.”

⁴⁸ Peter Finn, “Schroeder Attempts to Rebuild U.S. Ties,” *Washington Post*, May 10, 2003, p. A 20.

⁴⁹ See the Afghanistan case study in [Chapter 6](#).

⁵⁰ Vernon Loeb, “In Visit to Germany, Rumsfeld Mum on Strained Ties,” *Washington Post*, June 12, 2003, p. A36.

⁵¹ Edward Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 83.

exasperation, and even anger, but these indicators can be very misleading. The historical record suggests that the democracies that make up the Atlantic Alliance become more rather than less concerned to conciliate each other when tensions among them are on the rise. Indeed, at the very moment that public concern about the latest so-called crisis seems to be peaking and observers rush into print with predictions of imminent collapse, NATO members are actually becoming more accommodating of their allies' concerns, seeking to change the subject to something more agreeable, and even attempting to appease allies through conciliatory gestures. Unlike many pre-1939 alliances, which collapsed at the first hint of troubles among the members, the democracies that make up the Atlantic Alliance have shown a willingness to do whatever it takes – even outright policy reversals – to heal a rift in the Alliance.⁵² What French President Charles de Gaulle wrote of his relationship with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer could also be applied to the Alliance as a whole: “It is true that circumstances would produce some divergence of view. But these were always surmounted.”⁵³ And they likely *will* be surmounted for many years to come, because democracies – like the Alliance itself – can be counted on to outlast their critics if not to convert them.

⁵² In 1963, to cite one more example, the Americans became more flexible as British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan sought to exploit the “crisis” atmosphere caused by the cancellation of the Skybolt air-launched ballistic missile. In the end, the Americans did exactly what senior officials on their side had repeatedly said they would *not* do – namely, offer Polaris to the United Kingdom, thereby perpetuating the British nuclear deterrent (John Baylis, *Anglo-American Relations since 1939: The Enduring Alliance* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997], pp. 119–125).

⁵³ Quoted in Grosser, *The Western Alliance*, p. 190.

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