The Politics of a Military Alliance:

The Development of NATO's Strategic Concept of Flexible Response

By

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Lisa M. Halket

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THE POLITICS OF A MILITARY ALLIANCE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATO'S STRATEGIC CONCEPT OF FLEXIBLE RESPONSE

BY

LISA M. HALKET

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

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ABSTRACT

The development of NATO strategy from its inception in 1949 to the adoption of flexible response in 1967 illustrates the primacy of politics in a military alliance. Borne of the necessity to satisfy the competing national priorities and objectives of NATO's diverse membership, flexible response emerged as a strategic concept that satisfied more political than military imperatives. This, however, does not mean that the alliance failed to accomplish its goal: on the contrary, NATO's success in maintaining the integrity of its members and ultimately in dismantling its opponent is unparalleled in history. In this way, strategy as implemented by NATO can be viewed dialectically: despite the initial objective being the defence of alliance members through military means, the strategic concept of the alliance served the more political function of maintaining alliance cohesion, a function which itself possessed great military significance. The experience of NATO in developing strategy is particularly relevant today, as the world seeks a means to deal with the problems left by the collapse of the Cold War order.

This thesis is an interpretive study of the evolution of NATO's flexible response strategy for the purpose of demonstrating the links between politics and military strategy. It reconsiders a well-told story in light of what the story reveals about strategy and politics. This connection retains its importance as NATO enters a new era amid questions of its continued usefulness.

INTRODUCTION

In 1949 the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was established to respond to the military threat posed to the Western democratic states by an increasingly aggressive and expansionist Soviet Union. The members of the alliance would spend the better part of the next two decades deliberating over the most expedient means of accomplishing this fundamental objective. As an organization composed of member states technically equal but in practice vastly disparate, the primacy of politics in military decisions was inevitable. In fact, it will be argued that the political process exerted such an overwhelming influence on the development of military strategy that the resulting eighteen years of debate produced a strategic doctrine that satisfied more political than military imperatives. This, however, does not mean that the alliance failed to accomplish its goal: on the contrary, NATO's success in maintaining the integrity of its members and ultimately in dismantling its opponent is unparalleled in history. The experience of NATO in developing strategy is particularly relevant today, as the world seeks a means to deal with the problems left by the collapse of the Cold War order. An examination of the development of flexible response, the strategic concept which served NATO's interests for more than two decades, will serve to illuminate the intricacies of the process and provide some insight into how the alliance might be suited to address the problems of the 1990s.

The strategic doctrine of a military alliance such as NATO needs to be understood in the double sense of serving both political and military aims. Strategy is designed

initially to meet real military threats, to provide a blueprint for a nation's armed forces should they be required to go to war. Strategy involves the physical and psychological preparation of men and materiel for battle. Strategy requires the development of battle plans against some possible future threat, the exact nature of which cannot be fully predicted in advance.

But is it also true that strategy serves the ideological needs of a state by providing its constituents with a sense of security. This second component, it will be argued, was the overriding driving force behind the development of NATO strategy. The main thrust of NATO strategy, as it emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, was alliance cohesion. The compromise of flexible response was able to satisfy this requirement.

The role of NATO strategy in maintaining alliance cohesion should not, however, be viewed as purely political: the very existence of NATO was a deterrent in itself. As a group of nations united in their commitment to collective defence and to the preservation of their individual ways of life, NATO *in and of itself* deterred the Soviet Union from attempting to attack or subvert any of the NATO members. Strategy as implemented by NATO can therefore be viewed dialectically: despite the initial objective being the defence of alliance members through military means, the strategic doctrine of the alliance served the more political function of maintaining alliance cohesion, a function which itself possessed great military significance. In many respects the development of NATO strategy emerged through the interplay of forces seeking to strengthen alliance

cohesion; the importance of this factor to this discussion of strategy will be demonstrated throughout the text. NATO strategic doctrine must therefore be viewed from the point of serving an *intra*-alliance function first, although its expressed – and ultimate – aim was *inter*-alliance.

Furthermore, this internal function of strategy was itself multi-dimensional, in addition to being highly political and complicated. Each nation possessed its own unique, complex domestic environment in which the government of the day had to search for domestic consensus on issues to which the public may have been hostile. In response to these challenges, strategic doctrine had to make sense of government choices which might not have always seemed in concert with the country's interests; strategic doctrine had to provide a rationale for participation in NATO. Thus NATO strategy had to serve the alliance's interest among its members as well as between its members and the external environment.

This duality of strategy was manifest in the alliance's governing strategic concept. From 1967 to 1991, the defence of NATO relied upon flexible response, a concept which linked together strategic nuclear, tactical nuclear, and conventional forces. In theory, this triad provided the alliance with maximum flexibility in response to Soviet aggression and, through the concept of escalation, enhanced the American promise of extended deterrence by linking U.S. strategic nuclear weapons to the defence of America's European allies. In practice, an inadequate conventional component was linked by an incredible concept

of escalation to an eroded theatre nuclear force, perching alliance defence precariously on "a stool that has three uneven strategic legs."[1]

These flaws would seem initially to be antithetical to the very purpose of flexible response. Yet a more detailed examination will reveal that the alliance's strategic posture resulted from a complex political process in which objectives other than purely strategic ones were sought. The great divergence between the NATO allies in terms of such factors as geography, history, economic wealth, and domestic political environment created an equally great divergence in opinions regarding defence strategy. This fact was further complicated by the addition of nuclear weapons to the equation, and the misconceptions which accompanied them. For the allies, the central problems of the 1950s and 1960s were: How best to ensure European security? What role should nuclear weapons play? What role do each of the allies play, particularly regarding nuclear control? Answers to these questions differed between allied countries as much as within them; resolution to the debates which raged throughout this period often seemed out of reach. Interestingly, the events of the 1990s have brought some of these questions to the forefront again.

Flexible response was accepted in 1967 as a compromise to the political and military questions facing the alliance. The primary requirement of developing a strategy which satisfied fifteen competing national priorities and objectives meant that ambiguities

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[1] Douglas L. Bland, The Military Committee of the North Atlantic Alliance (New York: Praeger, 1991), p. 1.

were unavoidable. Flexible response catered to these differences by providing a deterrent strategy that could be everything to everyone: with a large and varied force structure and ambiguous guidelines regarding nuclear use, flexible response could be interpreted to suit each nation's individual deployment preferences. Though formal adoption of this strategic concept in 1967 by no means quashed the debate from which it had emerged, it did provide a respite from the divisive disputes which characterized alliance politics until this time. It also remained the alliance's guiding defence policy until the collapse of the Soviet empire.

One author has argued that the difficulties faced by NATO were 'chronic coalition ailments' which doomed alliance strategy to mediocrity: "The dilemma stems from the fact that consensus among a group of countries cannot but find its common denominator on a level that falls short of the particular interests of each participant."[2] While this may be true, it will be shown that NATO strategy, whether intended or not, imbued the alliance with a particular kind of strength which resulted from this ambiguity.

An examination of the evolution of NATO military strategy in the period 1949-1967 with particular emphasis on events leading to the development of flexible response serves as a useful case study for the proposition that in a military alliance politics has primacy. Military strategy, especially in an organization such as NATO, must fulfil a political role. It must possess both an external and an internal component: the external

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[2] Harald von Riekhoff, NATO: Issues and Prospects (Toronto: CIIA, 1967), p. 4.

function of strategy being to convince potential enemies that attacking would not be in their interest, the internal function being to reassure constituent members of the strategy's ability to protect them from harm. This political function becomes even more pronounced with the introduction of nuclear weapons. The external and internal security roles become tangled as states seek to reconcile the threat of use of such a destructive force with the problem of possible mutual devastation. For NATO the problem was further exacerbated by the unequal distribution of the consequences of nuclear use (except in the case of all-out nuclear war). This paper will demonstrate how, under very difficult circumstances, a doctrine emerged which was acceptable to widely diverse peoples.

This thesis is an interpretive study of the evolution of NATO's flexible response strategy for the purpose of demonstrating the links between politics and military strategy. It reconsiders a well-told story in light of what the story reveals about strategy and politics. This connection retains its importance as NATO enters a new era amid questions of its continued usefulness.

Chapter One will describe strategy and examine its use by NATO. The proposition that military and political factors are intertwined, mutually reinforcing components of strategy is supported by such classic strategists as Clausewitz and Machiavelli. Contemporary historians like Samuel Huntington and Edward Luttwak reiterate the duality of strategy. Applied to NATO, strategy has three main components: deterrence, defence and diplomacy. From the vast literature on this issue, this section will

draw on the work of Paul Buteux, Barry Buzan, Gordon Craig, Lawrence Freedman, Alexander George, Colin Gray, Morton Halperin, Robert Osgood, Jane Stromseth and Phil Williams.

Chapters Two and Three will consider the domestic factors of the alliance members and the ways in which these influenced strategic priorities during the 1950s. It was during this time that NATO's nuclear bias was firmly entrenched in alliance culture, and the reasons for this will be examined. The literature on this subject is extensive and, in concert with the relatively large number of NATO members, too overwhelming for a study of this nature. Thus the analysis will be confined to the four major players: the United States, Britain, France and Germany. The first three have been selected because of their dominant influence on all aspects of alliance politics; Germany is included because of its strategic position in Europe and the impact its status as a nation divided had on political priorities. While Germany did not wield the influence of the other three during this period, it was influenced most directly by NATO strategic decisions, particularly by the Forward Strategy which, in governing allied defence, directed that "aggression must be resisted as far to the East as possible".[3] As such, Germany's input into the decision making process and the results of that process on the front line nation are of interest to this study. These chapters will rely on such classic writings as those of Samuel Hungtington, Catherine McArdle Kelleher, Henry Kissinger, Wilfrid Kohl, Robert Osgood, Andrew Pierre, Hans Speier, as well as more recent works

[3] NATO Facts and Figures, 1976, p. 30.

by John Baylis, Timothy Ireland, and David Schwartz.

In considering the influence of the alliance's four major players on NATO's nuclear reliance, the discussion will turn to examine the effect of this reliance on alliance strategy and on alliance relationships. Essentially, alliance cohesion was strained by the threat to respond massively to Soviet aggression. Such a threat entailed costs which, as Soviet missile technology became increasingly sophisicated, grew out of proportion with the benefits of alliance membership. Moreover, the fact that the Americans jealously guarded the means by which massive retaliation would be carried out both hindered defensive preparations and heightened tensions within the alliance. Thus, the launching of a direct challenge to massive retaliation in the post-Sputnik era created a crisis of confidence.

The massive retaliation critique and limited war proposals will be the focus of Chapter Four. Their influence on the development of flexible response warrants a detailed examination. What factors emerged to erode confidence in massive retaliation as the alliance's deterrent strategy? Why was this so potentially damaging to the alliance? The growing realization that technological advancements and the loss of American nuclear superiority made massive retaliation untenable led to a search for alternative strategies to provide the alliance with a viable deterrent strategy and a means to restore confidence. Limited war strategies became the centre of a debate over how to respond to the Soviet nuclear challenge without threatening suicide. This debate is

influential because it brought out the main strategic and political problems that any new NATO strategy would need to address. In particular, the problem of the Europeans' lack of control over defensive preparations demanded a resolution if alliance cohesion was to hold. Sources for this chapter include Bernard Brodie, Morton Halperin, William Kaufmann, Klaus Knorr, Oskar Morgenstern, Thomas Schelling, and Glenn Snyder.

Nuclear sharing emerged as the most salient issue of the 1960s, as Chapter Five will show. The need to replace massive retaliation with a more credible deterrent strategy became wound up in the European alliance members' struggle to acquire a louder voice in strategic matters. A variety of schemes were proposed to combat European attempts to develop their own nuclear forces. The most influential proposals called for European basing of American intermediate-range ballistic missiles, and for the creation of a Multilateral Force (MLF) in which the Europeans would jointly own and operate a fleet of surface ships armed with Polaris missiles. None of these so-called hardware solutions succeeded, largely because none of them recognized or dealt with the real concerns of the European allies: how and when nuclear weapons would be used. In addition to authors previously mentioned, this chapter draws from the work of J.W. Boulton, Robert Bowie, Alastair Buchan, Frederick Mulley as well as articles in the New York Times and NATO official communiqués.

Chapter Six examines the processes which led to the inclusion of the Europeans in nuclear decision making and to the acceptance of flexible response as a solution to the

alliance's ailments. American Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's new approach to alliance military policy provided the Europeans with a more satisfying role in nuclear deterrence than any of the sharing proposals offered. Through the creation of such instruments as the Nuclear Planning Group, the allies acquired access to and input into the nuclear policy process. This chapter also considers the dramatic changes in the American approach to nuclear deterrence which occurred during the mid-1960s, which both necessitated and ultimately enabled the acceptance of flexible response as NATO's governing strategic concept. Works used in this section include those by Desmond Ball, Paul Buteux, Harland Cleveland, Alain Enthoven and Wayne Smith, William Kaufmann, Robert McNamara, David Schwartz, John Steinbruner, Jane Stromseth and Albert Wohlstetter.

Finally, the conclusion will consider the relevance of the flexible response case study to the current realities of international relations in the 1990s. NATO must now deal with an international security environment which differs substantially from the one in which flexible response was developed. Despite these differences, the alliance's long struggle with flexible response is an encouraging demonstration of the political flexibility that can be expected from an organization already both well-established and forced to contend with a diverse constituency. The history of the development of flexible response would seem to indicate the ability of NATO to accommodate new visions and new members which, it is argued, will be necessary for its continued existence. Although the cautious movement of the alliance may make it slow to change, it will also prevent NATO from making rash decisions. The flexibility of NATO so demonstrated will nonetheless continue to be tested throughout the decade. Moreover, NATO's new

Strategic Concept is more explicitly political than was flexible response, supporting this paper's proposition of the central importance of politics in strategy. The similiarities of the two documents, developed in response to fundamentally different international situations, are interesting and further reflect the primacy of politics in military strategy.

In retrospect, critics of flexible response will argue that it was a militarily unsound strategy that would have doomed Europe, if not the world, had the Soviet Union ever forced NATO to put its strategy to the test. But flexible response *was* constantly being tested, by the political dynamics of both intra-alliance and East-West relations. The fact that the alliance continues to function as an integrated structure, that its members feel reasonably secure of their integrity and, ultimately, that the Soviet Union/Warsaw Pact did not attack Western Europe is a testament to the effectiveness of flexible response.

In many ways NATO's new strategic concept, adopted at the 1991 Rome meeting, is the natural extension of flexible response. By stating unequivocally the importance of politics in the security of the alliance, it legitimizes the political component of flexible response. Indeed, the Rome declaration places the political components of the alliance's defence strategy ahead of military considerations. As one observer recently noted, "[m]ilitary forces have become a much less important, but still discernible, part of security in Europe".[4] This paper will argue that military forces were always only one component of alliance security, and that NATO is well-suited to deal with a change in their relative importance.

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[4]Fred Chernoff, "Arms Control, European Security and the Future of the Western Alliance", Strategic Review (Winter 1992), p. 19.

A new era of international politics is beginning, one which in many ways deviates sharply from the course followed over the last half century. The breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War have redefined the entire sphere of international relations from a bipolar system to one that has yet to emerge clearly. Fear of nuclear war has declined almost to the point of nonexistence. Yet the resulting turmoil in Russia and other former Soviet states, combined with the persistence of conflicts elsewhere in the world, leaves lingering questions about security which suggest many features of old system remain. Currently, the West lacks a strategy to deal with these conflicts. NATO is a possible vehicle through which the West could develop a method to confront the insecurities of the international situation.

CHAPTER ONE: Strategy

Strategy is the use of engagements for the object of the war.

- Carl Von Clausewitz

Strategy is a multifaceted concept with a variety of meanings and uses. Derived from the ancient Greek term for a general and generalship, strategy has been defined as "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil ends of policy",[1] "exploiting military force so as to attain given objects of policy",[2] "the indispensable bridge between arms and policy"[3] and "the relating of military power to political purpose."[4] The common theme throughout these various descriptions is the existence of a relationship between military power and political ends. This relationship may be limited in the sense of describing military manoeuvres, as well as interpreted more broadly to encompass the whole range of factors — societal, economic, geographic, as well as political and military — which influence events on the battlefield and ultimately the nature of the battle itself. It is this more inclusive definition which will be applied in this study.

At its most basic level, strategy can be seen as an organizing tool for the conduct

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[1]Basil Liddell Hart, Strategy: The Indirect Approach 4th ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), p. 335.

[2]Hedley Bull, "Strategic Studies and its Critics", World Politics (II, 1968), p. 593.

[3]Robert Osgood, NATO. The Entangling Alliance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 7.

[4]Colin S. Gray, Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 4.

of war, in either theory or practice. Theories of strategy seek to "investigate the essence of the phenomena of war and to indicate the links between these phenomena and the nature of their constituent parts."[5] By examining the underlying factors of war, strategists attempt to achieve a clearer understanding of war: why it begins, why certain events unfold the way they do, and how these factors influence the outcome. Competing strategies differ both in terms of *which* factors are important and *how much* effect they have on the outcome of the battle. Strategic theory attempts to describe and explain war by reducing war to the sum of its parts, and by developing certain basic principles. It is hoped that by understanding the causes of war future conflicts can be prevented or, at least, the suffering they cause reduced. In this way strategy seeks not only an understanding of the past but also some impact on the future.

It is difficult, however, to view strategic theory solely in the abstract. It is possible in the natural sciences to deduce fundamental principles or laws which will consistently explain certain phenomena. The social sciences, on the other hand, are subject to the whims and desires of the human element which is their focus. To consider strategy only on paper is to ignore Clausewitz's warning of the effects of friction on the seeming simplicity of war.

Strategy must, therefore, be considered in the realm of the practical, in the light

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[5]Carl von Clausewitz, On War, Indexed ed. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 61.

of experience and history. Strategy must be adapted to respond to the conditions which initiate its application, and subsequently to adjust itself as its application alters those conditions. The development of strategy "from idea to doctrine to implementation [is] a progression that in turn will give rise to further ideas".[6] Strategy is dynamic, affecting but also reacting to the situation in which it is applied. It is only from this process of implementation that true strategy will emerge. As Bernard Brodie noted, "strategic thinking, or 'theory' if one prefers, is nothing if not pragmatic. Strategy is a 'how to do it' study, a guide to accomplishing something and doing it efficiently."[7]

An examination of the various etymological and historical contexts of strategy will contribute to this discussion of NATO strategy by illustrating the varied components of strategy, as well as the importance of the political process in the development of military plans. Moreover, the dialectical nature of strategy as it both results from and responds to such factors as history, geography, technology and politics will be demonstrated, with reference to the dialectical role strategy played as implemented by NATO. Furthermore, differences between classical and modern strategy will serve to illuminate the challenge faced by statesmen as they attempted to develop doctrines for the use of nuclear weapons.

Modern strategic thought has evolved from the classic theorizing of such authors

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[6]Peter Paret, "Introduction", in Peter Paret, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 3.

[7]Bernard Brodie, War and Politics (London: Cassell and Company, 1973), p. 452.

as Clausewitz and Machiavelli, whose main contributions were in considering "the fundamental nature of war as a branch of politics".[8] Clausewitz's "revolutionary and defiantly simple" definition serves as a useful starting point for a discussion of strategy.[9] Strategy is a device to explain war, from its technical manoeuvrings on the battlefield and the aim these hope to achieve to the ultimate reason for engaging in combat. Yet for Clausewitz war is ultimately a political act, a fact which directly affects strategy.

In his seminal work, On War, Clausewitz's discussion of the art of war centres on the distinction he makes between *tactics* and *strategy*. Central to this explanation is the concept of the *engagement*, which encompasses the many aspects of combat: weapons, men, fighting, and the effect each has upon the other. It is the "*planning and executing*" of these self-contained engagements which constitutes tactics; "*coordinating* each of [the engagements] with the others in order to further the object of the war" comprises strategy.[10]

The distinction between tactics and strategy is essential, but so too is their interdependence. Clausewitz goes on to state that "tactics teaches *the use of armed forces in the engagement;* strategy, *the use of engagements for the object of the war.*"[11] Tactics

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[8]*ibid.*, p. 438.

[9]Michael Howard, The Causes of War, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 101.

[10]Clausewitz, On War, p. 128. Original emphasis.

[11]*ibid.* Original emphasis.

deals with the operationalization of battle, while strategy seeks to place individual battles in some overriding context. Strategy is therefore the way in which armed force is to be used to achieve the object of the war, which is *political.* And according to Clausewitz, "the political object — the original motive for the war — will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires."[12]

Clausewitz's definition illustrates the interaction between the political and military spheres in determining strategy. The political aim establishes the military goal, and the military in turn determines what political goals are attainable. Military realities may force an adjustment of political aims, and this modification may in turn require new military plans. The dynamic nature of strategy is evident here.

The interaction between political and military spheres is further emphasized in Clausewitz's famous phrase: "War is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means".[13] For Clausewitz, war is ultimately a political act, its course guided by a "political object" which serves as "the original motive for the war."[14] This stress on the essentially political nature of war supports the primacy of politics proposition made in the introduction; immediate goals are set by the military in order to meet over-riding political goals.

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[12]*ibid.*, p. 81.

[13]*ibid.*, p. 69.

[14]*ibid.*, p. 81.

Clausewitz's contrasting definitions of tactics and strategy further represent the dichotomy of strategy: there exists the technical, more narrow, interpretation of strategy, contrasted by the broader, more inclusive definition by which strategy is "based on, and may include, the development, intellectual mastery, and utilization of all of the state's resources for the purpose of implementing its policy in war."[15] For NATO, this inclusive definition is particularly important, as will be shown.

Three centuries earlier, Machiavelli also recognized the interdependence of military and political institutions. The central thesis throughout all of his writing is that a strong military will permit a stable government, which must in turn create favourable conditions for the effective functioning of the military. War for Machiavelli was a contest of wills, the aim being to subject the enemy to your will, which was defined ultimately by the political agenda: "What the appropriate means are — what the correct strategy is — to carry out this aim will depend on the particular circumstances under which a campaign is conducted."[16]

The development of strategic thought has continued throughout the twentieth

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[15]Paret, Makers of Modern Strategy, p. 3.

[16]Felix Gilbert, "Machiavelli: The Renaissance of the Art of War", in Paret, Makers of Modern Strategy, p. 27. Gilbert argues that Machiavelli did not fully comprehend the importance of this concept, emphasizing instead the technical-military sphere and concentrating on the development of certain norms and rational laws of conduct in war. Nevertheless, Clausewitz embraced Machiavelli's central concept of the nature of war as the starting point for any analysis (pp. 29-31).

century by both practitioners and theorizers of war. General Andre Beaufre defined strategy not as a doctrine, but as "a method of thought, the object of which is to codify events, set them in order of priority and then choose the most effective course of action."[17] More recently, one author has conceptualized strategy as having both a *re*active and a *pro*active sense. "Strategy can be defined as the set of military, economic, political and cultural policies adopted to respond to external challenges — the weak definition; or the measures adopted to influence the external environment in which the state finds itself — the strong definition."[18] It is more likely that strategy encompasses both senses, and that in reacting to the external environment a strategy will dialectically affect that environment whether intended or not.

The dialectical forces of strategy become evident in what Luttwak has termed "grand strategy", where domestic and international political realities interact with military capabilities to produce strategic requirements. Luttwak describes a variety of "levels" of strategy — from the technical workings of weapons to their tactical uses in battle and the interplay of battles in the theatre of warfare — whose interaction produces synergy. Each level affects and is affected by the other, so that no event or capability in a military effort is autonomous. Moreover, "the entire conduct of warfare and peacetime preparation for war are in turn subordinate expressions of national struggles that unfold at the highest

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[17]Andre Beaufre, An Introduction to Strategy. Translated by Major-General R.H. Barry. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1965, p.13).

[18]John Roper, "Shaping Strategy without the Threat", in Adelphi Papers 257: America's Role in a Changing World, Part II. (Winter 1990/91), p. 76.

level of *grand strategy,* where all that is military happens within the much broader context of domestic governance, international politics, economic activity, and their ancillaries."[19] Strategy results from a combination of military and political, domestic and international factors.

The synergism of these factors has particular relevance with regard to multi-member organizations such as NATO: in order for alliance members to agree on military equipment and use, they must first agree on the objectives which such use aims to achieve. In the NATO context, strategy serves as an organizing tool by coordinating "the military resources of the alliance to fulfil basic political objectives."[20] But it is precisely the difficulty in agreeing on these "basic political objectives" that was at the heart of alliance debate. Domestic political environments, not just international ones, shape and condition foreign policies. It is because of strategy's existence in the 'two worlds' of international and domestic politics that military policy is influenced by and must react to both foreign and domestic policy. "The competition between the external goals of the government as a collective entity in a world of other governments and the domestic goals of the government and other groups in society is the heart of military policy".[21] In the development of military policy, governments must consider their

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[19]Edward Luttwak, Strategy. The Logic of War and Peace (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 70.

[20]Jane E. Stromseth, The Origins of Flexible Response, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 5.

[21]Samuel Huntington, The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 3.

domestic political constituents in their attempts to secure foreign policy goals. Military policy must be palatable to the people it is designed to serve. Yet it must also be in line with the goals of other nations, if any unity is to be achieved. This is not always easy, and not always possible.

The differing domestic situations of the NATO allies contributed in no small way to the difficulties in developing NATO security policy. For the allies, the challenge of reconciling domestic with foreign policy was further complicated by the need to reconcile the domestic and foreign policies of each member with that of the others. The fact that strategy must be acceptable "to the constituency on whose behalf it is designed"[22] and at the same time compatible with the policies of other governments is indicative of the range of factors that must be taken into consideration when formulating strategy. And when nuclear weapons are added to the equation, the problems created by the need to accommodate this range of factors increase exponentially.

The introduction of nuclear weapons added a new and complex dimension to strategy. Nuclear strategy has been defined as "the art of the impossible": art, "because nuclear strategy is more concerned with the intangibles of politics, psychology, personality and perception"; and impossible, "because in the final analysis nuclear weapons are too horrific for their use to be contemplated in a rational calculation of

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[22]Paul Buteux, Strategy, Doctrine, and the Politics of Alliance, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), p. 4.

possibilities."[23] Since the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagaski, no nuclear weapons have ever been used in battle. Given this void of historical precedents, nuclear strategy is effectively "the study of the nonuse of [nuclear] weapons."[24] The development of nuclear strategy was driven by the need to deal with rapid technological advances and, as this thesis will show, is very much rooted in the experiences of the superpowers.

Initially, nuclear weapons were envisioned as the perfect tool for fulfilling the theories of strategic bombardment. Developed in the 1920s and 1930s, these theories had been used in World World II with less conclusive results than predicted. With the jump in destructiveness offered by nuclear weapons, the air power enthusiasts believed their theories were vindicated. Moreover, "the eventual marriage of nuclear fission with the sort of rocket technology exhibited in the German V-2s promised an unstoppable weapon."[25] Nuclear weapons, it was thought, would focus strategy on the role of offense.

The very destructive capabilities which made nuclear weapons seem so attractive soon cast doubt on their usefulness. Western strategists were confronted with the

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[23]Gerald Segal, "Strategy and Survival", in Segal et al., Nuclear War, Nuclear Peace (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 1.

[24]Lawrence Freedman, "The First Two Generations of Nuclear Strategists", in Paret, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy, p. 735.

[25]*ibid.*, p. 736.

dilemma that these weapons were actually too powerful to be militarily practical or morally acceptable. And with the development by the Soviet Union of nuclear capabilities, the risks posed to the members of the alliance became apparent; for if both sides could threaten catastrophic damage, the initiatiation of nuclear bombing amounted to suicide. This stalemate led nuclear strategists to switch emphasis to defence, and the deterrence of nuclear weapons use. This, however, was no easy feat, given the historical advantage conferred upon the side in a conflict which could first attain the upper hand. Thereupon followed an offense-defence duel: "As new offensive means were found, prodigious efforts were made to develop countermeasures, which in turn stimulated innovations in the offense."[26]

As the superpowers acquired the nuclear capabilities to annihilate each other it was argued that, given the suicidal implications, the use of nuclear weapons would be deterred automatically by their possession by both sides in a conflict. Others cautioned that deterrence was not guaranteed by the mere possession of nuclear weapons, and that such premises were dangerously naive. Albert Wohlstetter, for example, was one of the leading proponents during this time of the view that nuclear weapons, despite their destructive potential, had not eliminated the possibility of war. He argued that "to deter an attack means being able to strike back in spite of it. It means, in other words, a

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[26]*ibid.*, p. 755.

capability to strike second."[27]

Under the influence of Wohlstetter and other analysts of his time, nuclear strategy evolved toward means which were likely to enhance deterrence. Emphasis was placed on establishing a "second strike capability" by making one's nuclear forces invulnerable in order to remove an attacker's incentive for a first strike. In this way a "balance of terror" could be maintained. But the possibility still existed that conflict could result in the outbreak of hostilities and the initiation — accidental or otherwise — of nuclear warfare. Thus nuclear strategy sought to keep conflict at as low a level as possible and keep damage, particularly civilian damage, to a minimum to improve the chances for swift a resolution to the conflict.[28] A key change to strategy in the nuclear age was the appreciation for the utter destruction of society which would result from a full-scale or prolonged war.

The debate on what constituted an appropriate strategy for nuclear weapons took place at the same as these weapons were being deployed. Theories of nuclear strategy often conflicted with traditional military war preparations; the result was that nuclear strategy both influenced and was influenced by events in the real world.

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[27]Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror", Foreign Affairs Vol. 37 (January 1959), p. 213.

[28]*ibid.*, pp. 230-231.

Deterrence, Defence, Diplomacy

For NATO, the expressed aim of strategy was preservation of the member states' "territorial integrity, political independence [and] security" from the threat posed to these fundamental rights by the Soviet Union and its East European satellites.[29] As it was set out to accomplish this aim, NATO strategy can be broken down into three components:[30] deterrence, on the basis that the alliance was fundamentally concerned with *preventing* a Soviet/Warsaw Pact attack on Western Europe; defence, which is a vital element of deterrence; and diplomacy, because "at the broader political level, NATO strategy must serve as a cohesive foundation for diplomacy with the Soviet Union aimed at diffusing political conflicts and seeking a more stable relationship."[31]

Deterrence has always been the most fundamental aim of alliance strategy, driven in particular by the memory of two world wars and West European resolve to avoid another occupation. The great destructive power of nuclear weapons forced strategists to seek ways of reducing or even eliminating war, particularly large-scale nuclear war. The interest in deterrence, therefore, sprang from the notion "that the primary function of military force should be to prevent the use of military force by one's opponents".[32] The

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[29]The North Atlantic Treaty, Washington, D.C., (April 4, 1949), Article 4.

[30]See in particular: Stromseth, Origins of Flexible Response, pp. 5-8; Osgood, NATO, pp. 9-11.

[31]Stromseth, Origins of Flexible Response, p. 5.

[32]Morton Halperin, Contemporary Military Strategy (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1972), p. 10.

incredible capabilities of nuclear weapons turned traditional notions of war upside down. The aim of strategy in the nuclear age became the art of how *not* to use one's most powerful weapon.

A seemingly straightforward concept, deterrence "refers to the adoption by states of policies and strategies that seek through the manipulation of threats to stop an adversary or putative enemy from doing what he might otherwise do."[33] Deterrence is thus concerned with the *prevention* of some action deemed harmful to one's interests. As Craig and George outline, one must first decide which interests are most important; in NATO's case, however, the determination of vital interests was not necessarily a simple task. The second step is to make a commitment to defend one's interests if challenged, supported by threats of action which must be both credible and sufficiently potent to deter the enemy from action.[34]

These 'threats of action' fall into two basic categories: deterrence by denial, and deterrence by punishment. While the former seeks to deter by denying an opponent the acquisition of his objective (i.e., denying him victory), the latter purports to inflict great pain upon him if he dares try to achieve his aim (i.e., the costs of victory will outweigh

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[33]Paul Buteux, "The Theory and Practice of Deterrence", in David Haglund and Michael Hawes, eds. World Politics: Power, Interdependence and Dependence. (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1990), p. 83.

[34]Gordon Craig and Alexander George, Force and Statecraft. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 172.

any benefits). Although denial and punishment are both means of accomplishing the end of deterrence, there is a fundamental difference between these two conceptions which is essential to understanding NATO's security dilemmas. Deterrence by denial is "the classical strategy of defense" which, in NATO's case, means "physically preventing the Warsaw Pact from occupying Western Europe."[35] On the other hand, deterrence by punishment or retaliation is the threat to inflict damage in response to an attack but not necessarily directly associated with that attack. The advent of nuclear weapons with tremendous destructive power gave rise to "the idea that deterrence could be achieved by threat of punishment *other than those associated with denial*".[36] In the case of NATO, American nuclear strikes against the Soviet homeland could be threatened in retaliation to an attack on Europe. The distinction is particularly relevant to this study and explains some of the controversy surrounding the evolution of NATO strategy.

The requirements of deterrence, either by denial or punishment, are fourfold: capability, credibility, communication and cost effectiveness.[37] Initially, it is necessary to possess the military capabilities to carry out threats made in defence of one's interests.

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[35]Gregory F. Treverton, "Theatre Nuclear Forces: Military Logic and Political Purpose", in Boutwell, Doty and Treverton, eds., The Nuclear Confrontation in Europe (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 97-98.

[36]Barry Buzan, An Introduction to Strategic Studies (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 136.

[37]These distinctions are based on those made by Phil Williams, "Nuclear Deterrence", in John Baylis et al., eds., Contemporary Strategy I: Theories and Policies. 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987), pp. 116-121; Buteux, "The Theory and Practice of Deterrence", pp. 85-88; and Craig and George, Force and Statecraft, pp. 172-173.

Secondly, since pure physical capabilities are somewhat artificial, one must convey a willingness and intention to actually use these capabilities and carry out the threat. This willingness must be successfully communicated to the adversary, since the purpose of deterrence is to *avoid* the actual resort to military force. And finally, a cost effectiveness analysis undertaken by the statesmen involved must conclude that the benefits of an action outweigh the costs of that action (which contributes to the credibility component).

Broken down this way, the essentially psychological nature of deterrence becomes apparent. Deterrence is the attempt to frighten the adversary into inaction by affecting his *perception* of gains versus losses.[38] Thus, deterrence becomes something of a guessing game, a "bargaining or blackmail process ... which must consider the motives and expectations of opponents."[39] The importance played by perception in the calculation of deterrence alters substantially the traditional aim of strategy, so that "the political and psychological consequences of the nature and disposition of armed forces may be the primary function, not just the by-product, of military strategy."[40] In this sense, and considering the focus of deterrence is events *prior* to the outbreak of war, deterrence — especially nuclear deterrence — becomes less a military function and more a political concern: "Nuclear strategy was more directly political than traditional strategy

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[38]Williams, "Nuclear Deterrence", p. 115.

[39]George Quester, Nuclear Diplomacy: The First Twenty-Five Years (New York: Dunellan, 1970), p. xvii.

[40]Osgood, NATO, p. 5.

because it sought to work on the decision-making of political leaders, rather than to compete with the military skills of rival military commanders."[41] The political nature of deterrence gradually effected a move of the development of strategy from the military into the civilian sphere, and "the essence of the strategy that emerged was that any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons should be seen as a supremely political act."[42]

Deterrence policies carry implications for deterrers as well as deterrees. To the extent that a deterrence strategy must satisfy those it is designed to protect, one can see European reliance on extended deterrence and the American nuclear guarantee as the cause of significant intra-alliance problems. The most significant and enduring question in the minds of Europeans during the formulation of NATO strategy was that of credibility: while Europeans were afraid that in an actual conflict restricted to Europe the Americans would be unwilling to use nuclear weapons for fear of invoking nuclear retaliation on themselves (or, as the saying goes, trade Hamburg for Chicago), the paradoxical position was concerned about the actual *use* of nuclear weapons in Europe, with catastrophic results.

Reliance on the American nuclear guarantee created further problems for the credibility of NATO's nuclear deterrence, and led to divisive debates on the issue of

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[41]Buzan, An Introduction to Strategic Studies, p. 141.

[42]Lawrence Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 176.

nuclear control. Writing during the NATO strategic debates of the 1960s, Strausz-Hupe, Dougherty and Kintner argued:

> the deterrent will not be credible unless NATO provides for the automatic employment of nuclear weapons in defensive configurations under circumstances stipulated in advance by the appropriate political authorities. *Credibility, as long as it is predicated upon delayed decision-making in Washington, shrinks to a fifty-fifty probability: Either Washington makes the decision to use nuclear weapons or it does not.*[43]

It will be shown that this issue was central in alliance strategic deliberations. At this point, however, it is clear that the overwhelming desire to avoid a third major conflict on European soil ensured that NATO policy was firmly based on deterrence.

Defence, the second element of NATO strategy, is a fundamental part of deterrence but must be distinguished from it. As Paul Buteux notes, to equate the two "ignores a crucial difference between defending against an actual resort to force on the part of an adversary and dissuading an adversary from launching a military challenge" *in the first place*, which is the purview of deterrence.[44] To the extent that deterrence was the alliance's first priority, defence will be considered here in terms of its contribution to that goal.

It was widely assumed that deterrence by punishment would be accomplished by

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[43]Robert Strausz-Hupe, James Dougherty and William Kintner, Building the Atlantic World (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 104. Emphasis in original.

[44]Buteux, "Theory and Practice of Deterrence", pp. 87-89. See also Buzan, An Introduction to Strategic Studies, pp. 135-7.

nuclear weapons, the point being to dissuade the enemy from attacking by the threat of damage greater than any gain. Moreover, any first-use of nuclear weapons by Soviet/Warsaw Pact forces would be returned in kind. To fulfil the NATO objective of deterrence by denial, however, the allies would have to be able to mount a defence capable of denying to an invader the achievement of his aim, i.e., the takeover of Western Europe.

There were two sides to the defence issue. On the one hand were the quantitative and qualitative questions: economic and political cost versus military and psychological necessity, conventional versus nuclear:

> Its [NATO's] objective was to not fight a war — not in defense and still less in attack — but rather to have and make visible the defensive capabilities that would make the choice of war clearly and deeply unattractive to the Soviet Union, and thus also make Soviet attempts at intimidation unrewarding.[45]

Just how much force was enough to accomplish this was the subject of great debate. On the other hand was the argument that *any* preparation to defend against a Warsaw Pact invasion of Western Europe undermined the credibility of deterrence by punishment threatened by the American nuclear arsenal. As Jane Stromseth notes, "not only the plausibility, but also the merits of constructing a major non-nuclear defence of Western Europe [was] a matter of intra-alliance dispute virtually from NATO's inception."[46]

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[45]European Security Study, Strengthening Conventional Deterrence in Europe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 7.

[46]Stromseth, Origins of Flexible Response, p. 7.

The ebb and flow of the debate between and within these two view points profoundly shaped NATO's military posture: as the deterrence by punishment supporters gained ground, the allies' desire to contribute to their mutual defence declined in favour of reliance on American (and to a lesser extent British and French) long-range nuclear weapons. The rise in popularity of American extended deterrence generated concern over the extent to which Americans could be counted on to protect their distant European partners, and fuelled calls for increased conventional capabilities.

This debate on the role of conventional defence was accompanied by an economic rationale in favour of nuclear weapons, that they were cheaper and required less manpower than conventional armaments. A historically pessimistic assessment of the NATO-Warsaw Pact conventional balance contributed to a sense of futility regarding conventional defence preparations. The prestigious position held by nuclear weapons further affected commitment to conventional forces, on the basis that these "newfangled items" held more public appeal than the "prosaic accoutrements of the foot soldier,"[47] and therefore these expenditures could be more easily justified. The dramatic increase in American nuclear weapons stockpiles throughout the 1950s (first in the U.S. and then in Europe) further jeopardized the quality of conventional defence, ensuring that it would be approached in a haphazard way depending on prevailing political opinion at the time.

[47]Maxwell Taylor, Swords and Ploughshares (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), p. 171. Quoted in Stromseth, Origins of Flexible Response, p. 24.

That the third function of NATO strategy deals with diplomacy is not surprising, given that "security problems are, at root, political problems which, for their resolution, must be addressed in political terms."[48] NATO's most fundamental objective was to avoid a war with the Soviet Union, and ultimately "to contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations."[49] The diplomatic function of strategy also has an essential intra-alliance component which rivals in importance peaceful overtures toward the Soviet Union.

The goal of NATO strategy was to deter Soviet/Warsaw Pact forces from attacking by convincing the Soviets they could not succeed. This was achieved in part by the presenting of a united front for the allies. To the extent that alliance cohesion contributed to deterrence, then development and maintenance of that cohesion — i.e., intra-alliance relationships — were critical elements of strategy. As Robert Osgood notes, "military strategy (in the full sense of the word) is a major medium through which the allies exert their political influence, not only with respect to the adversary but also with respect to each other."[50] Intra-alliance politics took precedence over and, in fact shaped, the East-West relationship as a whole.

The development of NATO strategy served in many ways as a mechanism to order

[48]Gray, Strategic Studies, p. 69.

[49]The North Atlantic Treaty, 1949, Article 2.

[50]Osgood, NATO, p. 349.

relations between the allies. Nations jockeyed for position within the NATO hierarchy by throwing their support behind one defence theory over another, by proposing scenarios in which they had 'prestigious' duties: "debates over military strategy in the alliance [were] not only about the best way to deter and relate to the Soviet Union but [were] also about the appropriate leadership and division of labour within the alliance."[51]

As will be shown, however, this unified front was usually obtained by compromise. It can be argued that some concessions are necessary to accommodate the interests of such a diverse group; on the other hand, the process may also be seen as glossing over fundamental disputes leading to the implementation of temporary solutions which ultimately only exacerbate problems. The function of diplomacy within NATO strategy can therefore not be overlooked.

Diplomacy is a fundamental component of strategy, as important in NATO's case as deterrence and defence. The necessity of incorporating these three elements meant that strategy would often be a political compromise taking into consideration the requirements of fifteen different national priorities. The ambiguous flexible response doctrine and the complex history of its adoption as the alliance's deterrent strategy amply illustrate this.

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[51]Stromseth, Origins of Flexible Response, p. 8.

CHAPTER TWO: The Nuclearization of NATO

The development of NATO strategy throughout the 1950s was a tumultuous process. In the debate over how best to secure the defence of NATO, the allies were influenced by far more than purely strategic considerations. Domestic political and economic constraints, inevitable in democratic nations; power relationships, and the resulting in-fighting among the allies as they jockeyed for positions of influence and prestige; and the inertia of bureaucratic decisions all created a path down which NATO was compelled to travel. The background for these problems was set by the unique nature of NATO itself: as a permanent military commitment under multinational control, NATO represented a drastic departure from traditional security arrangements requiring an adjustment to the way in which strategy would be developed.[1]

The adoption of flexible response in 1967 seemingly solved NATO's defence dilemmas and calmed, for a time, the debate which had threatened to split the alliance apart. In retrospect flexible response has been widely criticized as being nothing more than a band-aid solution. It can be argued, however, that the strategic concept did in fact do what it was supposed to: that is, ensure the territorial integrity of the member states. Additionally, more than just a by-product of the doctrine was the maintenance of the political integrity of the alliance, a fact which in no small measure contributed to the

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[1]William P. Snyder, The Politics of British Defense Policy, 1945-1962 (Ohio State University Press, 1964), p. 18.

ultimate goal of defence.

Flexible Response

The final communiqué of the North Atlantic Council's December 1967 Ministerial Meeting described flexible response as being:

> based upon a flexible and balanced range of appropriate responses, conventional and nuclear, to all levels of aggression or threats of aggression. These responses, subject to appropriate political control, are designed, first to deter aggression and thus preserve peace; but, should aggression unhappily occur, to maintain the security and integrity of the North Atlantic Treaty area within the concept of forward defence.[2]

Flexible response, as embodied in Military Committee document 14/3 ("Overall Strategic Concept for the Defence of the NATO Area"), conceptualized a deterrent strategy that aimed to prevent hostilities from erupting in Europe by threatening a range of military responses to aggression. Incorporating both nuclear and conventional forces, flexible response provided NATO with three possible responses should deterrence fail: (1) direct defence, at the level (conventional or nuclear) chosen by the aggressor; (2) deliberate escalation, if direct defence fails; and (3) general nuclear response, as "the ultimate guarantor of deterrence".[3] The implementation of such a strategy required NATO to possess a triad of forces: conventional, tactical nuclear and strategic nuclear.

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[2]North Atlantic Council, Communiqué, Ministerial Meeting 14 December 1967, Texts of Final Communiques: 1949-1974 (Brussels: NATO Information Service, 1975), p. 197.

[3]Bernard Rogers, "Greater Flexibility for NATO's Flexible Response", Strategic Review, Vol. 11, No. 2, Spring 1983, p. 12. See also Jane Stromseth, The Origins of Flexible Response (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 175; Richard Hart Sinnreich, "NATO's Doctrinal Dilemma", Orbis, Vol. 19, No. 2, Summer 1975, p. 461.

The first option, direct defence, was designed essentially as a conventional response; however, nuclear weapons would not be precluded at this level if their use was initiated by the Soviet Union. In pursuit of direct defence, NATO forces would perform a limited function, resisting a Soviet/Warsaw Pact invasion long enough to give both sides a chance to consider their next move. The aim of direct defence was to defeat a limited aggression and re-establish deterrence but, if this could not be accomplished, then at least "deny an aggressor any prospect of quick victory ... [and] allow for sufficient time to enable the arrival of reinforcements and/or to enable the alliance to take a considered decision to escalate to the use of nuclear weapons."[4]

In the event that conventional forces could not contain a Warsaw Pact attack, deliberate escalation to the nuclear level would be invoked. To this end, the possibility of first use of nuclear weapons by NATO was central to alliance strategy, particularly in the light of Warsaw Pact conventional superiority. "Inherent in this level of response is the concept of controlled, progressive nuclear escalation if need be (and, a number of strategists would add, the risk that the process of nuclear escalation could become *un*controlled)."[5] The possibility that nuclear weapon employment could spiral out of control was key to the flexible response doctrine. This ambiguity was further heightened by the nature of escalation: escalation could be both vertical (from conventional to

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[4]W.W. Schmidt, "The Strategy of Flexible Response", Canadian Defence Quarterly, Vol. 17 Special, No. 1, 1988, p. 50. Emphasis in original.

[5]*ibid.*, p. 52.

nuclear weapons) and horizontal (from one theatre to another, i.e., from Europe to Soviet territory).[6] That the decision to escalate would be a "political-military" one underscored the difficulty an aggressor would face in predicting NATO's response to his actions.

Finally, as a last option flexible response called for general nuclear response, which entailed the employment of the strategic nuclear forces of both Britain and the United States. Although this was NATO strategy, the decision to employ strategic nuclear forces would have to be taken by the American and British governments.

Supporters of flexible response argued that the strength of the concept was its ambiguity: aggressors would be deterred by the impossibility of predicting NATO's response, and by the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used, with catastrophic results. Despite assurances that this ambiguity enhanced flexible response, it sentenced NATO's strategy to doubt and circumspection for all of the 24 years it served the alliance.

Given the extent of the debate engendered by flexible response, the origins of its ambiguity are worthy of further inspection. Why did the alliance adopt such a contentious strategy? Why was flexible response so ambiguous? It is argued that flexible response was the result of a highly political process which served mostly political

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[6]Gary Guertner, "Flexible Options in NATO Military Strategy: Deterrent or Escalation Trap?" in Comparative Strategy, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1989, pp. 335-6.

interests, despite the essential military nature of the alliance. Moreover, the ambiguity resulted not from any conscious design but rather emerged gradually in response to competing interests within the alliance, and as a means to resolve such varying interests which have at their root the allies' predilection for nuclear weapons.

NATO's Nuclear Bias

> Within five years after its establishment in 1949 NATO became firmly committed to a general strategic plan that relied primarily on the use, or threat of use, of American nuclear weapons in defense of Europe to deter Soviet aggression.[7]

The entrenchment of nuclear weapons as an integral part of NATO strategy occurred early in the allies' relationship, based on a variety factors including but by no means restricted to military considerations. Domestic demands determined responses to the rapidly changing international environment, which was profoundly coloured by the larger-than-life struggle between communism and democracy. The political demands for nuclear weapons far outweighed their strategic utility even before any detailed investigation into their military effectiveness was initiated: "A formal American commitment to the security of Western Europe, backed by the US strategic nuclear arsenal, was regarded as *essential to restore political confidence* and stability in Western Europe."[8] The battle between economic ability, political necessity, and military security profoundly shaped the discourse of the decade. During this formative stage of NATO's

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[7]David Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1983), p. 17.

[8]Stromseth, The Origins of Flexible Response, p. 11. Emphasis added.

development beliefs were established which were frequently questioned but rarely shaken.

The Americans influenced the development of NATO strategy during the 1950s on two fronts. The role of the US as the dominant military power in the alliance meant that independent American defence preparations directly affected European military planning, particularly since the US saw its Atlantic neighbours as integral to its own security. This position was strengthened by American supremacy in nuclear weapons and the US strategic deterrent monopoly. Given the influential role of the US in ensuring European security, changes in American military strategy could hardly be ignored by those who depended on it most. Secondly, the designation of an American officer as Supreme Allied Commander who would oversee the integrated European defence force ensured the US a central position in the direction of NATO strategy.[9] However, the supplying of men and arms to carry out these plans was always the prerogative of individual nations, an arrangement not always conducive to plans devised by SACEUR; while military/strategic considerations drove SACEUR, European leaders had to respond to domestic political and economic concerns first. NATO strategy can be seen as the synergistic result of the interaction of these often conflicting forces.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was conceived in 1949 as a response by the West to the threat of communism and economic collapse in the aftermath of World War II. Driven from its traditional isolationism by the realization that American security

[9]NATO Facts and Figures, 1976, p. 29.

was intimately connected with the economic, political and military strength of Europe,[10] the US pledged its political support to Europe, backed by American nuclear weapons. With the Soviet acquisition of nuclear power in August 1949, the communist take-over of China and the Korean invasion, political support became military aid: American troops were committed to the alliance to bolster the questionable "adequacy of European defense preparations" but also to "spur the Europeans to greater defense efforts."[11] The American expectation was that Europe would eventually possess the economic and military strength to care for its own defence.

A massive American conventional rearmament was initiated under the Truman Administration based on the findings contained in National Security Council Document 68. Adopted by the US in 1950, NSC 68 rationalized expensive conventional improvements on the basis of burgeoning Soviet nuclear capabilities. It identified 1954 as the "year of maximum danger": at that time, the Soviet Union would possess sufficient nuclear capabilities to launch a devastating attack on the US.[12] This would upset what the US perceived as the existing balance, in which Soviet conventional superiority was

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[10]Examples of this line of thinking can be found in statements made by numerous influential decision makers in American government. See, for example, Secretary of State Dean Acheson's remarks at the 1951 Senate Hearings, Assignment of Ground Forces of the United States to Duty in the European Area, pp. 78-79, cited in Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas.

[11]Timothy Ireland, "Building NATO's Nuclear Posture 1950-65", in Jeffrey Boutwell, *et al.*, eds. The Nuclear Confrontation in Europe (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 6.

[12]Samuel Huntington, The Common Defense (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 50-51;57.

offset by American nuclear superiority. Thus the answer to the threat which lay four years down the road was a conventional buildup equivalent to that which had been obtained by the Soviets.

This could not be achieved without European participation, and in fact the increase in US defence expenditures was granted by Congress on this very condition.[13] Effective local defence on the Continent was deemed necessary "to defeat a small-scale Communist attack or to delay a major attack long enough" for American strategic bombers to respond with nuclear weapons.[14] American initiatives to restructure European defences centred on the creation of the European Defence Community (EDC), the imposition of force goals as determined at Lisbon in 1952, and German participation. "The EDC, by providing the framework for adding 12 German divisions to Western strength, made it possible for NATO to embrace both the 'forward defence' strategy (a defence as close to the inner-German border as possible), and the Lisbon objectives calling for 96 divisions (35-40 combat ready) and 9,000 aircraft by 1954."[15]

The proposed EDC was fraught with controversy from the beginning, and the idea was eventually defeated by the French Assembly in 1954. Achievement of the Lisbon force goals was found to be politically and economically impossible by the end of 1952

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[13]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 20.

[14]Huntington, The Common Defense, p. 62.

[15]Ireland, "Building NATO's Nuclear Posture 1950-65", p. 7.

— a mere ten months after their initial acceptance. German admission to the Western defence community was an equally controversial issue, owing to the lingering memory of German domination of the Continent. German participation was eventually secured, but not until its acceptance into NATO in 1955; it was nearly three years later before German troops took to the field "in substantial numbers".[16]

European failure to comply with the conventional rearmament schedule was paralleled by a change in American attitude to this issue. The Eisenhower Administration came into office committed to balancing the budget and reconciling foreign policy needs with domestic economic realities.[17] The policies which resulted from this budget-conscious government were known collectively as the New Look. The rivalry between domestic economic requirements and defence goals would henceforth be a persistent feature of allied security policy.[18]

The most profound feature of the New Look was the emphasis placed on nuclear weapons to secure the defence of the West. The priority on conventional buildup was downgraded and the notion of preparing for 1954 as the year of greatest peril to the West was abandoned in favour of a "long-haul" strategy: containment of Soviet expansionism would continue to be a challenge to the West well into the future and thus required a

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[16]*ibid.*, p. 8.

[17]Huntington, The Common Defense, p. 64.

[18]Robert Osgood, NATO: The Entangling Alliance. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 102.

more moderated defence effort sustainable over a period of years rather than the one-time attainment of massive military strength pursued under Truman.

Central to this strategy was greater reliance on nuclear airpower and acceptance of the view that any future war, whether general or limited, would entail the use of nuclear weapons.[19] This position was elaborated in NSC 162/2, the basic planning document of the New Look, which authorized military commanders to plan for the use of nuclear weapons in future conflicts. The document outlined the provision of "tactical atomic support for US or allied military forces in general war or in local aggression whenever the employment of tactical weapons would be militarily advantageous."[20] Paving the way for Dulles' massive retaliation speech, NSC 162/2 "emphasized both the importance of tactical nuclear weapons and the role of strategic airpower as a deterrent to aggression."[21]

Secretary of State Dulles' famous January 12, 1954 speech explaining the Administration's New Look illustrated the centrality of nuclear weapons to the achievement of the government's aims. In the pursuit of a "maximum deterrent at bearable cost", Dulles announced that the government "had decided to 'depend primarily

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[19]Huntington, The Common Defense, pp. 73-74.

[20]Quoted in Stromseth, Origins of Flexible Response, p. 13.

[21]Huntington, The Common Defense, p. 74.

upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our choosing'".[22] Dulles argued that nuclear weapons were a more efficient means of deterring Soviet expansionism not only militarily but also in terms of prevailing budget constraints. "The extension of this retaliatory threat to cover Soviet attack on NATO Europe came to be called extended deterrence."[23] By pledging to protect Europe against Soviet attack with the threat of nuclear retaliation *at American discretion*, the Americans implicitly supported a strategy of deterrence by punishment for NATO.

The New Look's emphasis on nuclear weapons did not, however, preclude a conventional option in the alliance's defence strategy. This function was to be performed by America's European allies. Equally concerned with economic as with military strength, Eisenhower's new policy — in terms of its effect on NATO Europe — was intended to lessen the harsh burden imposed on the European allies by the Lisbon force goals and the expectations of the Truman government; but it did not forego the necessity of strong local defence. Dulles later emphasized the importance of European conventional forces in a written clarification of his speech "to counter any impression that the United States might renounce local defense in Europe".[24] What the strategy of massive retaliation did imply was the compartmentalization of defence contributions of the allies, with the Americans responsible for nuclear deterrence and the European allies providing

[22]Quoted in Osgood, NATO, p. 103.

[23] Jonathon Dean, "Military Security in Europe", Foreign Affairs (Vol. 66, Fall 1987), p. 6.

[24]Osgood, NATO, p. 103.

conventional ground resistance. Although this national specialization might be *militarily* advantageous, the "grossly unequal distribution of sacrifices, such as would be imposed by their [the Europeans'] continued rearmament for conventional warfare while the United States reduced its conventional forces in favor of a nuclear strategy, would scarcely be compatible with the *political* requirements of allied collaboration".[25]

The effect of this division of labour on intra-NATO relations came to a head in the late 1950s and early 1960s as the nuclear aspirations of the allies developed. But for the time being, the obvious contradictions inherent in this strategy set the stage for one of the most fundamental and long-lasting points of contention to plague U.S.-NATO relations: that is, "if the major deterrent rested with U.S. atomic capability, what purpose was served by expending scarce resources on developing a coherent and strong European ground defense?"[26] Moreover, the logic with which the US justified its new defence policy was quickly extended to the realm of European security: "if nuclear firepower compensated for conventional manpower in America's armed forces, logically it should do the same for NATO as a whole".[27] The adoption of massive retaliation by the United States encouraged European resistance against meeting the Lisbon force goals, and

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[25]*ibid.*, p. 104. Emphasis in original.

[26]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 24. Underlying this controversy was the problem created by the *de facto* adoption of a strategy of deterrence by punishment. For the Europeans, this type of deterrence ought to have been less desirable because it might entail the occupation of or at least attack on their territory. Economically and politically, however, it was easier to sell because it shifted the burden to the Americans. This short term gain would eventually lead to longer term problems.

[27]Huntington, The Common Defense, p. 104.

solidified what Schwartz has called NATO's "nuclear addiction".

The New Look and the development in the early 1950s of relatively low-yield nuclear warheads designed for use on the battlefield quickly took effect on NATO. As early as 1952 Army Chief of Staff General J. Lawton Collins intimated that tactical nuclear weapons might "enable NATO to achieve its security objectives without meeting the Lisbon force goals" because they would "'result ultimately in the ability to do the job with a smaller number of divisions'".[28] Despite subsequent studies which concluded that nuclear warfare would require more rather than less manpower and the fact that the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 prohibited the sharing of American nuclear secrets with the allies, the incorporation of nuclear weapons into NATO strategy was actively sought.

In December 1954 a study conducted under SACEUR General Alfred M. Gruenther concluded in favour of a nuclear orientation for NATO, in the spirit of NSC 162/2. This study and the introduction of atomic artillery shells to American troops in Europe the previous year (followed by Honest John, Corporal, Matador and Regulus missiles in 1954)[29] led to a SHAPE recommendation for "a major NATO reorganization to adjust for the replacement of high conventional manpower ceilings with new, lower, nuclear-oriented manpower ceilings."[30] A planned nuclear response to Soviet aggression

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[28]Quoted in Osgood, NATO, p. 105; Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 31.

[29]Osgood, NATO, p. 107.

[30]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 32. See also A.J.R. Groom, British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons (London: F. Pinter, 1974), pp. 66-67.

was adopted at the North Atlantic Council's December 1954 meeting, formalized in December 1956 as Military Committee Documents MC 70 and MC 14/2. In addition to revising the Lisbon force goals downward, these reports authorized NATO commanders to use nuclear weapons "irrespective of whether the Pact used them" and, significantly, "*at the outset of the conflict*".[31] Under this new strategy, conventional forces would be utilized as a "shield" behind which the nuclear "sword" could be readied. As Jeffrey Record notes, conventional forces were to be a trip wire "designed to establish the fact of aggression and to 'justify' a nuclear response".[32]

Timothy Ireland, among others, describes NATO's nuclear decision as a turning point in alliance relations, not only because of the effect it had on military policy, but also because of the political implications. The decision to rely on American tactical as well as strategic nuclear weapons committed the Americans to the defence of Europe in a much more tangible way than had been originally intended with the establishment of NATO. At the same time, it increased the level of European dependence on the US such that "the balance of allied responsibility and power shifted drastically toward the Americans."[33] Reliance on tactical nuclear weapons, which the United States alone

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[31]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 32; Osgood, NATO, p. 117. Emphasis in original.

[32]Jeffrey Record, NATO's Theatre Nuclear Force Modernization Program (Cambridge: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1981), p. 13. See also Osgood, NATO, p. 123; Paul Buteux, The Politics of Nuclear Consultation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 2-3.

[33]Ireland, "Building NATO's Nuclear Posture 1950-65", p. 9.

controlled, further removed European input into the defence decision-making process: "Since the warheads of these [tactical nuclear] weapons remained under American control, the denial of European territory to the adversary became more dependent on American decisions than it had been hitherto."[34]

In addition to the issue of control, the plan to deploy nuclear weapons in a tactical and battlefield role fundamentally altered the strategic posture of NATO, "generating a seemingly insoluble series of military and political problems."[35] Issues of control became confused with allied concerns about strategy, making solutions to either problem particularly elusive.

The adoption by NATO of a strategy of tactical nuclear response to conventional aggression was designed to reconcile the discrepancy between NATO's declaratory strategy of ground defence and its actual military capabilities.[36] While the incorporation of tactical nuclear weapons into NATO defence planning augmented ground force capabilities, the allies' reliance on nuclear weapons provided them with the rationale to delay conventional force improvements. In fact, tactical nuclear reliance called into question the whole reason behind the need for greater conventional contributions. For if, as MC 70 now implied, European forces performed a trip wire function, then the existing

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[34]Groom, British Thinking, p. 294.

[35]Buteux, Politics of Nuclear Consultation, p. 1.

[36]Osgood, NATO, p. 116.

military capabilities were sufficient for that purpose. But the newly-approved NATO document repeated earlier demands for an increased European conventional force commitment, although the new level of 30 divisions was a substantially lower than the 96 set at Lisbon.

This continued requirement for a conventional component reflected an inability to come to terms with the significance of a total-war strategy. Ambivalence to nuclear deterrence was the natural outgrowth of the political/economic aversion to costly conventional forces combined with the fear of nuclear weapons. The confusion resulting from the accommodation of these two factors in NATO's deterrent strategy affected both the military and political functioning of the alliance: "Unsure about the implications of nuclear war, uncomfortable with a World War II type of strategy, NATO ... attempted to combine elements of both at the price of lessened self-confidence and diminished ability to take decisive action in a time of crisis."[37] Neither confident in their defence nor clear about their role in it, the allies downplayed their responsibilties or pursued options which, for the most part, either duplicated or deviated from the efforts of their largest partner. The resulting strategic discontinuity would threaten alliance political cohesion.

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[37]Henry A. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 202.

CHAPTER THREE: Europe and NATO's Nuclear Strategy

Throughout the 1950s, the American strategy of massive retaliation and SHAPE's reliance on nuclear weapons generated a variety of responses among the European members of the alliance. Focused on the demands of rebuilding their domestic economies and preserving pre-war colonial empires, the Europeans viewed nuclear weapons on the one hand as the means by which the demands of security could also be met. On the other hand, there was some concern about whether the cure of nuclear retaliation was worse than the disease of Soviet attack. The unleashing of nuclear weapons, even on a limited scale, would spell disaster to the European nations on or near whose territory they would be used. This ambivalence was for the most part overshadowed by the political issues embedded in the nuclear equation: nuclear weapons offered both prestige and a louder voice in international relations, as well as a means of providing for the unpleasant task of European security so that interests elsewhere could be pursued. Nuclear weapons were widely seen to hold the key to the post-war scramble to retain or attain international stature. In the period prior to Sputnik's dramatic alteration of the international environment, the key European players — Britain, France and Germany — developed their own attitudes toward nuclear weapons that were both affected by NATO's nuclear strategy and major determinants of the alliance's future course.

Britain

British commitment to a strategy based on nuclear weapons was firmly established

by the time of NATO's nuclear orientation. War-time atomic research had quickly mushroomed into a full-scale British nuclear programme based on reasons of economy as well as security. Admission to the nuclear club (secured with the detonation in 1952 of Britain's first atomic bomb followed in 1957 by the achievement of thermonuclear capabilities) was seen as necessary to maintain British prestige among the international community and enhance the "special" relationship with the United States. In fact, in the development of a nuclear programme, Britain was driven primarily by the need to be included in American nuclear plans. Despite the problems it would cause in the future, NATO's nuclear orientation initially fit in well with British defence plans.

London's decision to pursue nuclear weapons must be understood against the overshadowing backdrop of Britain's declining international status: the "devolution of empire" was a process which required constant policy readjustment to account for a change in the direction of military security (with a new emphasis on the security of Europe), the increasing political and economic inability to maintain overseas commitments, and Britain's declining diplomatic role.[1] British leaders were for the most part slow to adapt to these realities, although economic restrictions were less easily ignored. In particular, the Korean War rearmament programme demonstrated the incompatibility "of large, balanced, and well-equipped conventional forces ... with the requirements of a healthy economy, a sound trade position, and the maintenance of an

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[1]John Baylis, "British Defence Policy" in Baylis *et al.*, Contemporary Strategy II: The Nuclear Powers, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987), p. 142.

adequate level of social welfare in the British Isles".[2] Such a conclusion reinforced the belief in Whitehall that the NATO force goals set at Lisbon in 1952 were unrealistic.

In an attempt to meet both its defence obligations to NATO and its colonial commitments, the Conservative government proposed a reliance on nuclear weapons. This line of thinking was first advanced in 1952 in the influential "Global Strategy Paper", prepared by the British Chiefs of Staff at Churchill's direction. Having concluded that nuclear weapons had forever altered the character of war, the Chiefs outlined a new strategy for British defence policy which placed primary emphasis on nuclear weapons. As Andrew Pierre notes:

> The central thesis of the 'Global Strategy Paper' was that nuclear weapons had revolutionized the character of war. The most effective deterrent would be recognition by the Soviet Union that aggression on its part would bring an instantaneous atomic reprisal. The paper therefore recommended that the Western powers openly declare that Soviet aggression would be met not only at the local point of conflict, but would be punished by nuclear retaliation at the Russian heartland. Reliance on such a strategy of nuclear deterrence would permit a reduction in conventional ground forces.[3]

The need for deterrence on the cheap provided support for a British nuclear

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[2]Andrew Pierre, Nuclear Politics. The British Experience with an Independent Strategic Force, 1939-1970 (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 86-87.

[3]Pierre, Nuclear Politics, p. 87. Significant in that it predates NSC 162/2 by more than one year, the paper's emphasis on fiscal restraint and the gains that could be reaped from a strategy of nuclear retaliation clearly influenced US thinking and its New Look strategy. See also Samuel Huntington, The Common Defense (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 188.

programme that was required to gain London access to the nuclear plans of Washington. Without a nuclear capability of its own, Britain lacked the vehicle by which it would earn the right to have input into American nuclear planning. British interests would thus be left unprotected or its leaders forced into some undesirable action. As Defence Minister Harold Macmillan argued in 1955:

> Politically it [reliance on the US deterrent] surrenders our power to influence American policy and then, strategically and tactically it equally deprives us of any influence over the selection of targets and the use of our vital striking forces. The one, therefore, weakens our prestige and our influence in the world, and the other might imperil our safety.[4]

Churchill was of the same mind when he said:

> Personally, I cannot feel that we should have much influence over their [American] policy or action, wise or unwise, while we are largely dependent as we are today upon their protection. We too must possess substantial deterrent power of our own.[5]

Concern for national security was not without concern for prestige for, as Lawrence Freedman concluded, "if the West was to rely on the deterrent effect of nuclear power, then it seemed only proper that a country of Britain's status should participate fully in the construction and implementation of this strategy".[6] The political considerations of nuclear weapons, that is, the influence they would bring Britain in its relations with the international community, weighed foremost in the minds of British decision makers.

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[4]Quoted in Lawrence Freedman, Britain and Nuclear Weapons (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 5 and Pierre, Nuclear Politics, p. 93.

[5]Quoted in Pierre, Nuclear Politics, p. 93.

[6]Freedman, Britain and Nuclear Weapons, p. 5.

It is important to note that at this point the arguments for nuclear weapons were in terms of a British *contribution to* the nuclear deterrent controlled by the United States. Britain had sought American assistance in the development of nuclear weapons but had been forced to proceed independently by the restrictive conditions attached to nuclear technology sharing by the American Congress; at the same time, "the British nuclear programme had, as a principal *raison d'etre*, the re-establishment of close relations with the United States in the nuclear area such as had pertained during the Second World War."[7] It was believed that the independent development of a nuclear capability would prove Britain worthy of enhanced access to nuclear information.

Defence White Papers in the years subsequent to the "Global Strategy Paper" advocated a strategy of massive retaliation and a concomitant cut in conventional forces. But it was not until the famous 1957 Defence White Paper that declaratory policy was put into action. Defence Minister Duncan Sandys proposed a drastic alteration to the shape of British defence with his brief, which outlined the following cost-saving measures: "an end to Britain's long-standing policy of national military service; a five-year plan to cut the size of the military forces from 690,000 to 375,000; a cut in forces in Europe within a year from 77,000 to 64,000; and the cancellation of plans for a supersonic manned bomber so as to focus efforts on long-range ballistic missile

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[7]A. J. R. Groom, British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons (London: F. Pinter, 1974), p. 278.

technology".[8] At the time, the cancellation of conscription drew the biggest headlines; the strategic importance of this policy in committing Britain to a nuclear strategy would soon be realized.

The 1957 White Paper is important for three main reasons. First, it firmly committed Britain to a strategy of massive retaliation just as the United States began to look for more flexible options. The strategic policy divergence between NATO's two nuclear powers engendered differences regarding nuclear issues for the alliance itself and hampered the evolution of NATO strategic doctrine away from pure reliance on massive retaliation. Second, debate on the White Paper publicly introduced the idea that an independent nuclear force was necessary because of the growing incredibility of the American deterrent, which was in contrast to the original rationale of a British contribution to the American deterrent. Washington's reaction to events in Suez the year previous,[9] as well as the Soviet launching of Sputnik were beginning to cast doubt over

[8]David Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1983), p. 48.

[9]In 1956, Britain, France and Israel conspired to regain control of the Suez Canal and topple the government of Egyptian President Nasser through a surprise attack. Not only did their attack fail to surprise the Egyptians, it elicited threats of nuclear reprisal from the Russians and demands from the Americans for an immediate halt to the invasion. The British and French governments were humiliated and stunned by the American condemnation of an action they considered to be self-defence. "The resulting crisis shook the alliance to the core as the British and, more pointedly, the French questioned the reliability of American support for allies acting in defence of their perceived vital interests." Timothy Ireland, "Building NATO's Nuclear Posture 1950-65", in Jeffrey Boutwell, *et al.*, eds. The Nuclear Confrontation in Europe (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 12. Shock waves from this event extended to both sides of the Atlantic, and the after effects were felt for years.

American willingness and ability to protect Europe through the nuclear guarantee. These events led to such concerns as those voiced by Defence Minister Sandys:

> So long as large American forces remain in Europe, and American bombers are based in Britain, it might conceivably be thought safe — I am not saying that it would — to leave to the United States the sole responsibility for providing the nuclear deterrent. But, when they have developed the 5,000 mile intercontinental ballistic rocket, can we really be sure that every American administration will go on looking at things in quite the same way?[10]

Third, the Sandys White Paper directly affected NATO strategy by reducing the British contribution to conventional defence in Europe. This, the government explained, could be accomplished without reducing the effectiveness of the British force by substituting nuclear fire-power for manpower. This decision to nuclearize British armed forces in Europe "ensured that NATO's strategy in Europe would be based on the tactical use of nuclear weapons, and that the other European Powers would not build up their conventional forces."[11] In order to finance the two operations most important to British prestige — its colonial commitments and its nuclear weapons programme — Britain pushed NATO more firmly down the nuclear road. The Americans, who had initiated the nuclearization of NATO, found the expansion of this role troubling particularly since it came at a time when the United States was examining its own nuclear dependence. Moreover, until this point the United States had dominated strategy by virtue of its nuclear status. The British challenge to this domination, soon to be emulated by other

[10]Quoted in Pierre, Nuclear Politics, pp. 100-101.

[11]Groom, British Thinking, p. 291.

allies, would usher in a new era of alliance relations highlighted by negotiations, rather than American dictation, on strategic policy.

France

France's response to NATO's nuclear strategy was initially marked largely by disinterest, except to the extent that it encouraged France's own nuclear aspirations. Consumed with salvaging its crumbling colonial empire, European defence occupied a position of secondary importance in French foreign policy for most of the 1950s. France was generally satisfied with NATO's reliance on the American nuclear guarantee to deter a Soviet attack. The alliance adoption of the threat to use tactical nuclear weapons served mainly to justify French reluctance to meet its conventional force obligations, and to further diminish priority accorded to NATO in French policy. In fact, as Robert Osgood concludes, "the principal effect of NATO's nuclear strategy upon French military policies was to intensify France's concentration upon developing a nuclear capability instead of collaborating with NATO's forces."[12] And to the extent that a French nuclear capacity was incompatible with NATO strategy, the alliance's adoption of a nuclear orientation ultimately encouraged an independent course of action for France.

French foreign and military policies throughout the 1950s were driven by many of the same forces motivating the British during this period. France sought a return to

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[12]Robert Osgood, NATO: The Entangling Alliance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 132.

its "rightful" position on the world stage, a position distinguished by prestige and independence. Military forces, and in particular nuclear weapons, were seen as a major means of achieving this status, and as a symbol of French independence.[13] French nuclear policy evolved with these political aims in mind, goals which were shaped by France's relationships with its alliance partners.

The priority assigned to independence in French foreign policy stemmed from the nation's experience during World War II. Although liberation by the allies underscored the benefits of collaboration with other states, the fact that France had required such assistance in the first place resulted from the collapse of collective security initiatives in the inter-war years.[14] France thus entered into the Atlantic alliance warily, firm in its belief that ultimately French security depended upon France alone. As John Baylis concludes, "French interests were unlikely to coincide exactly with those of its allies, and in the vital sphere of defense it must retain as great a degree of self-sufficiency and independence as possible."[15]

Differences between France and its allies over security readily became apparent over the issue of German inclusion in NATO, one of the most consuming issues for

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[13]John Baylis, "French Defense Policy" in Baylis, *et al.*, Contemporary Strategy II, p. 169.

[14]Wolf Mendl, Deterrence and Persuasion: French Nuclear Armament in the Context of National Policy 1945-69 (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 18.

[15]Baylis, "French Defense Policy", p. 173.

France during the early 1950s. France saw itself as a leader among Western Europe states, a role threatened by a resurgent Germany. To counter the effects of German post-war recovery, the Fourth Republic attempted to submerge Germany "in European organizations in the hopes of channelling Germany's economic power and political orientation away from strictly national ends."[16] But this strategy did not deal with the issue of German military power. The American plan to augment NATO's front line defences with a German military contribution met with vigorous opposition from Paris. Germany's entry into the alliance was eventually approved by France subject to a number of conditions, including the continued stationing of allied troops on German soil — as Robert Osgood describes it, "only after a new set of commitments had been woven into the tangled strands of allied collaboration."[17] Furthermore, German rearmament proceeded under French insistence that NATO's newest member would be prevented from developing nuclear weapons. In this way, France could approach relations with Germany as the senior partner, a superiority confirmed by "the development of a national nuclear force [for France], the creation of which was denied to Germany."[18] A nuclear capability for France was proposed as a counter to German power within Europe.

French leadership aspirations were equally threatened by the Anglo-Saxon predominance within NATO. Tensions between France and the United States in particular

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[16]Wilfrid Kohl, French Nuclear Diplomacy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 37.

[17]Osgood, NATO, p. 96.

[18]Baylis, "French Defense Policy", p. 171.

can to some extent be explained by differing conceptions of NATO's role: the Americans viewed the alliance's primary purpose in the narrow terms of European security; the French agreed with this goal but also conceived of a broader role for NATO, "as a vehicle for reviving France's fallen status in Europe and abroad....as a cornucopia of opportunity for securing a wide range of French interests."[19] American refusal to assist France in defending its colonial interests (particularly Algeria) enraged Paris and raised questions about the purpose of French participation in NATO — as well as about the wisdom of dependence on the American nuclear guarantee. French resentment of American inaction in this area was intensified by the impression that the United States was benefitting from France's loss: "in the name of 'general interest' the French and the British were being asked to abandon one position after another, while, in the name of the same 'general interest', American economic influence was displacing European political influence."[20]

Anti-American sentiments among the French were met by Anglo-Saxon suspicion of Paris as a government "laced with communist or disloyal fellow travellers."[21] American and British doubts about the calibre of France as an ally were given further weight by the drain on NATO's defences as France reallocated its European forces to battle for its colonial possessions. These issues seriously undermined French credibility

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[19]Michael Harrison, The Reluctant Ally: France and Atlantic Security (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 12.

[20]Grosser, "France and Germany in the Atlantic Community", International Organization Vol. XVII, No. 3, Summer 1963, p. 558.

[21]Harrison, The Reluctant Ally, p. 10.

as an alliance partner, and directly impinged upon the willingness of the United States and Britain to include France in high-level discussions. Declining French influence in alliance circles led Paris to consider nuclear weapons as a means of attaining its goals.

French interest in the power of nuclear energy dated back to De Gaulle's establishment of the Commissariat a l'energie atomique (CEA) in 1945, and parliamentary approval of a five-year plan for atomic development in 1952.[22] The decision in 1957 to proceed with a national nuclear programme[23] was influenced by a convergence of political and strategic factors. In particular, the cost-savings thought to apply to nuclear forces as opposed to conventional would enable France to continue her expensive colonial campaigns while meeting French commitments to NATO by substituting nuclear technology for manpower. This policy offered the diplomatic advantage of re-establishing respect for France within the alliance. More importantly, Paris believed nuclear weapons would entitle France to break into the Anglo-American domination of the decision-making process; as a nuclear power, "the nation would automatically acquire a wedge for shaping allied decisions".[24] Without nuclear weapons, French officials argued that France would

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[22]Kohl, French Nuclear Diplomacy, p. 18.

[23]A nuclear capability for France was initially viewed by the governments of the Fourth Republic as compatible with the country's role in NATO. As John Baylis points out, "it was envisaged that nuclear weapons could provide a base for a more independent national policy and that they could enhance France's standing and prestige, but in both cases this was to be within the Atlantic Alliance." Baylis, "French Defense Policy", p. 169. De Gaulle's decision to pursue an independent nuclear force will be discussed later in the paper.

[24]George Kelly, "Political Background of the French A-Bomb", Orbis IV ((Fall 1960), p. 294.

be "an ally of the second rank", and that "inferior armies must perpetually accept inferior missions".[25] Despite these compelling arguments, Scheinman concludes that the decision to develop a French nuclear force resulted not from a rational, clear-cut policy but from a bureaucratic and military momentum that, once started, was impossible to contain: "in the face of vacillation and indecisiveness by the government, and unawareness and abdication of responsibility by Parliament, policy issues were debated and resolved at another level, and that the elaboration of a military atomic program was guided by a small group of persons from the CEA, the military and the Government".[26]

The decision to develop a French nuclear capability was also aided at the time by growing doubts over the credibility of the American nuclear guarantee. Beyond the French desire for enhanced control over the defence of Europe, this issue dealt with creeping fears that the American pledge to defend Europe with nuclear weapons was less realistic given Soviet progress in nuclear weapons technology. In addition to Washington's attitude to the whole decolonialization process, the French viewed American treachery over Suez as predictive of American foreign policy in the emerging era of strategic parity: "the obvious reluctance of the United States government to stride beyond the 'brink of war' impressed upon many Frenchmen the probability that the Americans could not be counted on to defend specifically French interests against the mounting

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[25]*ibid.*, pp. 287, 291.

[26]Lawrence Scheinman, Atomic Energy Policy in France Under the Fourth Republic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 94-95. See also Kohl, French Nuclear Diplomacy, p. 7.

military offensive of the communist bloc".[27]

General Pierre Gallois was particularly forceful regarding the emerging incredibility of the American commitment in terms of the rapidly developing situation of mutual vulnerability of the Superpowers. In his book Balance of Terror, he argued:

> Since the United States itself is vulnerable to Soviet ballistic missiles, the automatic nature of American intervention is less certain.... [I]n a question of intervening for the sake of another country, even a friendly power, hesitation is particularly likely, for the laws of nuclear strategy are unfavorable to such intervention".[28]

The argument that strategic nuclear parity neutralized American retaliatory threats added a strategic rationale to the political necessity of France's own nuclear capability. Moreover, parity left a gaping hole in NATO defence strategy, based as it was on the superiority of American nuclear weapons. This issue percolated throughout the 1950s, coming to a boil in 1960s with the NATO deliberations over nuclear control, which will be discussed in greater detail later. At this point it is important to note that in addition to French nationalism, the Suez fall-out, and burgeoning Soviet nuclear capabilities, the impetus for an independent nuclear force for France came from the American nuclear monopoly and particularly from American refusal to share nuclear technology.

French nuclear aspirations, sparked by the country's desire for international prestige and national self-sufficiency, were encouraged by the unreasonable conventional

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[27]Kelly, "Political Background of the French A-Bomb", p. 287.

[28]Pierre Gallois, Balance of Terror (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), pp. 139-40.

force goals set for the European members of NATO and by the sanctioning of tactical nuclear weapons as a substitute for manpower. France argued as had Britain that if the Americans could replace troops with technology, then so could it. But unlike Britain, France would go on to develop a distinctive strategic rationale for its own nuclear force. In this way, France more than any other single NATO member hindered NATO's development as a unified military organization. Michael Harrison has concluded that the French "preoccupation with obtaining a superior and independent military capability in Western Europe ... helped prevent the emergence of a political-military community to complement economic cooperation and enable Europe to assume a more fully independent role in Atlantic and world affairs."[29] French decisions about nuclear weapons had a greater effect on NATO than alliance nuclear politics had on France.

West Germany

The scope and intensity of Germany's reaction to NATO's tactical nuclear strategy emerged in stark contrast to French indifference. As the likely battlefield for any future conflict with the Soviet Union, the strategic decision that such a conflict would be waged with nuclear weapons created an uproar. Bonn initially ignored the obvious implications of NATO's nuclear strategy for German military plans, and then did an about-face, moving beyond endorsing a nuclear strategy for NATO to request nuclear weapons for German troops as well. Germany's vulnerable position led it to be profoundly affected by NATO's strategic decision and, in turn, to affect undeniably NATO military plans.

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[29]Harrison, The Reluctant Ally, pp. 3-4.

The political demands of reintegration into the western community shaped German military policy. Germany emerged from World War II defeated and divided, and the search for solutions to these ailments preoccupied the German government's agenda throughout the 1950s. The first priority for German policy under Chancellor Adenauer was overcoming defeat, rebuilding German society and the economy, and establishing the Federal Republic as a sovereign and equal nation. External security was critical to the accomplishment of these internal aims, which Adenauer decided would be best attained through alignment with the West. Confronted with the immediate requirements of territorial integrity, reunification was set aside as a long-term goal. As James Richardson concluded, this course of action was not undertaken completely by choice: "directly exposed to the pressure of the Soviets, who already occupied one-third of Germany's territory, Germany was constrained to give first priority to establishing a more permanent framework for its relations with the Western powers."[30]

The American proposal to include Germany in NATO initially met with resistance from the European allies who feared the consequences of rearming their former enemy. Agreement on German participation was eventually obtained for reasons of both strategy and economics. According to the policy of forward defence, which had been adopted as essential to ensure the security of all Europeans, resistance would have to take place "as far east as possible"; given the requirement of defending Europe in Germany, "the

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[30]James Richardson, Germany and the Atlantic Alliance: The Interaction of Strategy and Politics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 27-28.

military and political participation of the Federal Republic seemed unavoidable."[31] Moreover, the other allies seemed unlikely to meet the Lisbon force goals necessary to repel a Soviet invasion. The strength of the German economic revival could benefit all of Europe if directed toward military preparations. In addition to easing the burden of rearmament borne by the other European nations, "it seemed unfair to let vanquished German develop her economy, while the victors assumed the entire responsibility for her defense."[32]

Rearmament was also made possible by the German government's renunciation of nuclear weapons production. The nuclear nonproduction pledge contained in the 1954 London and Paris accords providing for Germany's accession to NATO "can be viewed as the last in a series of control measures set down by the wartime Allies for a defeated and, subsequently, not-yet-sovereign Germany."[33] The significance of the pledge is that it provided for Western military protection of German territory while paving the way for German entry into democratic society as an independent nation.[34] At the same time, it focused German military planners on the difficult issues of conventional defence.

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[31]Gordon A. Craig, "NATO and the New German Army", in William Kaufmann, ed., Military Policy and National Security (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 195.

[32]Hans Speier, German Rearmament and Atomic War (New York: Row, Peterson and Company, 1957), p. 7.

[33]Catherine McArdle Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 11.

[34]Osgood, NATO, p. 97.

The German political agenda of the early 1950s was thus dominated by the related issues of rearmament and reintegration. Concentrating on establishing Germany as a loyal ally worthy of the alliance's confidence, rearmament was pursued with little regard to allied or American strategy. The implications of NATO's tactical nuclear defence strategy for the front-line nation were not immediately seized upon, and conventional rearmament continued on the assumption that the character of the next war would be much like that of the last.[35] "The embryonic German Defense Ministry ... went about planning its 12 divisions as if nuclear weapons had not been invented, in spite of the growing literature available to German leaders about the constraints atomic warfare would place on ground warfare organization and operations".[36]

It was not until the 1955 SHAPE war game Carte Blanche that the ramifications of NATO's nuclear strategy on the fledgling republic became apparent. The military exercise, which simulated the use of 355 tactical nuclear warheads on West German territory, generated an estimated 1.7 million deaths and 3.5 million wounded, to say nothing of those affected by radiation.[37] Public reaction to these widely publicized figures was fierce. German public support for rearmament and participation in NATO had been given on the assurance that such actions would prevent Germany from becoming a battlefield. But the Carte Blanche exercise seemed to indicate that "NATO's strategy

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[35]Speier, German Rearmament and Atomic War, pp. 132-140.

[36]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 42.

[37]Speier, German Rearmament and Atomic War, p. 183.

rendered German forces little more than the instrument for elaborating the cause of a tactical nuclear response, which was expected to lead to general nuclear warfare".[38] The realities of nuclear warfare spurred criticism of the Adenauer government's military policy as a whole, and its rearmament programme in particular. The opposition Socialists charged that German rearmament was not only superfluous, "but would also constitute moral collusion in the preparation of unspeakable horror".[39]

The government's initial reaction to these attacks was to reiterate the continued need for a strong conventional defence — including a German contribution — despite nuclear technology. In fact, Bonn argued that atomic advances may have even enhanced the usefulness of conventional forces, given the inevitability of strategic nuclear parity between the United States and the Soviet Union. "Under these circumstances, a substantial Western conventional-force capability would not only prevent easy Soviet ground gains but would improve chances for negotiated disarmament of nuclear weapons."[40]

Attempts to deny the implications of NATO's nuclear strategy for Germany's conventional defence plans were short-lived, and by 1957 Bonn was fully wedded to the alliance's nuclear strategy. Chancellor Adenauer's decision to follow the nuclear trend can

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[38]Osgood, NATO, pp. 126-130. The quote is from p. 130.

[39]Speier, German Rearmament and Atomic War, p. 184.

[40]Kelleher, Germany and Nuclear Weapons, p. 39.

be attributed to one other major development, in addition to the domestic crisis sparked by Carte Blanche exercise. In 1956 the Radford Plan, a proposal to cut substantially the US troop commitment to Europe in light of revolutionary technological advances, was leaked to the press. The proposed reduction was based on the Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Radford's conviction that "since any conflict in the NATO area would immediately involve both the United States and the Soviet Union and would result in a general nuclear war, there was no longer a need ... for substantial numbers of American ground forces in Europe".[41] Although this proposal was immediately denied by Radford, Eisenhower, and other Washington officials, it forced Adenauer to accept that a fundamental change had taken place "in U.S. (and NATO) strategy, away from a reliance on conventional forces and toward a reliance on deterrence by threat of nuclear retaliation."[42]

The proposal to substitute American troops with technology combined with domestic opposition to German rearmament encouraged Adenauer to approve a reduction in the period of conscription (from 18 to 12 months) and announce that Germany would not be able to meet its 500,000-man force goal by 1959.[43] To compensate for this shortfall, Adenauer proposed equipping German troops with tactical nuclear weapons — for if the technology-for-manpower trade worked for the US, the logic could similarly be

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[41]*ibid.*, p. 44.

[42]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 44.

[43]Speier, German Rearmament and Atomic War, p. 212.

extended to West Germany.[44] More importantly, continued German preparations for conventional war would be of little use if the rest of the alliance, led by the Americans and the British, was basing its preparations on the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Regardless of domestic reasons, Adenauer's adoption of a tactical nuclear orientation was necessary "in order to preserve Germany's influence in NATO, for if the other members of NATO were to collaborate with the United States in organizing, equipping, and training their contingents to fight a tactical nuclear war, then as vital a participant as West Germany could hardly retain her voice in allied councils or even support her security by pursuing a strategy of local conventional resistance."[45] The political necessity of attaining equal status within the alliance meant German access to nuclear weapons was essential — although hardly automatic, as the discussion on nuclear sharing will illustrate.

The Results of Nuclear Reliance

By the end of the 1950s NATO had firmly established a reliance on nuclear weapons. Local conventional resistance was basically abandoned in favour of nuclear deterrence largely on the basis of compelling domestic economic and political arguments. Tactical nuclear weapons reliance alleviated the need to increase conscription terms or defence budgets, thus enabling the allocation of monies to more politically-rewarding domestic ventures. This reluctance of the allies to make the necessary sacrifices for effective local defence was supported by the American technology-for-manpower trade

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[44]*ibid.*, pp. 219-20.

[45]Osgood, NATO, p. 129.

argument. American (and, to a lesser extent, British) reliance on a strategy of nuclear deterrence raised questions on the purpose of enhanced European conventional forces, which further reduced the allies' incentives to achieve conventional goals.

The result of nuclear reliance was a decrease in alliance security and cohesion. By threatening to turn any aggression into a total war, massive retaliation promised a defence with catastrophic results. Given this prospective outcome, the allies were thus reluctant partners in nuclear deterrence. In this way, NATO's nuclear strategy "increased the liabilities of strategic collaboration by raising the risks of nuclear obliteration."[46] As the cost of alliance membership grew, members increasingly questioned the value of this membership, a process which was not healthy for alliance cohesion.

Alliance cohesion was further hampered by nuclear reliance: dependence on a strategy for which most alliance members had little input and less control "inhibited the growth of a sense of common purpose."[47] Born of American refusal to share information, the allies' lack of understanding of nuclear weapons and how they were to secure European territory contributed to an evasion of their responsibilities. Moreover, American secrecy about nuclear weapons encouraged those allies who could to procure their own nuclear weapons. Such wasteful duplication was not only of little use to alliance defence (given the adequate coverage by American weapons) but was even a

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[46] *ibid.*, p. 146.

[47] Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, p. 202.

hindrance, to the extent that the development of independent nuclear forces was undertaken in place of conventional force improvements. At the same time, allied cohesion suffered with the growing ability of the allies to afford their own "diversified arms programs."[48] Independent military programmes ended the integration and coordination of forces and strategies that had been a by-product of the American monopoly in this area until the mid-1950s. In the same sense, the challenge to American leadership exerted by the British and French through their independent nuclear programmes further contributed to the deterioration of alliance cohesion which had been imposed on the alliance by American domination.

Finally, alliance cohesion was threatened by reliance on a strategy which was increasingly coming under attack due to recent Soviet nuclear weapons developments. The allies were understandably disconcerted by the questioning of the strategic soundness of the doctrine upon which the alliance depended for its security. The debates over the merits of massive retaliation revealed, as the next chapter will show, that it was becoming less credible and less desirable as a deterrent strategy. Given the lack of alternatives to nuclear reliance as a result of the neglect of conventional forces, these criticisms dealt an especially damaging blow to alliance confidence in its deterrent strategy. It is to the criticism of massive retaliation that we now turn.

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[48]Osgood, NATO, p. 168; see also Groom, British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons, p. 502.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Challenge to Massive Retaliation

Just as the Europeans were growing accustomed to massive retaliation, the Americans were becoming uneasy with it. In the United States the assumptions on which the New Look were based changed in the second half of the 1950s as the Soviets' nuclear delivery capabilities improved ahead of American estimates. Soviet advances in long-range bomber design and production coupled with the 1957 launching of Sputnik indicated the end of American nuclear superiority and an emerging "balance of terror". Once "massive retaliation had become a two-way street",[1] it was subject to a vigorous moral and military critique which created what a number of authors termed "a crisis of confidence".[2] Reliance on American strategic bombing capabilities had been "the keystone of Western strategy with respect to Europe"[3] for a decade; the questioning of that policy was bound to affect European confidence in NATO's nuclear strategy. And as a result of their declining confidence, the European states began to examine alternatives to secure their defence.

Integral to the massive retaliation critique was a debate on limited war. Whether focused on conventional or nuclear weapons, a limited war capability was touted as the

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[1]Samuel Huntington, The Common Defense (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 89.

[2]Klause Knorr, "The Strained Alliance", in Klaus Knorr, ed., NATO and American Security Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 3.

[3]George W. Rathjens, "NATO Strategy: Total War", in Knorr, ed., NATO and American Security, p. 65.

alternative to the excesses of massive retaliation. The limited war debate was influential in the development of NATO strategy because it signalled the end of massive retaliation and initiated discussion on the requirements of a replacement strategy.

Criticism of massive retaliation centred on the fact that it did not fulfil the four main requirements of a deterrent policy: capability, credibility, communication and cost effectiveness.[4] While the US did possess the capability necessary to follow through with its threat of massive retaliation and it did communicate to the Soviets its intention to do so in case of aggression, the American deterrent policy was sorely lacking in the other two areas: credibility and cost effectiveness. The credibility of a deterrent policy stems from the willingness to invoke the threat previously made, which is in turn dependent upon the value of the interests at stake. In his article, "The Requirements of Deterrence", William Kaufmann wrote that to be effective, the costs of a deterrent policy must be worth incurring in terms of the objective sought.[5] Since the costs of massive retaliation were enormous, entailing possibly the destruction of society, then the threat to invoke it would only be credible if the most vital interests were threatened. If this was the place of massive retaliation in the American policy of deterrence then, Kaufmann concluded, "this leaves us with a large gap in our policy of deterrence. The options open to the Communists which seem most dangerous to the United States are covered; but a number

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[4]See Chapter One for more detail.

[5]William Kaufmann, "The Requirements of Deterrence", in William Kaufmann, ed., Military Policy and National Security (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 20.

of alternatives lie open to them which it would be to our interest to interdict. Among these are conventional warfare against the peripheral areas or segments of the Western bloc, and subversion and civil war instigated in the same areas."[6] Although massive retaliation might be a useful deterrent strategy in protection of the most vital of interests, it failed to protect Western interests at lower levels of conflict.

Critics attacked the credibility of massive retaliation, claiming that it had been undermined by the strategy's declining support among the western publics; by conflicting and often confused pronouncements of American intentions; and by America's diplomatic record, particularly in terms of US resistance to the use of nuclear weapons in Korea and Indo-China.[7] The conclusion was thus drawn that the threat of massive retaliation was limited in its applicability to preventing the Soviets from similarly threatening the United States; as Klaus Knorr wrote, "as long as the balance of terror prevails, their [nuclear weapons'] utility is exhausted in deterrence of a direct attack".[8] For contingencies which were not of this magnitude, some other deterrent policy had to be developed.

In the latter half of the 1950s, tactical nuclear weapons began to receive more attention. NATO had been committed to the use of tactical nuclear weapons in its defence since 1954; but their role was one of supplementing strategic nuclear weapons

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[6]*ibid.*, p. 28.

[7]*ibid.*

[8]Klaus Knorr, On the Uses of Military Power in the Nuclear Age. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 165.

and substituting for conventional deficiencies, *not* in terms of an independent battlefield capability. But as these weapons became more technologically sophisticated and as massive retaliation became increasingly untenable, their incorporation into a limited war strategy drew interest.

Alternatives to the suicide or surrender scenario presented by massive retaliation initially emphasized some form of limited war capability. A less-than-total strategy was needed to fight a less-than-total war. A limited war capability would remove the need for an automatic strategic nuclear response and provide the opportunity for the political aspect of war to function, making a diplomatic solution to the conflict possible. As Malcolm Hoag commented:

> a policy of limited war has great appeal. Limited war offers an alternative to unacceptable extremes of violence or appeasement, and gives warfare a truly political function that we sorely need. It promises a series of 'cooling off' stages between levels of violence. The pace of hostilities may be slow enough to enable diplomacy to be brought to bear at several stages before all-out war is reached.[9]

Proponents of limited war, who agreed on the need for an intermediate defence capability, however were divided over the issue of whether this capability should be nuclear or conventional. The literature engendered by the debate on the use of nuclear weapons in limited war was as controversial as voluminous; a summary of the key points covered is useful because the debate contributed to the shift in NATO and American

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[9]Malcolm W. Hoag, "The Place of Limited War in NATO Strategy", in Knorr, ed., NATO and American Security, p. 103.

strategy away from massive retaliation, as well as to the strategy which would replace it.

Arguments in favour of incorporating nuclear weapons into a limited war strategy stressed the infeasibility of a purely conventional defence. The current preparedness of NATO forces would be insufficient to repel a Soviet attack; the allied governments were clearly unwilling to augment defence expeditures to a level that would see much improvement in this condition due to the priority assigned to rebuilding economic strength and implementing social programmes. Estimates of overwhelmingly superior Warsaw Pact forces (later proved false) further entrenched the belief in the futility of conventional defence preparations. The solution, therefore, was the substitution of technology for manpower, a proposition which held great sway within both academic and political circles.

The proposition that fewer troops would be required if they were equipped with tactical nuclear weapons was not only politically and economically attractive, but militarily so as well. Oskar Morgenstern argued in favour of using any means necessary to win, particularly in light of the lessons learned in Korea: "Russia was able to force us in the Korean war to violate a classical principle of warfare, which is: *Never fight an inferior army on its own terms.*"[10] If it were possible to use nuclear weapons in limited engagements, then they ought to be used. Edward Teller, among others, asserted that

[10]Oskar Morgenstern, The Question of National Defense (NY: Random House, 1959), p. 146, emphasis in original.

nuclear weapons were well-suited for the battlefield: since troops must be massed for an offensive action, they would provide an excellent target for small mobile units armed with tactical nuclear weapons.[11] Henry Kissinger developed a strategy for nuclear-armed troops analogous to naval strategy, in which self-contained units would be highly efficient and would alleviate interdiction problems.[12]

Kissinger also claimed that a limited nuclear war would be inherently more stable than a limited conventional war. The initiation of conflict at the tactical nuclear level would entail the highest commitment short of all-out war, and would therefore prevent risks and gains from spiralling out of control:

> Obviously, a nuclear war involves a larger initial commitment than a conventional war.... [I]n a war which begins with a smaller investment it may prove much more difficult to establish an equilibrium. The consciousness that the opponent is able at any moment to increase his commitment will insert an element of instability into the psychological equation of limited war. The temptation to anticipate the other side may lead to an increasingly explosive situation and to a cycle of gradually expanding commitments.[13]

Stability would thus be enhanced by the knowledge that *any* rise in the stakes would mean total war, as opposed to a gradual increase in the stakes and the amount of force justified which might unintentionally lead to total war. Moreover, having planned for the use of nuclear weapons, their introduction would not be as destabilizing as if conventional

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[11]Edward Teller, "The Feasibility of Arms Control and the Principle of Openness", Daedalus 89 (1960), pp. 781-99.

[12]Henry A. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy (NY: Harper, 1957), p. 180.

[13]*ibid.*, p. 193.

limited war had been assumed.

Like Kissinger, Morgenstern believed in the inherent stability of a limited nuclear war. He proposed that the same strategic deterrent which prevented a first strike would also deter the expansion of a limited nuclear to total war:

> The deterioration of a limited situation may produce some expansion of the conflict ... but the motivation which prevented a wholesale exchange in the first place still exists. *If the deterrent works, it must work also against the expansion of limited conflicts.*[14]

Conversely, other strategists supported a limited nuclear war strategy because they believed the use of nuclear weapons at the local level was more likely to lead to total war. Thomas Schelling[15] and Glenn Snyder[16] argued that a tactical nuclear war had a *higher* risk of escalating to all-out war and therefore was a more effective deterrent to the resort to force in the first place.

One of the earliest proposals for the use of tactical nuclear weapons in a limited war role was Sir Anthony A. Buzzard's notion of graduated deterrence. Arguing in favour of a nuclear response proportional to the aggression it was addressing, Buzzard proposed meeting conventional attacks with the graduated use of battlefield nuclear weapons. He advocated establishing a distinction between tactical nuclear weapons

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[14]Morgenstern, The Question of National Defense p. 145, emphasis in original.

[15]Thomas C. Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1960), pp. 190-94.

[16]Glenn Snyder, Deterrence by Denial and Punishment (Princeton: Center of International Studies, 1959), pp. 12 & 19.

(which would be employed first against military targets) and strategic nuclear weapons (which would be reserved for use against cities in the event that tactical nuclear strikes failed to halt the aggression).[17] It is important to note that in this proposal nuclear use was not at issue; overwhelmingly superior Soviet conventional forces made this fact unavoidable according to Buzzard. Rather, the point was to employ nuclear technology in such a way that it would be militarily useful, not merely catalytic.

The attractiveness of graduated deterrence also lay in the strategic rationale it provided for the tactical nuclear weapons already in place in Europe. As Schwartz noted: "No doubt the development of a new theoretical justification for tactical nuclear weapons relieved those who had originally argued for them as compensation for conventional manpower inferiority — an argument increasingly open to question as the results of NATO nuclear exercises were analyzed."[18]

Opponents of limited nuclear war objected to its advocates' conclusions in both military and political terms. Army war games like Carte Blanche refuted the claim that nuclear warfare would require less manpower; if anything, the high casualty levels

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[17]Sir Anthony W. Buzzard, "Massive Retaliation and Graduated Deterrence", World Politics 8 (January 1956), pp. 228-37.

[18]David Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1983), p. 50.

associated with nuclear usage implied the need for *more* troops.[19] The argument that nuclear weapons favoured the defence was rejected on the basis that it assumed *only* the defence would be so equipped. "Once one concedes to both sides small mobile forces equipped with mobile tactical nuclear weapons, the advantage is not necessarily with the defensive. While there will be problems in massing for attack, there will be similar problems of holding a defensive position."[20] Thus the interdiction role assigned to Western nuclear weapons would be equally applicable to Soviet/Warsaw Pact forces which, considering the extensive American supply lines, would be even more effective. Morton Halperin also pointed out that the self-sufficient military units endorsed by Kissinger and Morgenstern did not yet exist, though their arguments were based on this assumption.

The assertion that limited nuclear war was inherently more stable than conventional operations was also attacked. Bernard Brodie[21] and James King[22] claimed that because of the clear distinction between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons, a conventional war would be easier to keep limited. For once nuclear weapons have been

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[19]See, for example, Speier, German Rearmament and Atomic War, pp. 144-47; Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons, pp. 39-42; Ireland, "Building NATO's Nuclear Posture", p. 10.

[20]Morton H. Halperin, "Nuclear weapons and limited war", Conflict Resolution V:2 (1961), p. 155.

[21]Bernard Brodie, Strategy in the Missile Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 323.

[22]James E. King, "Nuclear Plenty and Limited War", Foreign Affairs 35 (1957), p. 240.

introduced, the demands of maximum military effectiveness would dictate their employment, overshadowing politically imposed limitations. Moreover, as Kaufmann indicated, the stakes of a war often expand; the more each side expends, the less it can afford to lose.[23] This pattern of increased cost justified only by increased gain works inherently against keeping a conflict limited.

Critics charged that the credibility of limited nuclear war was further eroded by the psychological aversion to using nuclear weapons. Brodie and Kaufmann contended, as they had in their criticisms of massive retaliation, that an American response to Soviet pressures would be inhibited by plans for nuclear retaliation; the US record and public opposition demonstrated little willingness to use nuclear weapons in local conflicts. Thus Brodie noted, "that readiness to use atomic weapons against limited aggression would have a great deterrent, *but only if the prospect of fighting in a nuclear environment did not reduce our willingness to intervene.* For it would seem that our willingness to intervene is more important as a deterrent that the choice of weapons."[24] As Kaufmann concluded, a policy of limited nuclear war would "result only in deterring the deterrer."[25]

In the face of these challenges to the viability of a limited nuclear war strategy,

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[23]William W. Kaufmann, "The Crisis in Military Affairs", World Politics 10 (1958), p. 595.

[24]Brodie, Strategy in the Missile Age, p. 322, emphasis added.

[25]Kaufmann, "Requirements of Deterrence", p. 20.

a strong conventional defence was put forward as the most effective option: it would present an attacking force with a form of resistance that the allies would not be inhibited to use — and one which the allies had experience in preparing — thereby making it a more credible deterrent to aggression. Moreover, by placing the burden of escalation to the nuclear level upon the enemy, with the attendant risk of all-out war, this deterrent function would be enhanced. Finally, "[i]f unsuccessful in its conventional defense, NATO would still have recourse to its nuclear arsenal".[26]

Regardless of its merits, the limited war debate paralleled a change in SHAPE planning away from the totality of massive retaliation. Under SACEUR General Lauris Norstad, NATO policy moved unofficially toward a greater acceptance of the need for a limited war capability. General Norstad differentiated between the "sword" wielded by strategic air power and the "shield" function of ground forces. In 1957 he proposed a shield of 30 standing divisions, the purpose of which would be threefold: 1) to signify the commitment of the US to come to the defence of Europe; 2) in case of the failure of deterrence, to keep Russian troops out of Western Europe until the full weight of the alliance's retaliatory power could be brought to bear; and 3) to provide the "means to meet less-than-ultimate threats with a decisive, but less-than-ultimate response ... the very possession of this ability would discourage the threat, and would thereby provide us with

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[26]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 53.

essential political and military manoeuverability."[27]

The first two functions were broad, total-war components designed to supplement strategic forces in both their deterrent and war-fighting roles as part of NATO's commitment to forward defence. The third function hinted for the first time at providing NATO with an intermediate response capability, with "a force that could deal with attacks by the satellites, with probing actions by the Soviets, and with accidental outbreaks of violence between Soviet and Allied forces. With the 30-division force, NATO could put up enough resistance to force the Soviets to make their intentions perfectly clear, and the West could thereby avoid resorting to nuclear reprisal prematurely."[28] But Norstad outright denied the possibility of a limited war-fighting capability for NATO forces,[29] possibly because militarily, the forces available to NATO (16 to 18 divisions at the time) were unable to perform such a function; and politically, "a statement that a limited war was possible might [have been] a temptation for the Soviets to try one."[30]

That Norstad could not fully endorse limited war as alliance policy was a function of both military and political realities; but these same conditions also established the need

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[27]"Text of General Norstad's Cincinnati Speech", NATO Letter (December 1957), p. 27.

[28]Roger Hilsman, "Developing Strategic Context", in Knorr, ed., NATO and American Security, p. 30.

[29]New York Times, July 21, 1958.

[30]Hilsman, "Developing Strategic Context", p. 30.

for a new NATO policy, one which reconciled military capabilities with strategic requirements while simultaneously relieving the pressure created by the all or nothing choice the alliance faced in response to aggression. Thus, "lest he diminish the deterrence value of the nuclear forces upon which NATO in reality primarily depended, he denied the possibility of a limited war or of a conventional response beyond a brief hold action."[31]

The actual effect this declaratory shift had on SHAPE planning is uncertain, for "at the end of 1960 NATO's shield in fact remained at little more than half the operational strength that had been projected in 1957 as a bare minimum".[32] What is clear, though, is that the wheels were set in motion for a dramatic alteration to NATO defence policy which would take place under the Kennedy Administration.

The limited war debate was a polemical discussion. The only conclusive outcome which emerged from it was that massive retaliation clearly no longer met the deterrence requirements of the alliance. The effect of the debate on NATO strategy was twofold. Based on the fundamental assumption that the American strategic guarantee was no longer valid because of superpower nuclear parity, the debate itself created a crisis of confidence. Whether or not the United States was no longer willing to use nuclear weapons unless its

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[31]Robert Osgood, NATO: The Entangling Alliance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 162.

[32]*ibid.*, p. 163.

own territory was at stake, as the limited war proponents contended, the possibility that this was true was enough to cause Europeans to question their decade-long reliance on American nuclear retaliatory power. Europeans began to pursue their own solutions to their defence problems; the direction of these activities, which will be discussed later, profoundly affected NATO nuclear strategy as the American government clamoured to satisfy its European allies while keeping their nuclear aspirations in check.

Second, by pointing out the shortcomings of massive retaliation, the debate raised questions on the wisdom of reliance on nuclear weapons to deter Soviet aggression. But the suggestion that NATO should move away from firm reliance on nuclear weapons was a direct challenge to the arguments European statesmen had used throughout the 1950s to gain support for participation in NATO and, more specifically, for NATO's nuclear orientation. At the same time, it lent credence to those who were growing uncomfortable with NATO's nuclear dependence and fuelled the non-nuclear movements which became prominent during the 1960s.

European ambivalence toward nuclear weapons was complicated by European vulnerability to the immense destructive capabilities of these weapons. Given the possibility of devastation on a scale previously unknown, the European members of NATO increasingly began to ask, how *desirable* was a defence based on the threat to use nuclear weapons? And as the balance of terror evolved, the Europeans were faced with another, somewhat conflicting, problem: how *credible* was a defence based on the threat

to use nuclear weapons? Would the Americans, in light of the possibility of Soviet nuclear retaliation against American territory, use nuclear weapons in the defence of Europe? And if so, would the costs be worth it? Debate over these questions led Europeans to examine the merit of not just reliance on nuclear weapons but reliance on nuclear weapons *under American control.*

The credibility of NATO's deterrent strategy became wrapped up in this issue of control, particularly since the effectiveness of massive retaliation was predicated on a defence of vital interests. But with the changing strategic environment of the late 1950s and the emergence of nuclear parity, this simple statement of intent raised a number of difficult questions. How were vital interests to be defined? National existence, arguably the most fundamental concern, could be dependent on a variety of factors which would be determined by the particular nation in question. What constituted a threat to vital interests? Short of a full-scale enemy invasion, there were any number of provocations which could be deemed threatening, and whether or not they threatened vital interests would be a matter of interpretation. Lesser challenges could ultimately lead to a more substantial threat. Small incidents, when combined, could create a major concern; or left unchecked, they could embolden one's opponent to be more aggressive the next time. Malcolm Hoag presented a hypothetical case which explains this concept:

> Suppose the Soviets occupy an Alaskan island that is uninhabited and from which we draw nothing of value. In one sense, our interest in the island is not vital; it is practically non-existent. Yet our juridical claim to the area is clear, has been sanctioned by years of tradition, and the geographical line is obvious to all.... Not to respond with punishment more than proportionate to the provocation is to invite future aggression,

> especially aggression less naked in its challenge but involving territory more vital to us.[33]

This example raised another question which drove at the heart of the issue: *who* defined these interests as vital? The critique of massive retaliation made clear to everyone that it was an American-designed strategy which could only be implemented with American nuclear weapons employed at the discretion of the American government. Although this had always been the case, the exclusion of European governments from virtually all aspects of the nuclear deterrence process assumed new meaning in the late 1950s, given the changing strategic environment and the political and economic recovery of Western Europe. And in the mean time, the American monopoly over the nuclear process contributed to waning European defences: "Since the alliance [had] no control over the instrument around which its whole strategy [was] built, there [had] inevitably been an air of unreality about NATO planning."[34]

Massive retaliation was criticized as ignoring the complexity of security in the nuclear age. Changes in the way wars were fought, the reasons for which they were fought, and the nature of the combatants required corresponding innovations in strategy. Massive retaliation, however, was a classic deterrent strategy against a classic form of warfare, which was no longer the only form an attack on NATO could take and not even the most likely. As Kissinger wrote,

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[33]Malcolm W. Hoag, "The Place of Limited War in NATO Strategy", in Knorr, ed., NATO and American Security, p. 102.

[34]Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, p. 203.

> The traditional concept of aggression, as military attack by organized units across a sovereign boundary, presupposed a society of nations in which domination of one power by another was possible only by military victory of by annexation. But in the age of 'volunteers' and 'arms bases', or guerrilla warfare and economic penetration, the strategic balance may be upset without a clear-cut issue ever being presented.[35]

New and varied strategies were required to meet these new challenges; massive retaliation did not satisfy these requirements.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly from the perspective of this analysis, the rift developing over strategic issues threatened alliance cohesion. Given the growth in Soviet nuclear strength and the corresponding change to the strategic environment, NATO's nuclear strategy in the late 1950s presented unacceptable as well as unequal risks to the allies. With the argument that massive retaliation was justified only when vital US interests were threatened, Europeans believed they were being forced to bear a greater burden of alliance risk with diminished returns. "Whether objectively justified or not, the diminished credibility of American massive reprisal" thus brought out and hardened "the divergent patterns of risk and interest within the alliance."[36] Both the strategy's increased cost and the perception that this cost was not being shared evenly "created tensions between the allies which, in the view of some contemporaries, threatened the minimum degree of cohesion necessary for the alliance to function as a guarantor of the

[35] *ibid.*, p. 211.

[36] Knorr, "The Strained Alliance", p. 7.

security of its members."[37] The criticism of massive retaliation resulted in the search for an alternative strategy; at the same time, by illuminating the unequal risks of the alliance's deterrent strategy, the Europeans became aware that more than a new strategy was needed to ensure their security. Europeans wanted some control over the nuclear weapons on which their security was based.

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[37]Paul Buteux, The Politics of Nuclear Consultation in NATO, 1965-1980 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 4.

CHAPTER FIVE: Nuclear Sharing

How do we meet a growing but still somewhat confused and conflicting desire among our European allies for a broader sharing in the control of nuclear weapons?

— General Lauris Norstad, SACEUR (August 1959)[1]

By the late 1950s nuclear sharing was emerging as the most salient — and highly divisive — issue for the alliance. The limited war debate and the declining faith in massive retaliation made a military re-evaluation of NATO policy inevitable. Suez undermined European confidence in the American guarantee, and sparked fears in the United States that its allies, armed with nuclear weapons, might lead it down undesirable paths.[2] Sputnik underscored the need to modernize NATO's defensive preparations and threatened the American leadership role within the alliance. Economic recovery emboldened the Europeans anxious for an accompanying increase in political status. The synergistic effect of these events was European demand for an expanded role in alliance defence; and since nuclear weapons formed the core of this defence, greater access to nuclear technology and capabilities was at the heart of their aspirations. But rather than resolving the differences between the allies, proposals to increase access to nuclear weapons through a variety of hardware schemes seemed only to jeopardize alliance political cohesion and military collaboration even more so.

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[1]Quoted in Wilfrid Kohl, "Nuclear Sharing in NATO and the Multilateral Force", Political Science Quarterly, LXXX:1 (1965), p. 88.

[2]See, for example, Timothy Ireland, "Building NATO's Nuclear Posture: 1950-65", in Jeffrey Boutwell, *et al.*, eds., The Nuclear Confrontation in Europe (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 12.

The fact that most members of the alliance had relinquished control over the means of their defence to the US was a highly charged issue. Control of nuclear weapons rested "in American hands and outside the NATO structure," removing from the Europeans "direct influence over the key instruments of their own security."[3] This illustrates "the corrosive effects of nuclear arsenals on alliance relationships.... Nations which had long dominated world politics had been eased into subordinate relationships and no longer controlled the forces upon which the defence of their people and sovereign territory rested."[4] This lack of control not only had military ramifications, but political ones as well, since the ability of a government to protect its nation is one of the fundamental determinants of sovereignty. Despite the near-impossibility of self-defence in the nuclear age, reliance for so basic a function on an external power was politically demoralizing; with the onset of superpower nuclear parity, it also became militarily dangerous.

The threat to alliance cohesion posed by reliance on American nuclear weapons was exacerbated by two additional conditions: first, "NATO's overdependence on nuclear weapons in general"[5] meant that the Europeans had little alternative than subservience to American nuclear might. Second, alliance cohesion was threatened by the uncertainty

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[3]Michael Harrison, The Reluctant Ally: France and Atlantic Security (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 35.

[4]John D. Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 171.

[5]Robert Osgood, NATO: The Entangling Alliance (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 278-279.

which resulted from the lack of a clear employment doctrine for these nuclear weapons. Herein lay the heart of the matter: NATO strategy was based on the initiation of nuclear war, with weapons controlled by the Americans, to compensate for conventional deficiencies. This strategy bred the nuclear addiction and hence the reliance on American nuclear weapons which was beginning to sever alliance ties.

The fact that NATO strategy was to blame for the alliance's ailments was not readily grasped. In the late 1950s, debate on the alliance's nuclear strategy became enmeshed with the determination of the role to be played within that strategy by each of the allies. "Questions of nuclear strategy concerning what that strategy was to be, how it was to be determined, and in what manner it was to be implemented became of major political significance. In particular, these strategic concerns became focussed on the issue of nuclear sharing in the alliance, and on how nuclear weapons deployed in support of the alliance would be commanded and controlled."[6] Control was a much more tangible issue on which to focus attention than was the more abstract notion of strategy. It was easier for the allies to seek the possession of nuclear weapons because this would automatically confer a say over how they would be used. Thus the allies' initial attempts to resolve the strategic ambiguity lay in this realm.

Greater control over nuclear weapons was also viewed as a means of addressing

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[6]Paul Buteux, The Politics of Nuclear Consultation in NATO, 1965-1980 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 4.

the perceived imbalance between Soviet/Warsaw Pact and NATO forces. Fears of a "missile gap" emerged with the Soviet launching of Sputnik: not only did this demonstration indicate that the US itself would soon be threatened by direct nuclear attack from Soviet territory, but it also suggested that the Americans were losing the technology race. Sputnik reinforced the Europeans' worst fears arising from their dependence on the United States: due to recent developments, the Americans neither *would* nor *could* fulfil their commitment to the defence of Europe. Moreover, ambiguity concerning how nuclear weapons would be used led the Europeans not surprisingly to focus on ways of augmenting their control of nuclear weapons deployed in Europe, "for this was a possible area for European participation in the decision to make use of nuclear weapons."[7] And in some cases, the pursuit of independent nuclear capabilities seemed the best solution.

In addition to the credibility concerns, a major impetus for the Europeans in the development of national nuclear forces was the secrecy with which the United States shrouded its nuclear affairs. Despite war-time collaboration among many of the allies in the development of the A-bomb, the US refused to share any nuclear information. The 1946 Atomic Energy Act (better known as the McMahon Act) legislated against the dissemination of atomic weapons or technology, in an attempt to preserve the US monopoly. With the incorporation of tactical nuclear weapons into NATO defence

[7]A.J.R. Groom, British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons (London: F. Pinter, 1974), p. 293.

strategy in 1954, the Act was amended to permit the sharing of sufficient nuclear information to enable the allies to prepare for nuclear war; it also "permitted the President to direct the Atomic Energy Commission to deliver atomic weapons to the Department of Defense for such use as he deemed to be in the national interest", provided the warheads remained in American custody.[8] From this provision emerged a series of bilateral agreements between the United States and host countries in which nuclear weapons were stockpiled; the weapons, under American control, were to be released to the allies "in time of emergency".[9]

Despite the importance of the 1954 revision as "the first substantial measure of nuclear sharing"[10] the limited nature of the information released did little to satisfy the allies' requests, or discourage national nuclear aspirations. In fact, "it only whetted the allies' appetites for a larger share of the control of nuclear weapons and stimulated the British and French efforts to get American assistance in building independent nuclear capabilities."[11] Realizing that continued American secrecy about nuclear technology was having the opposite effect than desired, and in response to European calls at the December 1956 North Atlantic Council meeting for "more extensive sharing of

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[8]Osgood, NATO, p. 216.

[9]Norstad, NATO Letter, 1956, p. 37.

[10]Osgood, NATO, p. 216.

[11]*ibid.,* p. 217.

short-range nuclear systems on the part of the United States",[12] the American government pressed Congress for greater liberalization of nuclear sharing provisions.

The American position on nuclear sharing at this time was split between the views of the Eisenhower Administration and those of Congress. Eisenhower himself was generally supportive of nuclear sharing and liberalization of the restrictive McMahon Act, owing to his "long-standing view that European defence should be primarily a European responsibility".[13] The budget-conscious President favoured a more equitable sharing of the defence burden; nuclear dependence on the US allowed the allies to downplay their collective defence responsibilities and avoid the associated costs. Moreover, the American monopoly was having a detrimental effect on the alliance's political cohesion and military collaboration by encouraging the development of independent nuclear forces of allies dissatisfied with reliance on the United States. Such a trend toward national nuclear forces increased the chances of a nuclear accident, encouraged proliferation outside the NATO area and, more importantly, redirected allied contributions away from NATO's conventional shield force. As Osgood commented: "Nations that could not control the use of the principal weapon upon which their security depended could not be expected to contribute fully to the required build-up of conventional forces, which were intended only to enforce a 'pause' and touch off nuclear warfare."[14] The Joint

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[12] Ireland, "Building NATO's Nuclear Posture", p. 12.

[13] *ibid.*

[14] Osgood, NATO, p. 277.

Committee on Atomic Energy, however, viewed the situation differently. The JCAE was protective of American control and feared dangerous consequences if the dissemination nuclear weapons was allowed. The irresponsible actions of the British and French in the Suez debacle justified their concerns.

A compromise in the sharing of nuclear weapons had been reached previously in the establishment of the "dual-key" formula, under which "the European allies would purchase nuclear capable systems from the United States and station them with their own forces.... [T]he United States would retain physical custody over the nuclear warheads for the missiles."[15] Thus by 1958, some short-range ballistic missiles, medium-range cruise missiles and air-defence missiles were to be made available to the Europeans under the dual-key system.[16]

Under continued pressure, Congress agreed in 1958 to a further amendment to the McMahon Act, which permitted the transmission of more detailed nuclear information to the allies. However, it restricted the sharing of "technical information and materials for the *manufacture* of nuclear weapons" to only those nations that had made "'substantial progress in the development of atomic weapons'".[17] Thus Britain was the only real benefactor of this revision, and the extension of preferential treatment supported French

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[15]Ireland, "Building NATO's Nuclear Posture", p. 13.

[16]New York Times, 13 April 1957, p. 1.

[17]Osgood, NATO, p. 226, emphasis added.

accusations of Anglo-American domination of the alliance. Needless to say, this did nothing to enhance alliance cohesion or promote cooperation in strategic planning. Moreover, rather than diminish national nuclear projects this provision spurred them forward, toward the level at which American aid would become available. Clearly a more comprehensive means of sharing control over nuclear weapons was required.

Missiles for Europe

Trying simultaneously to address the challenges burgeoning Soviet nuclear capabilities posed to American security and NATO's military effectiveness, and to discourage the development of national nuclear arsenals, the Americans proposed in late 1957 European basing for intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs). Based on the findings of the Killian panel[18] research in intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) technology was given priority. But because such plans were not expected to bear fruit until 1962, a temporary stop-gap measure was required to address the Soviet challenge until the long-range missiles could become operational. The report recommended the production of the shorter-range IRBMs which, because they lacked the technical problems ICBM development was incurring, could be ready several years ahead of the ICBMs.[19]

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[18]James R. Killian, president of MIT, was asked by President Eisenhower in 1954 to lead a panel of scientific experts in "a study of the country's technological capabilities to meet some of its current problems." James R. Killian, Sputnik, Scientists, and Eisenhower (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1977), pp. 67-68.

[19]David Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1983), p. 63.

The significance of this time factor led to the go-ahead on production of Thor and Jupiter IRBMS to be based in Europe. These missiles would counter Soviet ICBMs until the United States' own contingent could be deployed. The deployments were considered to possess both a strategic asset, in terms of providing "an additional retaliatory system for the West, and additional trigger for SAC, and an added complication for Soviet defense plans" as well as a political asset by offsetting any negative effects Soviet medium-range missiles were having on the "balance of confidence" within NATO.[20] The political significance of these missiles was equally as important as their strategic rationale: proponents argued their direct relevance to the superpower strategic balance demonstrated "the strength of America's commitment to European security".[21] If US security depended on the Thors and Jupiters in Europe, then a Soviet attack on these missiles would necessitate an American response.

An agreement with Britain was reached in 1958 under which it agreed to purchase sixty Thor missiles from the US, to be stationed on British territory under dual-key control.[22] Subsequent deals secured the delivery of Jupiter missiles to Italy and Turkey under the same type of control arrangements, although in these situations the US retained ownership of the missiles. West German participation in the IRBM deployments was never formally sought, owing to the politically and militarily sensitive nature of the

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[20]Michael H. Armacost, The Politics of Weapons Innovation (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 175-176.

[21]Ireland, "Building NATO's Nuclear Posture", p. 14.

[22]Jack Raymond, New York Times (February 16, 1957), p. 1.

Republic's position. Attempts were made, however, to reach an agreement with the French. But because of US resistance to French conditions on IRBM deployment — that the US provide technical and financial aid for France's own nuclear arsenal — the American offer was rejected.[23]

The planned deployment of IRBMs to Europe was part of SACEUR Norstad's five-year force requirements presented at the December 1957 NATO Council meeting. The three-part proposal (designated MC-70) was designed to address what Norstad considered a gap in NATO defence preparations. The intermediate-range missiles under the dual-key arrangement constituted the first part of his plan. Second, he advocated a land-mobile medium-range ballistic missile force produced by a consortium of the major allies under US control. Based on the need to meet the growing threat of Soviet missiles which could reach Europe (but not the US) and to account for the impending obsolescence of NATO's tactical interdiction forces, Norstad argued that such an MRBM capability was required to maintain the theatre balance on which deterrence rested.[24] Finally, "the third part of the plan envisaged the design and development of subsequent-generation delivery systems by the established consortium."[25] Together these plans proposed to satisfy European security concerns and the allies' nuclear aspirations

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[23] New York Times, July 5, 1958, p. 1 and July 6, 1958, p. 1; Ireland, "Building NATO's Nuclear Posture", p. 23.

[24] Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 176; see also Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 76.

[25] Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 184.

by providing them with a nuclear capability under the control of SACEUR: in effect, turning NATO into the "fourth nuclear power". The weapons advanced for this NATO nuclear force were the Polaris. Mobile and solid-fuelled, the Polaris amply suited Norstad's requirements of relative invulnerability to pre-emption and a high state of readiness.[26]

Norstad's proposal won limited support from the American government, which advanced the MRBM concept as a political imperative to enhance allied confidence in NATO defence preparations. Washington also believed that an MRBM force for Europe would halt national nuclear aspirations, which it deemed to be contrary to American security. In Congressional hearings to amend the McMahon Act and relax nuclear sharing regulations, one witness argued that:

> It is of major importance to the security of the United States and to the unity and resolution of the free world that our allies have confidence in their ability to meet aggression swiftly and effectively.... [I]f NATO is furnished a nuclear capability on a cooperative basis, there will be less incentive to additional countries to enter the atomic weapons field.[27]

But JCAE opposition and French demands forced Eisenhower to back away from Norstad's plan. De Gaulle's condition of American aid to the French independent nuclear programme in return for his acceptance of the proposal raised fears that Germany would

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[26]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 77; Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 185.

[27]U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, Hearings Amending the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, 85th Congress, 2nd Session, 1958, p. 93. Quoted in Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 180.

duplicate such demands and made the American government wary of the deal.

Eisenhower's proposal to amend the McMahon Act in order to arm the Europeans with nuclear weapons[28] met with resolute opposition from the JCAE whose members feared that nuclear weapons might fall into "weak or irresponsible hands" and that such liberalization would encourage the Soviets to arm the Chinese.[29] Concern also existed that the allies might not be long satisfied with arrangements giving the US a veto over nuclear usage; no provision existed to prevent individual allies from seizing forces under NATO command for their own use.[30] Moreover, the possibility that Germany desired independent nuclear control was unacceptable to both East and West. In the final analysis, then, the American Administration concluded that such a dispersion of nuclear weapons and technology was not in the best interests of their security.

It must, however, be clearly noted that while European objections did exist, it was ultimately American reservations which killed the project. Though important, pacifying the allies' demands for greater access to nuclear weapons was a consideration secondary

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[28]In a press conference, the President stated: "I have always been of the belief that we should not deny to our allies what the enemies, what your potential enemy, already has. We do want allies to be treated as partners and allies and not as junior members of a firm who are to be seen and not heard. So I think that it would be better, for the interests of the United States, to make our law more liberal...." Transcript of Eisenhower's News Conference on Domestic and Foreign Matters, New York Times, Feb. 4, 1960, p. 12.

[29]John Finney, "Sharing A-Bombs Called a Danger", New York Times, 10 February 1960, p. 4.

[30]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 81.

to the central military problem: how to prevent the erosion of American security by growing Soviet nuclear capabilities and enhance the credibility of extended deterrence. These problems continued on throughout the 1960s and elicited from the new Kennedy administration a number of potential solutions; solutions which, at the same time, were influenced by past nuclear sharing proposals.

The Multilateral Force

The nuclear sharing issue took on new importance under the Kennedy Administration. European demands for greater independence could no longer go unanswered, particularly given the increasing interest in national nuclear forces. A means was also needed to alleviate allied doubts about the American commitment to Europe's defence, and to enhance the credibility of alliance deterrence. In addition to these political imperatives, there was a military requirement to address the growing number of Soviet MRBMs and IRBMs targeted at Europe. In response to these concerns, the idea of a multilateral force was pursued as a means to improve NATO cohesion and provide the allies "with a worthy strategic role".[31]

In these first few years of the 1960s, the MLF was not the only solution pursued by the Americans in response to the problems plaguing NATO. Support for national nuclear forces — begun under Eisenhower with the amendments to the McMahon Act and

[31]Alastair Buchan, "The Multilateral Force: A Study in Alliance Politics," International Affairs 40:4 (October 1964), p. 624.

preferential treatment for the British nuclear deterrent — continued, at times as an alternative to the MLF, at times in concert with the collective force proposal. At the same time, Secretary of Defense McNamara was engineering a revolution in American strategic thought, which had as its main tenet the centralization of command and control of nuclear weapons. This new nuclear philosophy utterly opposed the devolution of nuclear control, either to SACEUR, as envisioned by the MLF proponents, or to individual allies, as provided for by national nuclear forces. Instead, McNamara proposed to satisfy the allies' nuclear desires by inclusion in American nuclear planning decisions.

Competition within the US Administration between supporters of these various perspectives resulted in a schizophrenic approach to NATO nuclear policy during this period. The outcome of this confusion was the clarification of alliance requirements regarding access to nuclear weapons; it also set the stage for a final solution to nuclear management within NATO. In any case, the nuclear sharing issue was not a trivial one. The political differences plaguing the alliance placed in grave danger its ability to fulfil its main objective; as one contemporary noted, these differences threatened "indirectly its military strength by destroying its unity of purpose to deter aggression and promote disarmament."[32] Despite a variety of subgoals, the overriding purpose of the MLF proposal was to resolve European anxieties about the control of nuclear weapons and unify the alliance.

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[32]Frederick W. Mulley, "NATO's Nuclear Problems: Control or Consultation" Orbis VIII:1 (Spring 1964), p. 29.

Norstad's proposed MRBM force was followed by the suggestion for a collective alliance force, to be manned, owned and controlled multilaterally. At the December 1960 NATO Ministerial Council meeting, out-going Secretary of State Christian Herter announced that the US was prepared to commit to the alliance five nuclear submarines armed with 80 Polaris missiles. As a supplement to this force, he also suggested that Washington would be willing to support a NATO deterrent in terms of selling to the allies 100 MRBMs to be deployed at sea alongside the American submarines. Conditional upon such a sale, however, was agreement among the allies on how such a force would be controlled and allied acceptance of a greater share in the burden of defence.[33]

The proposal to make NATO into a 'fourth nuclear power' received little reaction from Europe coming, as it did, in the final days of the Eisenhower Administration. The new Kennedy government was not enthusiastic about the plan either; European based missiles were losing their appeal within the Pentagon and centralized control over nuclear weapons was developing as major policy theme.[34] But in May the following year, President Kennedy reintroduced the collective force idea in an Ottawa speech:

> To make clear our own intentions and commitments to the defense of Western Europe, the United States will commit to the NATO command five -- and subsequently still more -- Polaris-missile submarines, which are defensive weapons, *subject to any agreed NATO guidelines on their control and use*, and responsive to the needs of all members but still credible in an emergency. Beyond this, we look to the possibility of establishing a NATO sea-borne force, which would be truly multi-lateral

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[33]Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 153.

[34]Buchan, "The Multilateral Force", p. 623.

in ownership and control, if this should be desired and found feasible by our Allies, *once NATO's non-nuclear goals have been achieved.*[35]

The qualification attached to the Polaris proposal, that the Europeans agree upon a command structure for the nuclear force, indicated the tentativeness of Kennedy's support. More telling was his unwillingness to consider a multilateral force until conventional improvements had been implemented. In any case, the idea again received a minimal response.

The concept of a European nuclear force did not re-emerge until more than a year later. At this time, two major changes in the strategic environment made a revival of the MLF possible — if not necessarily desirable. First was a shift in the superpower strategic balance away from the position of predominance occupied by the US since the end of World War II. The Soviet Union's movement toward nuclear parity with the United States eroded the credibility of NATO's reliance on first-use and massive retaliation which had presented acceptable risks under conditions of American numerical and technological superiority. Soviet superiority in medium-range ballistic missiles and the lack of a European equivalent compounded these risks. In a report he prepared for the State Department, Robert Bowie noted: "The risks of undue reliance on nuclear weapons have therefore become excessive."[36]

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[35] Public Papers of the Presidents : John F. Kennedy, 1961, p. 385, as quoted in Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 88. Emphasis added.

[36] Robert R. Bowie, "Strategy and the Atlantic Alliance", in Henry A. Kissinger, Problems of National Strategy, (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 239.

The Bowie Report, which led directly to Herter's proposal and greatly influenced nuclear and alliance policy direction in the first half of the 1960s, also discovered a second factor which would have to be taken into account in any new initiative: the change in intra-alliance relationships, both between Europe and the US, and among the Europeans themselves. Having undergone a dramatic transformation from the weak, fragmented countries of the post-war era, the European nations were now economically strong and politically confident, no longer willing to blindly follow American directives but consumed with a sense of their own independent identity. Bowie concluded with somewhat of a warning: "This emerging Europe deeply wants a more self-respecting role in the world. This desire is already genuine and strong and will gradually become more of a force. Europeans do not like the feeling of being wards of the United States."[37]

Relations within Europe were also changing in a way that would forever alter NATO politics. Gone were French efforts to draw a reluctant Britain into European affairs as a counter to West Germany; instead, British attempts to gain membership in the Common Market were being rebuked by a France seeking friendship with its German neighbours in opposition to the Anglo-Saxon domination of the alliance.[38] The disintegrative impact of de Gaulle's actions combined with the possibility that a Franco-German pact would give Germany direct access to nuclear weapons necessitated an immediate response.

[37]Bowie, "Strategy and the Atlantic Alliance", p. 239.

[38]Frederick Mulley, "NATO's Nuclear Problems", p. 22.

Against this backdrop the offer to create a multilateral force was resubmitted in the second half of 1962 by American officials seeking a salve to NATO's nuclear problems. In a number of speeches to the alliance members throughout that fall, the idea a fleet of surface ships armed with Polaris missiles jointly owned and operated was advanced.[39] This despite Kennedy's preference for a multinational solution to NATO's nuclear management problems. As Paul Buteux notes, "given that there had been positive allied responses to what Herter had said, the new administration was unable to abandon entirely the idea of a NATO seaborne force."[40] Norstad's land-mobile MRBM force, though essentially abandoned by the US government, had not yet met with such final rejection by the European governments. Thus the MLF, though not a satisfying proposition in and of itself from the US point of view, was nonetheless a superior alternative.

The events of the intervening year between the MLF's initial unveiling and its reintroduction had a direct impact on Kennedy's decision to reconsider a European collective force. One of the main goals of American participation in NATO – European political and economic unity – was in serious jeopardy. Since the development of the Marshall Plan, US policy had encouraged European cohesion in economic, military and even political terms, in the hopes that "if the plans for European unity should come to full fruition...together, a unified Western Europe and the United States could shoulder the

[39]Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 233.

[40]Buteux, Consultation, p. 20.

formidable tasks of constructive world leadership."[41]

But this vision of 'Atlantic partnership' conflicted with de Gaulle's aspiration of a revived Europe under French leadership, a Europe which rejected American hegemony. French actions, driven by the very nationalism that institutions like NATO and the EEC aimed to transcend, were intended to undermine American influence. At the same time, France's veto of British entry into the European Community in January 1963 was designed to deny the British an opportunity to challenge France's power base on the Continent; pursuit of a French national nuclear force denied to the Germans — who renounced nuclear weapons production — the same opportunity.[42] De Gaulle clearly threatened the unity and cooperation which NATO policy sought.

A second issue which led the American Administration to look more favourably upon the MLF proposal concerned the effect on the allies — particularly Germany — of the renunciation of massive retaliation as NATO policy. Although the strategy had clearly been in retreat since the advent of sufficient Soviet nuclear capabilities, the final repudiation of massive retaliation came with McNamara's flexible response proposal at the NATO ministerial meetings at Athens in April 1962. At the same time, the removal of the Jupiter bases in Turkey ostensibly in response to Soviet demands and the increased

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[41]Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 223.

[42]Robert Bowie, "Tensions within the Alliance", Foreign Affairs 42:1 (October 1963), pp. 55-59.

emphasis McNamara's Athens programme placed on conventional weapons heightened doubts about the credibility of the US nuclear pledge to defend European interests.[43] The possibility that Europe would once again be drawn into a protracted conventional war was unsettling to all Europeans, but in particular to Germans who would bear the brunt of any such assault. The MLF seemed to respond more appropriately to their demands to be defended rather than liberated.

Third, the MLF presented an opportunity to bring Germany into the military alliance on a more equal footing with the other members. As one commentator noted at the time: "The supporters of the MLF feel strongly that Germany has not received equal treatment or equal international status in the alliance, and that such equal treatment is necessary if mistakes of the past are to be avoided and if the European Community and NATO are to remain strong and grow."[44] The MLF was thus presented as a means to end this discrimination and satisfy Germany's demands for greater participation in the alliance's nuclear defence, without actually giving the Germans national control over nuclear weapons; for it was feared that "without a tangible collective framework like the MLF, eventual development of a German national nuclear force was inevitable."[45] Although this was thought to be the case, in fact it was a most unlikely development.

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[43]J.W. Bouton, "NATO and the MLF", Journal of Contemporary History 7:4 (October 1972), p. 280. See also Buchan, "The Multilateral Force", p. 624.

[44]Wilfrid Kohl, "Nuclear Sharing in NATO and the Multilateral Force", Political Science Quarterly LXXX:1 (1965), p. 93.

[45]Catherine McArdle Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 229.

The MLF was also advanced in the wake of the failure of the multinational machinery proposed by McNamara in his Athens speech. To convince the allies of the undesirability of national nuclear forces and foster support for his flexible response doctrine, McNamara proposed the establishment of a nuclear committee to provide the allies with detailed strategic information which they were currently denied. But opposition from the State Department and the JCS to the release of such classified information diluted the impact of the briefing sessions to such an extent that they were no substitute for the MLF.[46]

Finally, the commitment of State Department officials to the MLF scheme factored significantly in the revival of the proposal. Responsible for the original Herter proposal, these individuals "had early made up their minds that the multilateral solution was the correct one".[47] Their support for the MLF was manifest in an intense lobbying effort to bring others to their side of the multilateral versus multinational debate.

In addition to these over-arching concerns, the MLF's revival was given added impetus at the beginning of 1963 by two specific events: the cancellation of Skybolt and the signing of the Franco-German Treaty of Cooperation. The American December 1962 decision not to proceed with production of the Skybolt missile threatened political disaster for the British government, which had been relying on the new weapons to serve as the

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[46]Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, pp. 211-212.

[47]Buchan, "The Multilateral Force", p. 624.

backbone of the British deterrent. Although just one of many missiles under development by the American government, for the British Skybolt symbolized their nuclear independence. "With Skybolt, the RAF Bomber Command would double its prospective life of proclaimed usefulness as a strategic deterrent."[48] But Defence Department officials had determined that the missile was not cost-effective and ended its development on this basis.

The Americans' unilateral cancellation of the weapons programme also jeopardized Anglo-American relations; in order to prevent a diplomatic nightmare, Kennedy offered to replace Skybolt with Polaris missiles. This move distressed those in Washington who were opposed to independent nuclear forces. They saw the missile's cancellation for financial reasons as an ideal way to ease the British out of the nuclear game. The Americans therefore sought to minimize the contribution of Polaris to Britain's nuclear independence by making the offer contingent on the weapons being pledged to NATO. But independence was precisely what the British were after and they insisted that this condition was unacceptable since no such strings had been attached to the original Skybolt deal.

The wording of the resulting Nassau agreement was sufficiently ambiguous to allow both sides to claim victory. The US agreed "to make available on a continuing

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[48]Richard Neustadt, Alliance Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 33.

basis Polaris missiles (less warheads) for British submarines" in accordance with "the development of a multilateral NATO nuclear force."[49] For their part, the British conceded to the assignment of Polaris to NATO, "except where Her Majesty's Government may decided that supreme national interests are at stake."[50] While the British were feeling confident that they had maintained the independence of their nuclear deterrent, the Americans believed they had successfully tied the Polaris to NATO. Washington used the deal as an affirmation of the collective force principle, and proceeded to seek agreement on the MLF from other NATO allies -- but not before approaching France.

Anticipating a French reaction of Anglo-American collusion at Nassau, the Polaris deal was immediately extended to de Gaulle. With nationalist arrogance indicative of things to come, de Gaulle held a dramatic press conference on January 14, 1963 at which he not only turned down the American offer but also denounced French participation in any NATO nuclear force.[51] Further shattering the European unity movement, he vetoed British entry to the EEC and, one week later, concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between France and West Germany, which was interpreted as a threat to advance German nuclear aspirations.

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[49]Nassau Communiqué, New York Times (22 December 1962), p. 3.

[50]*ibid.*

[51]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, pp. 105-106.

These events added urgency to the already reinvigorated MLF proposal. At this point any military rationale that had existed for the MLF was completely subsumed by the overriding political necessity to repair the rifts in the alliance and prevent German acquisition of nuclear weapons. In particular, something had to be done to keep de Gaulle from causing any further damage to the unity movement. As J.W. Boulton concluded, Washington advanced the MLF scheme "to isolate France, quarantine Gaullism, and halt the trend toward disintegration in Europe".[52] The MLF was a technical solution to a largely political problem, particularly given that Polaris missiles deployed on American submarines and the soon-anticipated ICBM force could adequately deter Soviet missiles.

With this in mind, serious negotiations were initiated with European governments to sell them on an MLF. The proposal presented to the allies early in 1963 differed from Herter's original idea in a number of ways. In particular, the collective force would be based on jointly owned, financed, and controlled mixed-manned *surface* ships; submarines had been replaced in deference to US Navy and JCAE objections to exposing sensitive nuclear submarine technology to foreign crews, "technology which the Soviets were apparently having difficulty in mastering."[53] The mixed-manned requirement was to prevent the seizure of the vessel by any one nation for its own purposes.

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[52]Boulton, "NATO and the MLF", pp. 282-283.

[53]Buchan, "The Multilateral Force", p. 628.

After a cautious beginning, Germany expressed serious interest in the collective force proposal. Anxious to confirm that the Franco-German Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation did not signal Bonn's intention to pursue its own nuclear force, nor disentangle Germany from its commitment to Atlantic defence, Chancellor Erhard enthusiastically supported the MLF as a means to involve Germany in nuclear deterrence and thereby remedy the country's inferior status within the alliance. In addition to political motivations, Bonn was increasingly concerned about the credibility of the American nuclear guarantee, given superpower strategic parity and the shift in American strategic doctrine introduced by McNamara at the 1962 Athens meeting. Furthermore, proposals like the British-supported multinational force would exclude Germany from the outset and entrench its inferior status. In the multilateral force endorsed by the Americans, on the other hand, the Germans would have the opportunity to participate in the initial determination of the form of such forces. Not only would the MLF formalize a continued American presence in Europe, but it would also "force more regular consultation by America with its partners...[and] militate against any sudden American force withdrawals or thin-outs."[54] Even if its military rationale were dubious, for Germany the MLF symbolized the strength of NATO and the ability of its members to reach agreement on nuclear matters.

Fuelled by American sponsorship and German support the MLF idea steamed ahead full speed. President Johnson set December 1964 as the deadline for agreement on

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[54]Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons, p. 234.

a final deal. But British reluctance to endorse the proposal posed a major stumbling block. By tying Britain's nuclear weapons to NATO, the scheme threatened its nuclear independence; by securing for Germany a place in the nuclear club, the MLF threatened Britain's superior status.[55] France, which was becoming ever more nationalist and independent under de Gaulle, made no secret of its general contempt for the initiative. De Gaulle attempted first to lure the Germans away from the MLF by enticing them with a possible German role in the French *force de frappe,* and then to frighten them off the deal by threatening collapse of the EEC.[56] For the US, constricting the independent nuclear forces of these nations was definitely a side benefit, if not an outright main aim.

Interest within other European capitals was restrained, and negotiations throughout 1964 revealed a number of contentious issues. Concerns were raised regarding the ability of the Polaris missiles to hit their targets, the difficulties of reconciling national rivalries to meet the mixed-manned requirement, cost and, in particular, the unresolved issue of control. "American planners gradually made clear that operational control would rest with SACEUR, that planning would be by majority vote, and that, in a crisis, decisions on the use of the force would be made by a small group, probably the four major contributors, whose heads of government would each have a veto."[57] Inclusion of an American veto provided the force with few advantages to the Europeans over the current arrangement

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[55]Boulton, "NATO and the MLF", p. 286.

[56]John Newhouse, De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons (New York: Viking Press, 1970), pp. 268-273.

[57]Boulton, "NATO and the MLF", p. 291.

of reliance on American nuclear weapons, despite American suggestions that it might in the future relinquish this control. Moreover, this possibility fuelled Soviet claims that the MLF was a screen for nuclear proliferation, and Moscow threatened to scuttle the Test Ban Treaty talks over this point.[58]

These open issues made formal agreement on the MLF impossible, and in December 1964, despite having nearly come into being, the proposal met its demise. President Johnson announced he would no longer pressure the Europeans to accept the deal, since it seemed they no longer wanted it. A common European position would have to be formulated, but without American intervention this did not emerge; by the end of 1965 Johnson and German Chancellor Erhard publicly acknowledged that the MLF was a dead issue.[59] Having been pursued as a means of uniting Europe, the proposal threatened rather to divide it in the face of British and French opposition. Its implementation was, in any case, tenuous at best owing to strong opposition by Defense Secretary McNamara, the JCAE and Congress, as well as little active support of any of the armed services.[60]

Steinbruner cites the fact that the US forwarded the MLF proposal for European consideration without having resolved the major anomalies inherent in the concept as one

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[58]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 111.

[59]*ibid.*, p. 122.

[60]Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 248.

reason for its failure. "The President remained unwilling to relinquish his veto over the firing of any NATO force, and yet a sharing of control remained the essence of the proposal."[61] By not properly assessing or answering Germany's nuclear defence requirements, the collective force proposal ultimately appealed to no one. "Thus the absurd paradox: the United States only proposed the force because they thought the Germans wanted something like it, and the Germans only accepted it to please the administration in Washington".[62]

In this study of the development of alliance strategic policy, the MLF's importance stems from its role in shaping the allies' demands and expectations of that policy. NATO strategy was not only designed to meet the Soviet threat but also to satisfy the requirements of its members. The decade of the 1960s witnessed the economic, political and social revival of Europe, and a new set of demands accompanied this resurgence. At the same time, the Soviet military build-up challenged current assumptions about deterrence, forcing an alteration to military policy. The MLF emerged as a proposal to deal with both changes, but failed, as Buchan concluded, because "of French chauvinism, British hesitations and a series of false American judgements about the nature of Europe and about the strength of her own position there...."[63]

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[61]*ibid.*

[62]Mulley, "NATO's Nuclear Problems", p. 30.

[63]Buchan, "The Multilateral Force", p. 637.

The proposed devolution of operational nuclear control contained in the MLF concept had fierce opponents in Washington on the basis of the emerging requirement for centralization of nuclear forces. The British and French opposed proliferation (notwithstanding American assistance to their own nuclear programmes), and therefore rejected the MLF out of fear that the force would jeopardize their independent nuclear arsenals while simultaneously tempting the Germans to nuclear independence. Germany was not however interested in its own nuclear force, but rather in gaining access to decisions crucial for its national security; although interested in the MLF as a 'better than nothing', the collective force would not likely have satisfied German needs for long.

Advanced by the State Department to suit a variety of American aims with regard to NATO strategy and European political outcomes, the MLF proposal represented "a transitional phase in the development of American policy toward nuclear sharing between the approach exemplified by Norstad on the one hand, which stressed the need for direct European participation in the operation of nuclear forces, and that subsequently associated with McNamara, which stressed allied consultations on the revision of alliance strategy...."[64]

What became clear during the MLF episode was the allies' desire to play a role in alliance policy; what remained unclear, however, was the role they wanted to play and the impact they hoped to achieve through increased participation. So while the MLF left

[64]Buteux, Consultation, p. 19.

the stage, nuclear sharing and the more general concern of how best to ensure European security persisted as central issues. The demise of the MLF cleared the road for McNamara's consultative approach and the implementation of flexible response.

CHAPTER SIX: The Acceptance of Flexible Response

A strategy of flexible and managed escalation obviously requires a system of flexible and managed consultation.[1]

Despite the attention paid to proposals which called for an increase in the allies' physical access to nuclear weapons, NATO's doctrinal dilemmas were ultimately resolved by increased participation at a political level. Two key events in the mid-1960s provided a way out of the nuclear sharing impasse. First, the Americans succeeded (once France had withdrawn from NATO's integrated military command) in gaining acceptance of flexible response as a new strategic concept which would provide a more credible deterrent and reduce the allies' anxieties over nuclear weapons. Second, the development of substantive vehicles for the sharing of nuclear information, culminating in the formation of the Nuclear Planning Group, provided the allies with the kind of input into nuclear decision making that the multilateral force and other hardware proposals had failed to deliver. Moreover, this meaningful consultation on nuclear matters assisted the US in convincing its partners to accept flexible response as the guiding principle of NATO nuclear strategy.

As we saw in Chapter 5, Washington initially responded to the allies' demands for greater input into nuclear deterrence with proposals for the physical sharing of control over nuclear weapons. These hardware initiatives, begun under Eisenhower with the

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[1]Harland Cleveland, NATO: The Transatlantic Bargain (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 82.

stockpiling of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe for use by allied troops, carried on into Kennedy's term in office even as the new President requested a review of US and NATO strategic policy. Under the direction of Defense Secretary McNamara, the review promoted a strategy for NATO based on flexibility and a renewed emphasis on conventional defensive preparations. Flexible battle plans required the centralized command and control of nuclear weapons, a concept which collided with the devolution of nuclear weapons espoused by such proposals as that in favour of a multilateral force; a revived non-nuclear effort was viewed negatively by the allies, for a variety of reasons which this chapter will consider. Believing that a greater understanding of his reasoning would lead to increased acceptance of his methods, McNamara pursued the consultative approach as the solution to NATO's nuclear woes. His efforts, as we have seen, were both overshadowed and initially dampened by the forces favouring the MLF. In the wake of the failure of the MLF, however, McNamara pursued with renewed vigour and ultimate success a political solution to NATO's military problems.

Several major themes set the stage for alliance policy deliberations in the 1960s. Centralized nuclear command and control, renewed emphasis on conventional capabilities, greater allied participation in the determination of nuclear policy, and the primacy of alliance cohesion formed the cornerstones of McNamara's defence policy for NATO. These principles emerged from McNamara's in-depth review of US strategic policy in response to President Kennedy's directive to find alternatives to the "all or nothing" scenario. In particular, McNamara sought a means of responding to aggression which

would "deter most of warfare and, to the extent that that was impossible ... to limit conflict to non-nuclear means."[2] The results of this review directly affected NATO strategy.

In his reappraisal of defence policy, McNamara was heavily influenced by the work of Albert Wohlstetter, a prestigious military theorist at the RAND Corporation. In a 1959 article on nuclear strategy, Wohlstetter had presented some radical ideas which were to have a significant impact on nuclear deterrence theory. First, Wohlstetter cautioned that the possession of nuclear weapons alone would not ensure deterrence, that "deterrence ... is not automatic".[3] He attacked the widely held belief that deterrence was based on matching American striking forces with those of the Soviets, arguing that deterrence "will be the product of sustained intelligent effort and hard choices."[4] In particular, Wohlstetter stressed the importance of a second-strike capability to strengthen the 'delicate' balance of terror implicit in deterrence.[5]

Second, Wohlstetter wrote that even if these stringent requirements were met, deterrence would not be assured: "Without a deterrent, general war is likely. With it,

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[2]William Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 73.

[3]Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror", Foreign Affairs Vol. 37, No. 2 (January 1959), pp. 211-212.

[4]*ibid.*, p. 211.

[5]*ibid.*, p. 213.

however, war might still occur."[6] In addition to the possibility of accidental nuclear war, Wohlstetter cautioned that nuclear war could arise from a variety of situations entirely different from the prevailing assumptions of a massive, all-out Soviet attack. He also described the range of alternatives open to an aggressor in terms of weapons systems, basing provisions, and targets. These choices, asserted Wohlstetter, required the means of deterrence be equally diverse, responsive to the particular threat posed by the enemy.

Henry Kissinger wrote: "More than any other individual, Professor Wohlstetter provided the intellectual impetus for the recasting of American military strategy in the 1960's."[7] To be sure, the American Defense Secretary agreed with Wohlstetter's conviction that mere possession of nuclear weapons did not ensure deterrence. McNamara further argued that strategic nuclear forces would only deter certain kinds of aggression. The threat to invoke their immense destructive potential would only be credible against a challenge proportional to the risk: specifically, a strategic nuclear attack launched by the Soviet Union. This assumption was borne out in the experiences of Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia, where massive retaliation had deterred neither communist guerrilla action nor the open use of conventional force.[8]

If deterrence was not automatic, then the need existed to determine the

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[6] *ibid.*, p. 231.

[7] Henry Kissinger, Problems of National Security (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 34.

[8] Alain Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, How Much Is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969 (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 123.

requirements of deterrence and then develop force structures and strategies capable of fulfilling those requirements. "As long as 'massive retaliation' was the doctrine, it did not seem to matter so much what the Warsaw Pact had, since the Soviets were presumably deterred by bombs and missiles from Nebraska, not by bazookas and mortars from nearby."[9] With the shift away from instant and massive retaliation however, how NATO forces stacked up against the Warsaw Pact's arsenal became increasingly more meaningful. McNamara emphasized the importance of linking force structure to strategy in terms of "determining the role that each of the major types of forces — strategic nuclear, tactical nuclear, and conventional — would play in the face of existing and potential threats."[10] The past practice of identifying strategy only with maximum force had to be abandoned.[11] And as the make-up of the deterrent force took on greater importance, so too did the way in which it would be used. McNamara rejected the single massive "spasm" option of the 1960 single integrated operational plan (SIOP), in which all US strategic nuclear weapons would be launched against an indiscriminate list of targets.[12] Instead, McNamara had a revised SIOP drawn up which separated targets into

[9]Cleveland, NATO, p. 83.

[10]Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy, p. 71.

[11]Henry Kissinger, "Missiles and the Western Alliance", Foreign Affairs Vol. 36, No. 3 (1958), p. 385.

[12]The purpose of the 1960 SIOP implemented under Eisenhower was to coordinate the burgeoning US nuclear forces of the Air Force, Army and Navy under a single planning command to alleviate the dangerous and wasteful duplication of targets. While this military logic appealed to then Defense Secretary Gates, development of the SIOP had as much to do with inter-service rivalry and Air Force attempts to maintain control the prestigious strategic-nuclear business, as with efficient military planning. See Fred Kaplan, Wizards of Armageddon (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), pp. 263-270.

nuclear, other military, and urban/industrial. Military operations were to be dedicated against counterforce (military) rather than countervalue (urban/industrial) targets so as to minimize damage and enhance chances for war-termination and post-war recovery. Strategic reserves were to be held by the US to provide for intrawar deterrence, and Soviet command and control centres were to be initially preserved for the same purpose. The strategic change was officially adopted in January 1962.[13] Most importantly for NATO, the implementation of this new American strategy rested on centralized command and control of nuclear forces. Notably, this change to US strategic posture took place without consultation of America's allies.

Just as McNamara decreed that strategic nuclear forces were of limited utility, so too did he believe that tactical nuclear weapons played only a narrow role in alliance defence. While tactical nuclear weapons had been the mainstay of NATO defence since their introduction to Europe in the early 1950s, the new American administration discounted most of the arguments supporting their employment. First, the widely-held belief that tactical nuclear weapons relieved manpower imbalances proved false in the light of war games which indicated that rapid depletion of front-line divisions due to tactical nuclear attacks would actually require *more* rather than fewer troops. Second, prospects for the limited employment of nuclear weapons on the battlefield – in terms of yield, targets and numbers – appeared low because of the difficulty of controlling such

[13]Desmond Ball, Politics and Force Levels (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 191.

limitations, and because of the advantages to the side which first violated such limitations. Third, even so-called low-yield battlefield nuclear weapons were several times more powerful than the bombs which levelled Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the use of such destructive weapons in the crowded central region of Europe, where battle was most likely to take place, would cause major devastation. Finally, the risk of escalation from limited nuclear to general nuclear war was believed to be high, owing to the rapid increase in stakes once nuclear warfare had been initiated. On the other hand, maintaining a firebreak between conventional and nuclear war would be much clearer to identify and enforce than one between strategic and tactical nuclear war.[14]

Despite these deficiencies, tactical nuclear weapons still had a role to play in NATO defence, if for no other reason than because by the mid-1960s approximately 7,000 of them had been stockpiled in Europe.[15] These weapons were highly symbolic to European governments who feared a replay of World War II; the presence of tactical nuclear forces in Europe was seen largely as a reassurance of the American guarantee. Additionally, tactical nuclear weapons contributed to deterrence both by deterring Soviet first-use of such weapons and by inhibiting the enemy from a launching a conventional attack with the possibility that it could be met with a tactical nuclear response. The

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[14]This is the key point made by Thomas Schelling in The Strategy of Conflict (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960). See also Enthoven and Smith, How Much Is Enough?, pp. 125-128; and William Park, Defending the West: A History of NATO (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 88-89.

[15]Harvey B. Seim, "Nuclear Policy-Making in NATO", NATO Review 6 (1973), p. 11.

weapons also served as a hedge against the failure of NATO's conventional defences.[16] The crux of McNamara's revision of defence policy, then, lay with conventional forces.

McNamara proposed greater reliance on conventional defence as a deterrent to Soviet aggression, arguing that because conventional weapons were more likely to be used than nuclear forces, they provided a more credible response to attack and therefore would be a more effective deterrence. The Berlin crisis amply demonstrated both the alliance's unwillingness to use nuclear weapons against lesser provocations and the benefits of strong non-nuclear options in such circumstances.[17] But convincing the allies of this would be no small task. Since its inception, NATO had relied on nuclear weapons for deterrence on the basis that conventional defence was unattainable. From the first intelligence estimates at the time of the treaty's signing indicating "that the dozen or so scattered, understrength Western divisions in Europe faced 25 fully armed Soviet divisions in Central Europe and, over all, at least 140 to 175 Soviet divisions at full battle strength", the alliance had had a "psychological 'complex' about conventional forces."[18] NATO could never hope to match Soviet deployments and to attempt to do so would be detrimentally expensive; besides, the nuclear weapons of the United States were far more effective at deterrence than any conventional force could ever be. These beliefs were firmly entrenched at the time of McNamara's decision to reassert the importance of

[16]Enthoven and Smith, How Much Is Enough? pp. 128-129.

[17]Jane Stromseth, The Origins of Flexible Response (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), pp. 39-40.

[18]Enthoven and Smith, How Much Is Enough?, p. 118.

conventional defence.

This then, was the attitude of the Kennedy Administration to NATO and nuclear deterrence: too much emphasis had been placed on nuclear weapons and their deterrent powers, too little emphasis on conventional forces and real alternatives in the event deterrence failed. Strategies to deal with situations other than all-out attack, and the forces necessary to implement these strategies, needed to be put in place.

These conclusions were reinforced by the results of a study on NATO strategy chaired by former Secretary of State Dean Acheson. The Acheson review discovered that NATO had been preparing to fight a general war, the war it was least likely to fight. Concomitantly, the alliance was least prepared to deal with the more likely outbreak of local conflict on small scale.[19] With NATO war plans calling for a nuclear response to any major aggression, "there was some danger that NATO, whose planning was all predicated on a sudden massive strike from the East, would turn even a modest attack into general nuclear war."[20] This dangerous possibility was exacerbated by "French theories of deterrence, which emphasized guaranteed response to attack" in direct opposition to the new American preference for intrawar deterrence.[21]

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[19]Stromseth, The Origins of Flexible Response, p. 119.

[20]John Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 202.

[21]*ibid.*

The report of the Acheson review submitted in March 1961 recommended a re-evaluation of NATO's nuclear posture. It concurred with the change to the US strategic posture, specifically the call for counterforce options.[22] For NATO, though, the report advocated not a change to its strategy, "but rather the fulfilment by the European allies of their existing commitments of manpower and equipment."[23] With 30 active and 30 reserve divisions, SACEUR could, Acheson believed, deal with lesser provocations and prevent NATO from being forced into using nuclear weapons. The report claimed that "a serious conventional option would also have a deterrent effect, by demonstrating that NATO could impose heavy costs on a Warsaw Pact conventional effort without necessarily having to make the difficult decision to initiate nuclear war."[24] In promoting a movement away from the early use of nuclear weapons, the report recommended that nuclear weapons — controlled by the US alone — be configured for a retaliatory strike in response to a major attack targeted against the enemy's offensive forces. Carefully controlled strategic nuclear options and a city-avoidance strategy would enhance intra-war deterrence and the chances for terminating the conflict before major destruction could occur. Such options would also "undermine arguments raised by the French — and by some Americans — that the threat of strategic retaliation in response to attacks on allies was not credible, since the United States would never 'risk Chicago for Hamburg'."[25]

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[22]David Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1983), p. 151.

[23]Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy, p. 106.

[24]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 151.

[25]*ibid.*

Implementation of these recommendations required centralized US control of nuclear weapons, rejection of any kind of European veto over their use, denial of aid to national nuclear forces, and improved preparations for conventional warfare.[26]

In April 1961, with their promulgation as a National Security Council policy directive, the recommendations of the Acheson report (later called the Green Book) became the guiding strategic doctrine of the Kennedy Administration.[27] But the US did not share immediately the new policy line with its allies. American officials anticipated a negative reaction from across the Atlantic to Washington's dramatic strategic shift and condemnation of independent nuclear arsenals. Indeed, the winds of change blowing over Europe — in the form of official and leaked statements and documentation — were already beginning to ruffle some feathers.[28] To make the Europeans more receptive to the new policy, the strategic analysts responsible for the Acheson report recommended a detailed information campaign to apprise the Europeans of nuclear realities and convince them of the benefits of this new orientation. "They argued that if the secrecy policies were relaxed, thus enabling the allies to be educated in the exigencies of the nuclear age, then

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[26]Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, pp. 202-203; Stromseth, Origins of Nuclear Response, pp. 31-34.

[27]Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 203. See also Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 152.

[28]See for example: Ball, Politics and Force Levels, pp. 195-6; Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy, pp. 106-13; Catherine McArdle Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), pp. 158-62; Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, pp. 153-6; Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 204.

the allies would eventually accede to American views".[29] It was their opinion that national nuclear forces were a result of the allies' ignorance of the nature and requirements of strategic nuclear deterrence. Education would thus alleviate the problem.

This was the tack tried by McNamara at the NATO ministerial meeting in Athens in May 1962. In unprecedented detail, McNamara explained to the allies the new US strategy, flexible response, attempting to justify the shift and elicit support. In fact, because of the predominant position of American forces within the alliance, the Kennedy Administration's adoption of flexible response as US policy meant that it became *de facto* NATO policy as well, although formal adoption did not occur until five years later.[30] With a candour and straightforwardness never before witnessed by the allies, McNamara launched into a detailed description of US strategic forces and plans, setting the tone for his approach to further alliance deliberations on nuclear strategy. He dealt with the whole range of military forces: strategic nuclear targeting, command of nuclear forces, the need for improved conventional forces and the desire of the United States to expand the allies' role in the policy-making process.

McNamara began his explanation of the shift in American nuclear strategy by comparing the new policy to a more traditional military strategy, with an emphasis on

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[29]Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, p. 204.

[30]Wilfrid Kohl, French Nuclear Diplomacy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 225; Richard Hart Sinnreich, "NATO's Doctrinal Dilemma", Orbis 19:2 (Summer 1975), p. 462.

military targets and limiting damage to the extent possible:

> the U.S. has come to the conclusion that to the extent feasible basic military strategy in general nuclear war should be approached in much the same way that more conventional military operations have been regarded in the past. That is to say, our principal military objectives, in the event of a nuclear war stemming from a major attack on the Alliance, should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces while attempting to preserve the fabric as well as the integrity of allied society.... In our best judgement, destroying enemy forces while preserving our own societies is — within the limits inherent in the great power of nuclear weapons — a not wholly unattainable military objective.[31]

In addition to the military benefits, the shift to counterforce targeting was rationalized as an inducement to an aggressor to similarly confine his military strikes, thereby reducing destruction to allied societies. The notion that in a nuclear war a distinction between military and urban targets could be made — and would be useful to make — signalled a pronounced break with the thinking behind massive retaliation.

In order to implement the flexible response strategy, McNamara emphasized the importance of the indivisibility of control: "The efficient use of our resources implies that the Alliance deterrence systems have three vital attributes: unity of planning, executive authority, and central direction — for in a major nuclear war ... the theatre is world-wide.... There must not be competing and conflicting strategies in the conduct of nuclear war."[32] Clearly any hope for a termination in a nuclear battle lay in the discriminate

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[31]"Remarks by Secretary McNamara, NATO Ministerial Meeting, 5 May 1962, Restricted Session", declassified 17 August 1979, in Marc Tractenberg, ed., The Development of American Strategic Thought 1945-1969 (New York: Garland, 1988), pp. 564-565.

[32]*ibid.*, p. 572.

execution of carefully pre-determined targets which could only be accomplished through carefully directed retaliatory strikes.

McNamara then made his case for improved non-nuclear forces, stating that while "the United States is prepared to respond immediately with nuclear weapons to the use of nuclear weapons against one or more of the members of the Alliance", and that "the United States is also prepared to counter with nuclear weapons any Soviet conventional attack so strong that it cannot be dealt with by conventional means",

> it simply is not credible that NATO, or anyone else, would respond to a given small step — the first slice of salami — with immediate use of nuclear weapons. Nor is it credible that a chain of small actions, no one of which is catastrophic, would evoke a response of general nuclear war.[33]

Thus he concluded, "For the kinds of conflicts we think most likely to arise in the NATO area, non-nuclear capabilities appear to be clearly the sort the Alliance would wish to use at the outset."[34]

Finally, the Defense Secretary announced his intention to expand the consultative obligations of the US to include the allies in nuclear deliberations:

> Our own view is that the flow of information should be greater than it has been in the past. We welcome the new procedures for handling sensitive information and we plan to provide information about our nuclear forces and consult about basic plans and arrangements for their use on a continuing basis.[35]

Indeed, McNamara's speech marked the first expression of this promise of enhanced

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[33] *ibid.*, pp. 575, 579.

[34] *ibid.*, p. 580.

[35] *ibid.*, p. 584.

information exchange.

In a public version of the Athens address delivered the following month, McNamara underscored the importance of central control by condemning national nuclear forces. His commencement speech at Ann Arbor questioned the ability of "relatively weak national forces ... to perform even the function of deterrence", and warned that such forces might even invite pre-emptive first strikes against them.[36] He concluded with the unequivocally damning and often quoted phrase: "In short, then, limited nuclear capabilities, operating independently, are dangerous, expensive, prone to obsolescence, and lacking in credibility as a deterrent."[37]

European governments were overwhelmingly critical to McNamara's radical pronouncements, particularly since America's new strategy had been publicly launched without their prior knowledge. The European allies denounced flexible response as an attempt by the Americans to escape their nuclear obligations to Europe; the emphasis on conventional defence was seen to undermine the credibility of US willingness to use nuclear weapons. The new strategy and the implication that it resulted from a growing American reluctance to fulfil its nuclear commitment seemed to substantiate French claims that extended deterrence in an era of modern missile technology was no longer possible: "If resort to force no longer implies risking merely the loss of an expeditionary

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[36]Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy, p. 116.

[37]*ibid.*, p. 117

army but hazards the very substance of national life, it is clear that such a risk can be taken only for oneself — and not for others, including even close allies."[38] London also viewed greater reliance on conventional defence as detrimental to NATO's nuclear deterrent: "The very weakness of NATO's conventional forces gave plausibility to the assumption that strategic nuclear weapons would be used for Europe's defence. To plan for a prolonged conventional war would, in the British view, remove this assumption and make a Soviet attack more likely."[39] Similarly, the high nuclear threshold advocated by flexible response was at odds with Germany's focus on 'forward defence' and its insistence on an early resort to tactical nuclear weapons to halt aggression at the inner-German border.[40]

The Europeans resented McNamara's requirement for centralized command and control of nuclear weapons, which they viewed as nothing more than "thinly disguised code-language for American dominance of NATO's force capabilities and war conduct."[41] Loss of a European nuclear component would be particularly dangerous if, as the French asserted, the American ability to maintain their extended guarantee were

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[38]Pierre M. Gallois, "U.S. Strategy and the Defence of Europe" in Orbis 8 (Summer 1963), p. 233.

[39]Andrew J. Pierre, Nuclear Politics: The British Experience with an Independent Strategic Force 1939-1970 (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 258-260.

[40]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 168. See Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons, pp. 179-227.

[41]William Park, Defending the West: A History of NATO (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), p. 91.

deteriorating. At the same time, the attack on national nuclear forces struck at the heart of the British and French defence programmes. "Macmillan — quite apart from any strategic calculation — insisted that his own political position and that of his government would be put at risk if Britain were deprived of this great-power symbol."[42]

European distrust of the changes to the alliance's nuclear posture was matched by the negative reaction to renewed emphasis on conventional response within American strategy. In economic terms, improved conventional options required the assignment to NATO of more men, more materiel, and more money — none of which the Europeans were willing to augment. At Athens, German Defence Minister Strauss warned that "when one considers the munition requirements and all the problems related to it — supply, depot storage ... the number of personnel, etc. — then naturally, there is a limit to our capabilities in the area of conventional armament."[43] This economic argument hinged on a much more fundamental basis for rejecting enhanced conventional capabilities: the new American strategy implied that conventional war was feasible at a time when the general feeling in Europe was that a war would be so destructive "as to render it unthinkable."[44] This unwillingness to fight any kind of war in Europe strengthened the allies' attachment to nuclear weapons as the means of ensuring deterrence, an attachment which heightened European distrust of flexible response.

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[42]C.J. Bartlett, The Special Relationship (London: Longman, 1992), p. 99.

[43]Quoted in Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons, p. 173.

[44]Park, Defending the West, p. 127.

These differences stemmed directly from broad disagreement between the Europeans and the Americans on the role played by nuclear weapons in defending the West. As a result of Washington's strategic review, the changed strategic balance, and the history of conflict in the post-war world, the Americans now believed that conventional weapons posed a more credible deterrent because they were more likely to be used — and if deterrence failed, then a means existed to address aggression without immediately having to make the choice to go nuclear. This, the Pentagon argued, was in itself deterrence enhancing. This new American preference for defence was contrasted sharply by a continuing European belief in the benefits of nuclear deterrence and a lower nuclear threshold. The Europeans believed that the threat to invoke nuclear weapons early on in a conflict would pose the most effective deterrent to Soviet attack, particularly since few other options existed.[45]

McNamara attempted to counter these objections by disclosing revised intelligence estimates which reduced the 10 to 1 Soviet advantage believed to exist in 1960 to between a 2 to 1 and 3 to 1 advantage — given these new figures, conventional defence was a viable option.[46] But this revelation was hardly comforting to European defence planners, who had for years argued against conventional force improvements on the basis of futility. More than a decade of pessimism on the issue would not be pushed aside easily. As Enthoven and Smith noted:

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[45] *ibid.*, p. 93.

[46] Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 149.

> In a perverse sense, it is rather comforting to be outnumbered 5 to 1 by your enemy. Because then there is no point in making the effort to deploy your forces in the right place, or to ensure that your forces are ready, or to insist on proper training standards. If, however, the opposing force numbers are approximately equal, these factors become more important.[47]

In addition to these criticisms, McNamara had to contend with objections at home. The State Department and others who were focused on alliance cohesion resented McNamara's attack on national nuclear forces as being counter-productive and promoting disunity within the alliance. They assailed counterforce targeting as an illusory goal, destabilizing to the strategic balance both by giving the Soviets an incentive to attack first, and by encouraging reckless behaviour among statesmen who believed that nuclear war could be controlled. Kissinger noted that "the political utility of a counterforce 'disarming' strategy" had been reduced by the advent of dispersed, protected missiles.[48] Bernard Brodie insisted that from a European perspective, conventional defence held little attraction over nuclear deterrence:

> even if we could promise what is in fact impossible to promise — that we could and would *keep* large-scale hostilities conventional — a third world war in any case means to most Europeans the death of Europe. If a conventional buildup is advocated, as it has been advocated, on the grounds that it will buy more backbone for our allies in a crisis, we really ought to look very carefully at the promised payoff to see whether the

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[47]Enthoven and Smith, How Much Is Enough?, p. 141. At the same time, it suited US purposes to downgrade the Soviet conventional advantage, in terms of bolstering the American argument in favour of reduced reliance on nuclear forces.

[48]Henry Kissinger, The Troubled Partnership (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p.109; see also Bernard Brodie, Escalation and the Nuclear Option (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 63-64.

> alleged extra margin of backbone justifies the very considerable extra cost.[49]

Clearly, McNamara's flexible response strategy and its conventional orientation were not an instant panacea to NATO's problems.

On the other hand, McNamara found the staff at SHAPE more willing to accept his new strategy, owing to the similarity it bore to a 1957 study conducted by Colonel Stilwell, director of the strategic studies group under the Plans and Policy Division. According to Schwartz, the Stilwell study had advocated adoption by NATO of a version of flexible response, in which aggression would first be countered at the level initiated by the enemy followed by "deliberate escalation", to raise the stakes of combat and make clear that continued aggression would be met by strategic nuclear response if necessary. The study's recommendations were rejected because of belief in the reliance on strategic nuclear forces and resistance toward improving conventional options. But with the strategic shift undertaken by McNamara five years later, the Stilwell study again began to attract attention. In June 1962, SHAPE planners submitted the study under the new name Draft MC 14/3 to NATO's Standing Group for as a replacement for the current MC 14/2, which advocated immediate nuclear response. All the NATO members save the US refused comment on the proposal, and the concept was shelved indefinitely, overshadowed by deliberations on MLF.[50]

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[49]Brodie, Escalation, pp. 91-92. Emphasis in original.

[50]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, pp. 140-141, 178.

Despite these difficulties, McNamara continued to espouse the virtues of flexible response, though he did back track somewhat on counterforce targeting in public pronouncements, shifting instead to an emphasis on assured destruction.[51] In addition to making flexible response more palatable, the shift toward assured destruction enabled McNamara to put a ceiling on the procurement requirements of the Air Force by instituting "a rough measure of sufficiency — the capability to destroy 25 percent of the Soviet population and 70 percent of its industrial capacity".[52] But the Defense Secretary remained hampered by the lack of trust among the Europeans for unilateral American revisions of strategy. Thus he sought new means to educate the allies on strategic realities and include them in defence policy deliberations.

As indicated previously, initial attempts at improving consultation among the allies on nuclear affairs failed. McNamara's strategy seminar idea, in which the allies would be included in discussions on nuclear planning issues, was watered down to a one-day briefing on established NATO policy; the allies clearly resented such a "kindergarten" seminar and by the end of 1962 the attempt was dropped.[53] McNamara's initiative was further buried as the MLF proposal gained momentum. The MLF held the spotlight for

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[51]Although declaratory policy shied away from a "no-cities" strategy because of its political implications, US action policy remained centred around counterforce targeting. Critics of damage limitation charged it was "provocative" and "weakened deterrence"; thus to avoid an alliance split, McNamara shifted declaratory emphasis to assured destruction. See, for example: Ball, Politics and Force Levels, pp. 197-199; Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, pp. 174-175.

[52]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, pp. 175-176.

[53]Steinbruner, Cybernetic Theory of Decision, pp. 209-213.

the first half of the decade, propelled to prominence by the allies' belief that physical control over nuclear weapons would confer a say in the strategy which governed their use. But the American insistence on a veto diluted the political attractiveness of this proposal, and by 1965 the emphasis was shifting from possession of nuclear weapons to the importance of developing an agreed formula for their proposed employment.[54]

McNamara seized upon this revelation to again offer the allies an opportunity to play a role in nuclear policy making. At the NATO defence ministers' meeting in the summer of 1965, he proposed a "select committee" composed of four or five defence ministers to consider how the allies might be included in the nuclear planning process.[55] McNamara's objective in establishing such a small committee was to enable its members to engage in meaningful discussions about strategy. At the same time, "the Americans were anxious that alliance nuclear policy be discussed at the highest level among a limited number of informed participants; those whose views on nuclear weapons would in fact carry weight in determining the overall strategic posture of the alliance."[56] This reasoning, however, contradicted both the fundamental alliance principle of equal representation and the whole point behind developing a mechanism for nuclear consultation, which was to give the non-nuclear allies a say in nuclear defence matters.

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[54]Paul Buteux, The Politics of Nuclear Consultation in NATO, 1965-1980 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 33-34.

[55]New York Times (1 June 1965), p. 11.

[56]Buteux, Consultation, p. 44.

The allies initially reacted to McNamara's committee with guarded scepticism: the smaller allies feared exclusion from this intimate group while the larger members were concerned it might force a diminution of their current role. The British government was concerned lest the new committee jeopardize its special relationship with the US. Germany's confidence in the leadership of the Americans had been weakened by their abandonment of the MLF, and Bonn hesitated to become involved in another American scheme. Italian concern focused on the composition of the group, specifically whether or not Italy would be included. And on top of general distrust of the US, the French opposed the committee outright because it seemed to undermine their independent nuclear efforts and threatened to entrench American dominance of alliance defence.[57]

Despite these concerns, the allies agreed at the Paris meeting to further consideration of the consultative committee, and in November 1965 an *ad hoc* Special Committee of Defence Ministers met. The Special Committee included all those defence ministers who wanted to join (ten) solving the question of who would participate in this "select" committee. France was notably absent from this group, the French having previously dismissed McNamara's committee as "not broad enough to merit the attention of defence ministers."[58] In response to McNamara's preference for a more intimate group, the Committee's tasks were divided among three working groups, dealing with communications, data exchange and nuclear planning. The Nuclear Planning Working

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[57]*ibid.*, pp. 41-44; Cleveland, NATO, p. 53.

[58]Buteux, Consultation, p. 44.

Group clearly carried the most importance of the three. Membership in what the press dubbed the "McNamara Committee" went to the US and Britain because of their nuclear status; to Germany and Italy, because of their size; and to Turkey, selected to represent the smaller allies.[59] In its first meeting in Washington in February 1966, the Working Group delved immediately into the nuts and bolts of nuclear strategy, appraising "the process by which the threat to NATO is measured; consideration of the ways in which nuclear forces are planned, procured, and managed; and discussion of the problems and procedures in the development of plans with respect to such forces, as well as the command and control arrangements which govern them."[60] McNamara's immediate aim was to show he meant business and to prevent French negativism for the consultative approach from prevailing upon the other members. The resulting discussion of strategy and forces was unprecedented in its detail and frankness, and convinced the European members — particularly the nuclear "have-nots" — that the American government was genuinely interested in their input regardless of their nuclear status.[61]

At the second meeting in April 1965, the findings of British war games were presented, and it was argued that the existing alliance tactical nuclear doctrine was "politically unacceptable and militarily unsound."[62] Despite the stated American

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[59]Cleveland, NATO, p. 54.

[60]Department of State Bulletin (7 March 1966), p. 368, cited in Thomas Wiegele, "Nuclear Consultation Processes in NATO", Orbis, 16 (Summer 1972), p. 473.

[61]Cleveland, NATO, pp. 54-55.

[62]Buteux, Consultation, p. 51. See also Cleveland, NATO, p. 55.

preference for a reduction in reliance on nuclear systems, tactical nuclear weapons deployments to Europe had increased throughout the early part of the decade.[63] The relatively haphazard method of their dispersement resulted in a strategic void; though NATO threatened early use of these missiles in the event of a Soviet attack, the strategy governing such employment was a hold-over from the massive retaliation era. But agreement on the general unacceptability of the current doctrine did not lend itself to agreement on an alternative. The Americans were pushing flexible response as a way out of excessive reliance on tactical nuclear weapons; but a higher conventional threshold meant increased cost, and implied a weakening of the nuclear deterrent that none of the allies favoured.

Despite the inability of the Nuclear Planning Working Group to come to agreement on an alternative strategy, all participating members converged in the positive assessment of the Committee's importance to allied consultation. At the December 1966 NATO ministerial meeting, the Special Committee of Defence Ministers was entrenched as two permanent bodies to deal with nuclear planning and consultation. In response to the demand for broad participation, NATO created the Nuclear Defence Affairs Committee as "a permanent advisory committee whose function is to propose general policy on nuclear defence affairs."[64] Membership in the NDAC would be open to all interested allies. Addressing McNamara's requirement of limited participation, the

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[63]See Chapter 4.

[64]Seim, "Nuclear Policy-Making in NATO", p. 11.

nominally subordinate Nuclear Planning Group was established "to accomplish the detailed work required for the development of policy proposals."[65] The composition of the NPG was limited to seven participants: four permanent members (Britain, Germany, Italy and the US) plus three rotating positions, in order to give all NDAC nations an active role in the NPG's work.[66] This compromise both satisfied all allies while creating a functional forum for serious discussions of strategy. At the same time, it signalled an end to the hardware approach to the problem of nuclear sharing and an acceptance of consultation.[67]

The creation of the NPG coincided with the formal adoption of the flexible response concept by the North Atlantic Council in December 1967. As defined in the 1967 Political Guidance to the Military Authorities, the new concept provided "for the employment as appropriate of one or more of direct defense, deliberate escalation, and general nuclear response, thus confronting the enemy with a credible threat of escalation in response to any type of aggression below the level of a major nuclear attack."[68] While these two seminal events are not necessarily directly related — the full details of how MC 14/3 came to supersede massive retaliation as alliance doctrine never having been released — it has been postulated that "the candid give-and-take in NPG sessions

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[65]*ibid.*

[66]A fourth rotating position was later added to accommodate the interests of Norway. See Wiegele, "Nuclear Consultation", p. 476.

[67]Wiegele, "Nuclear Consultation", p. 475.

[68]Cited in Cleveland, NATO, p. 81.

probably convinced Europeans doubtful of the American nuclear guarantee that they could significantly affect U.S. strategic nuclear policy without having physical access to the weapons themselves."[69] What is clear is that replacing so-called hardware solutions with a permanent forum for nuclear consultation alleviated pressure for nuclear control sharing and contributed to the shift in alliance strategy from massive retaliation to flexible response.

Two other factors enabled the allies to accept flexible response as NATO's governing strategic concept. First, the withdrawal of France from NATO's integrated military command in March 1966 removed a substantial obstacle to the adoption of the strategy. De Gaulle had been a vocal opponent of flexible response's higher nuclear threshold and increased reliance on conventional forces. This new strategy flew in the face of French strategic doctrine, which emphasised countervalue targeting and "an immediate atomic riposte to any attack against Europe as the cardinal principle for the deterrence of war."[70] At the same time, the French leader challenged American dominance of the alliance, aspiring for France the leadership of European nations. This conflict put the allies in an uncomfortable situation: acceptance of flexible response would be taken as a rejection of France and would deal a blow to European unity; on the other hand, by not supporting flexible response the allies risked losing their major sponsor, the United States. But de Gaulle's removal of France from NATO's integrated

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[69]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 185.

[70]Kohl, French Nuclear Diplomacy, p. 227.

command structure freed the allies from this dilemma, and paved the way for acceptance of flexible response. In fact, the French withdrawal had the opposite effect than expected: instead of threatening the demise of NATO, the departure of France strengthened the remaining allies' resolve to reach a consensus on strategic matters. "With France standing aside, the renewed political interest in NATO unity had a galvanizing effect on the governments that did want to cooperate in European and Mediterranean defense."[71]

The second factor which contributed to the adoption of flexible response was the degree to which the Americans were willing to accept an alteration to the original concept. The Political Guidance made specific reference to deliberate escalation as a possible response to aggression. "Despite the potential dangers it saw in a posture relying on escalation, especially escalation across the nuclear threshold, the United States agreed to this version, in part because of the political problems associated with building up a serious conventional option."[72]

The problem over control sharing of nuclear weapons which had dominated alliance relations for more than a decade was solved by the commitment to include the allies in deliberations on issues of nuclear strategy. Backed by the creation of a permanent body for the purpose of discussion, the consultation method was able to solve NATO's doctrinal dilemmas where the hardware approach had failed. Not that the NPG

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[71]Cleveland, NATO, p. 108.

[72]Schwartz, NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas, p. 190.

came to any firm conclusions on how NATO would respond to aggression; on the contrary, the flexible response concept was deliberately vague on the point. Since hypothetical questions in peacetime on what a nation will do during war are impossible to answer, the value of the NPG was the communication it fostered: "the outcomes of nuclear planning are bound to be less significant than the process itself; NPG's main products are its by-products."[73] Through intensive consultation, the Americans convinced the allies that flexible response, though not perfect, was a far better alternative to massive retaliation.

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[73]Cleveland, NATO, p. 64.

CONCLUSION

Twenty-four years after the adoption of flexible response, the story came full circle with the 1991 acceptance of a replacement strategic concept. The lessons of flexible response are evident in the new Strategic Concept's guiding principles of consultation, consensus and stability. Of particular relevance to the premise of this paper is the explicit enhancement of the strategy's political function. Yet questions remain regarding NATO's ability to continue to serve the security needs of the North Atlantic nations.

When the NATO leaders met in London in July 1990, they jubilantly announced the triumph of Western democracy over Soviet communism and declared NATO "the most successful defensive alliance in history."[1] But at the same time they agreed that as a consequence of the dramatic transformation taking place across Europe, "this Alliance must and will adapt." The decade of the nineties ushered in unparalleled changes to the international system which pose a challenge to the development of a workable security policy. These changes occur in several areas.

The breakup of the Soviet empire marked the end of bipolarity and an end to the stability associated with the two alliance system in which the players were easily identifiable, their habits well-known, their decision-making structures accessible. For

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[1]London Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance, NATO Review, Vol. 38, No. 4 (August 1990), p. 32.

forty years, "the vast expanse of the Soviet empire from the Elbe to the Pacific was governed by one political entity, with few exceptions."[2] With Moscow controlling the political and military conditions of Eastern Europe, NATO, under American tutelage, managed the security requirements of Western Europe. As such, the two alliances "established, either tacitly or explicitly, a network of communications and rules of behaviour that allow[ed] for a remarkable and unparalleled degree of crisis management."[3] The degree to which interactions between Moscow and Washington were institutionalized provided confidence to the players within the system. The end of the bipolar system has meant an end to the rules which have governed the alliance's external relations for more than four decades.

The effects of the end of bipolarity have been heightened by the increased number of players recently emerging on the international scene. The Soviet Union has now been replaced by more than 20 newly independent states and autonomous republics. The challenge to NATO in dealing with this multitude of new players will be a complicated one, particularly given the effect that many more players will have on the type, likelihood, and frequency of security problems that might arise.[4]

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[2]Michael Brenner, "Multilateralism and European Security", Survival, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Summer 1993), p. 140.

[3]Curt Gasteyger, "NATO in the Wider World", NATO Review, Vol. 37, No. 1 (February 1989), p. 31.

[4]Brenner, "Multilateralism and European Security", p. 140.

This influx of new actors on the international stage has been accompanied by a change in the types of crises which now surround NATO Europe. The threat to NATO security of massive attack has been replaced largely by the risks associated with ethnic conflicts, civil wars, and other political, economic and social crises, which "could lead to a range of unpredictable, multi-faceted and multi-directional risks to Allied security."[5] In addition to the possibility that these new types of crises could erupt into major conflicts and overflow into Europe, they threaten Europe with the problems of refugee inflow, disruption of trade and political instability.[6] These security threats require a carefully managed political response.

NATO moves through the nineties facing new circumstances in more than just its external environment. There now exists within the alliance a changing balance of power between the United States and its European partners. The development of Europe into an economic giant in its own right and the possibility of a US retreat from extensive global involvement have resulted in European demands for a more equal role in alliance affairs, and a concomitant reluctance on the part of the US to continue to dominate alliance relations. Diminished US leadership will force NATO to develop new patterns of relations and consultative procedures. Without the direction previously provided by

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[5]Michael Legge, "The Making of NATO's New Strategy", NATO Review, No. 6 (December 1991), p. 12.

[6]Jan Zielonka, "Europe's Security: A Great Confusion", International Affairs, Vol. 67, No. 1 (1991), p. 131.

the US, many analysts question the ability of the alliance to act decisively and effectively.[7] And yet changing power relationships and division within the alliance hardly constitute a new phenomenon for the Atlantic nations. As the preceding chapters describe, dealing with relations between members has been one of the alliance's strengths, indeed, one of the strategic concept's central aims. It is in managing the internal stresses that alliance strategy has demonstrated one of its primary, and one of its most successful, functions. Throughout NATO's history, the dominance wielded by the US in alliance interactions has been constantly changing, as well as questioned. As demonstrated in the case of the MLF, for example, American dominance does not necessarily translate into acceptance of American ideas. In fact, one analyst argues that "it is in the Alliance's long-term interest that such a European identity in security and defence emerge: the robustness of a coalition is to a large extent reliant on the lack of resentment of its most exposed members, and excessive dependence on a single partner, the United States, does breed such resentment."[8]

These changes to the environment in which NATO functions create a number of dilemmas for the formulation and implementation of strategy. In the most general terms, NATO defence planners will now be forced to switch their focus from sustaining the stalemate between the eastern and western blocs, to using forces for conflict intervention.

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[7]See, for example, Brenner, "Multilateralism and European Security", p. 148.

[8]Francois Heisbourg, "The Three Ages of NATO Strategy", NATO Review, Vol. 37, No. 1 (February 1989), p. 28.

Where efforts during the Cold War emphasized the maintenance of the status quo, the challenge now "is to influence the evolution of a new Europe which may not enjoy the stability of the old, which may never settle down into a predicable order, and which may confront us with regular upheavals resulting from social and economic dislocation, ethnic rivalries and frustrated nationalism."[9] Strategic doctrine since the inception of NATO has been driven by the need to *prevent* war with the Soviet Union, given the risks of conflict between the two nuclear powers. While nuclear war avoidance continues to hold a place of significance within NATO strategy, developing the means to deal with non-nuclear conflicts now takes on greater urgency. The example of Yugoslavia illustrates the complexities of crisis intervention by NATO forces.

NATO strategy will also be challenged by the lack of a clear threat. Without a monolithic enemy against which forces can be rallied, the alliance may find its members unwilling to make some of the sacrifices and concessions that marked the development and implementation of strategy during the Cold War. Already cuts to defence spending and public demands to see the "peace dividend" have made preparing for security a more difficult endeavour than ever before. The financial problems are compounded by conceptual complexities arising from murky threat perceptions. "Strategic doctrines and defence planning should ... be related to a possible conflict on European soil, but such a

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[9]Lawrence Freedman, "Escalators and Quagmires: Expectations and the Use of Force", International Affairs. Vol. 67, No. 1 (1991), p. 18.

scenario is increasingly unclear."[10] The spectre of a massive assault from the East which governed defence planning for forty years has now been replaced by uncertainty. Militarily, the development of risk scenarios to determine force requirements will be hampered by an unclear threat. The changes to the world as described above indicate that the international realm is far from safe, but the description provides a myriad of potential risks and dangers.

How to adapt strategy to address these new threats will also be challenged by the attitudes of alliance members in the absence of clear danger. As the immediate threat recedes, the importance of satisfying domestic political requirements in the pursuit of collective defence will increase. While it is to be expected that a reduced threat will also reduce the need for the allies to make concessions in defence decisions, it does not follow that the NATO collective defence model will fall apart. Nor does it signal an increasing politicization of military plans, to the detriment of those plans, as one analyst argues.[11] As this case study has demonstrated, the alliance already formulates strategy under the watchful and demanding eye of the political sphere. In fact, it is impossible to separate completely political from military activities, given that war is essentially a political act. The process by which strategy is derived is subject to varying degrees of political influence, depending on the particular circumstances, but there is no indication that because of the altered international situation the alliance's military needs will be suddenly

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[10]Zielonka, "Europe's Security", p. 133.

[11]Brenner, "Multilateralism and European Security", p. 143.

subsumed by political considerations to the point of being ineffectual. In fact, the history of alliance deliberations on strategy, an important part of which is outlined in this thesis, demonstrates that the NATO members have quite capably handled significant change in the past, change which included modifications to the threat perception. The record would seem to indicate that the alliance possesses the experience necessary to weather change and adversity successfully.

However, there is emerging within NATO a trend toward the re-nationalization of defence, "by which is meant a weakening in practice of the commitment to joint defence planning."[12] Solutions to crises such as that in the former Yugoslavia are being constructed outside the NATO context by those defence ministers most concerned about the issue. Although the problem of unilateral actions is not new in NATO, it is now occurring to an unprecedented extent which threatens to weaken the credibility of NATO's security guarantees.

A final obstacle for NATO strategy to overcome will be the growing irrelevance of the "out of area" distinction which previously determined the geographic extent of NATO involvement. The NATO area, set out in Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty, encompasses the territory of the alliance members. Alliance resources are therefore focused in these areas. All other areas are relegated to secondary significance and hence

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[12]Paul Buteux, "Canada and NATO Enlargement", International Journal Vol. L, No. 3, (Autumn 1995; forthcoming).

a substantially reduced commitment — this is the so-called out of area in which NATO members could choose their level of involvement, if at all. But the luxury of this distinction is evaporating with the changing international landscape and its attendant risks to NATO security regardless of physical proximity. There is now "a move away from the distinction, adopted for the purposes of military planning, between a big problem close to home and lots of small problems further away. We must now anticipate small and medium-sized problems all over the place."[13] In response to this change, NATO strategy and force structure must differ from the Cold War configuration. At the same time, NATO must overcome the problems faced by a regionally defined alliance as it moves beyond its perimeters.

Will NATO be able to overcome these changes to the nature of the international system, the security threat, and the relationships between its members? Many analysts argue that NATO will not, that the alliance has outlived its usefulness, and that other solutions are better suited to address the new security challenges. A brief examination of some of the proposed alternatives to NATO will demonstrate that, in fact, the alliance continues to be the best vehicle for ensuring Western security.

Given the new partnership between East and West, the United Nations deserves consideration as the means to deal with security challenges in the nineties. Indeed, handling conflict and preventing a third world war were part of the organization's *raison*

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[13]Freedman, "Escalators and Quagmires", p. 20.

d'être. The split which developed between the United States and the Soviet Union prevented the Security Council from carrying out the international policing function for which it was originally designed. Now that Moscow has dispensed with formal antagonism toward the West, is it possible for the UN to proceed with its mandate of securing international peace? Although the possibility remains, the potential for the UN to assume the role of international protector does not hold great promise. Despite the American-Russian rapproachment, the activities of the UN continue to be hampered by old rivalries and associations. The conflict in the former Yugoslavia is a case in point, where Moscow opposed some UN activities on the basis of its historical ties to the Serbs. At the same time, the Americans would be hard pressed to side against Israel if events in the Middle East should warrant such a stance.

Likewise, the UN's track record clearly shows that its successes lies in peace*keeping*, that is, in conflict intervention where the warring parties have made some effort to resolve their differences on their own. Somalia and Bosnia exemplify the futility of the UN when it tries to intercede as a peace*maker*. At the same time, the *ad hoc* nature of its members' commitment hampers UN missions overall, by preventing the development of continuity between expeditionary forces. Finally, alliance members would likely find the UN, as a substitute for NATO, lacking the focus on their particular security concerns, given the vast membership of that global organization.

Suggestions also abound that the European Union take on NATO's security role.

The Maastricht Treaty, which in 1993 incorporated the former European Community into the European Union, introduced the Common Foreign and Secruity Policy as one of the EU's main tenets. The policy, now being developed, calls upon the Western European Union to act as the defence arm of the EU. The relationship of the WEU to the EU and how this new European defence identity might be operationalized will be the focus of the 1996 Inter-Governmental Conference. Regardless of the outcome, the EU is emerging as a definite contender to NATO, particluarly given the enthusiasm of the French for the inititative — due in large measure to the exclusion of the Americans from the venture. To its credit, the EU avoids the focus pitfalls associated with the UN, the activities of the former firmly concentrated on Europe. This narrow focus, however, makes the EU less attractive than NATO in light of the expanding areas of traditional concern for the North Atlantic nations outlined above. The EU's largely inwardly looking character robs it of the experience in dealing with external actors that makes NATO so valuable in tending to European security. At the same time, despite extensive experience dealing with economic and political matters, the EU is a relative newcomer to involvement with military activities and the WEU lacks operational capabilities necessary to implement military decisions.

This case study of the development of flexible response illustrates quite clearly the complexities of deliberations over strategy. Given the stresses and strains that NATO military doctrine will undergo in the years to come, and the obvious prerequisite of adaptation in order to survive, it is highly questionable how European security could be

better served by reliance on an institution so void of experience in this crucial area. Even more damaging to the prospects of the EU assuming a security dimension is the apparent difficulty with which it is managing some of its current economic and political responsibilities. One analyst claims the EU "struggles to achieve the most rudimentary cooperation in the present," and that its "political authority remains restricted."[14] If this is the case, how can the institution be expected to manage the awesome responsibility of security? At the same time, the severing of the trans-Atlantic link implicit in replacing NATO with the EU -- despite its appeal to Paris -- has obvious implications that would alter European defence arrangements so significantly as to be unimaginable.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE -- formerly the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) has also been suggested as an alternative to NATO, "particularly as the [OSCE] now has its own permanent secretariat, a new pan-European parliamentary body, and a separate Conflict Prevention Centre."[15] With a long history in European security issues and a membership extending beyond Western Europe, the OSCE seems well-suited to address some of the military issues facing the alliance. But the OSCE lacks the wide-ranging security experience possessed by the alliance and, as such, "cannot substitute for the unique advantages which NATO offers in terms of collective defence and crisis resistance. The CSCE process, even

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[14]Brenner, "Multilateralism and European Security", pp. 143, 145.

[15]Zielonka, "Europe's Security", p. 130.

though significantly strengthened, can only fulfil a complementary role."[16] Additionally, the organization's broad membership creates at best a diversity of interests which complicates decision-making and, at worst, an atmosphere of suspicion between democratic and former Communist states.

Since none of these institutions — the United Nations, the European Union and the Western European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or any of the various other pan-European security models being bandied about — poses a viable alternative to NATO, the obvious answer is to keep NATO, albeit with some modifications. Changes to the alliance have already been initiated with the 1991 adoption of a new Strategic Concept.

The new Strategic Concept exemplifies NATO's ability to manage change effectively. It combines a more prominent political function with a reduced military component, including a reduced reliance on nuclear weapons. Both features represent an acknowledgement of the changes to the security environment. The concept's emphasis on its political role results from the increased opportunities to find peaceful means of resolving differences. In order to take advantage of these opportunities, the new Strategic Concept stresses the importance of dialogue to "provide a foundation for greater co-

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[16]Henning Wegener, "The Transformed Alliance", NATO Review, Vol. 38, No. 4 (August 1990), p. 8.

operation throughout Europe."[17] Dialogue and cooperation will work together to diminish the risks to future instability caused by "the persistence of new political, economic or social divisions."[18] Additionally, the concept refers specifically to the role played by crisis management and conflict resolution in achieving the alliance's goal of peace and security. The alliance members conclude that "the political approach to security will thus become increasingly important."[19]

At the same time, the new Strategic Concept features a revised force posture which incorporates a reduction in the overall size and readiness of the allies' forces with an increase in their flexibility, mobility and capability to be reinforced. The reliance on nuclear weapons has also been de-emphasized. These modifications reflect the changes to the threat faced by NATO: in the new strategic environment, "a single massive and global threat has given way to diverse and multi-directional risks."[20] Rather than mounting a forward defence to prepare for a major assault from the East, the alliance will deploy small, mobile units capable of "measured and timely responses" depending on the geographical and political needs of the situation.[21] All this is encompassed within what the alliance is calling "a broad approach to security" which, while maintaining the basic

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[17]Text of Strategic Concept, NATO Review, No. 6 (December 1991), p. 28.

[18]*ibid.*

[19]*ibid.*

[20]*ibid.*, p. 30.

[21]*ibid.*

principles of NATO as a defensive alliance committed to the assurance of its members' territorial integrity and political independence, includes adjustments to account for "the diversity of challenges now facing the Alliance."[22]

In the development of this new Strategic Concept the primacy of politics emerges more clearly than ever before. With the emphasis on dialogue and cooperation, the concept embodies "a more overriding political element that becomes an equally important component of [the] Alliance. The underlying philosophy is that a long-term guarantee for security does not come only from military forces and their readiness, but, no less importantly, from the way in which states peacefully interact with one another."[23] The alliance recognizes that security can no longer be viewed exclusively as protection from war alone; security encompasses a variety of dimensions including political, economic, environmental and social aspects. NATO's new strategy explicitly accepts that these factors need to be included in the consideration of its members security. At the same time, the reduced emphasis on the military component in NATO's defence automatically increases the political function. "The diminished — though vital — importance of NATO's military role and the broader concept of security to which the Alliance now moves, make NATO's political role more visible and more important."[24]

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[22]*ibid.*, p. 29.

[23]Wegener, "The Transformed Alliance", p. 6.

[24]*ibid.*, p. 8.

With the new Strategic Concept, the alliance has also "refuted once again the accusation constantly levelled against it that it only reacts to initiatives from the East".[25] NATO has proven that it deserves a role in the new international security environment. The organization has also charted its own course through these challenging waters, though leaving plenty of room to manoeuvre as the circumstances dictate.

NATO is no stranger to change, its entire existence having been governed by this immutable factor of international relations. Adapting to change and challenge, as this case study of the development of flexible response has illustrated, is indeed one of the features which has contributed — and will continue to contribute — to NATO's longevity and success.

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[25]Hansen, "NATO as a Political Alliance", p. 17.

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