

NATO COMMANDER TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:
THE INFLUENCE OF DWIGHT EISENHOWER'S EXPERIENCES AS NATO SUPREME
COMMANDER ON THE "NEW LOOK" DEFENSE POLICY

by

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Abstract

As the 1950s began, Western European defense policy posed unique challenges for the United States. At the outset of the Cold War, U.S. officials recognized that maintaining a free Western Europe was vital to the long-term survival of the United States against the Soviet Union and its satellite nations. While America could rely on its long-range nuclear bombers (and, in a few years, its intercontinental ballistic missiles) as a deterrent to Soviet aggression against the continental United States, the situation in Europe was more complicated. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), first organized in 1949, was the defense pact designed to counter the Soviet Bloc in Eastern Europe. The NATO alliance, however, still recovering from the destruction of the Second World War, was in no condition to oppose Soviet aggression at the end of 1950. Yet by 1955, the situation in Europe was dramatically different. The NATO allies had transformed from a loose confederation of weak nations to a strong international alliance capable of confronting the Communist forces if necessary.

At the center of this transformation was Dwight D. Eisenhower. In January 1951, Eisenhower assumed the position of NATO's first Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) and spent nearly two years strengthening the Western European alliance. Then, after entering the White House as president in 1953, Eisenhower used his experiences as SACEUR to reinforce several aspects of his own defense policy. Ultimately, several key aspects of Eisenhower's "New Look" defense policy (such as the continued emphasis of the NATO alliance) had their antecedents in Eisenhower's service as NATO Supreme Commander.

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The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

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Finally, my heartfelt thanks to Doug Kennedy, Lt Col, USAF, and fellow Kansas State graduate student. For my short year in Manhattan, Doug was my mentor and friend both in class and out. Thanks for keeping me focused on the big picture, Doug!

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my fiancée, Kristen. Thanks for always listening to my worries, complaints, and successes while I worked on this thesis.

Introduction

During the 1950s, Presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower solidified an American defense strategy that lasted for several decades. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Truman emphasized maintaining a sound economy, building the strategic nuclear capability of the U.S. Air Force (USAF), and increasing the strength of America's allies, especially those in Western Europe. After ascending to the presidency himself, Eisenhower continued to use Truman's framework under the policy that became known as the "New Look" strategy. Eisenhower had the same objectives: keeping the American economy strong, expanding the strategic nuclear deterrent of the USAF, and strengthening the NATO coalition.

The difference between Truman and Eisenhower's defense policy was in the execution of these strategic concepts. After the beginning of the Korean War, Truman came to rely on the containment policy advocated by George F. Kennan and codified in the document NSC-68. George F. Kennan, a distinguished U.S. diplomat and leading theorist on U.S.-Soviet relations in the Cold War, viewed the Soviet Union as inherently expansionist. Following Kennan's views, NSC-68 was a policy document generated by the National Security Council (NSC) as a recommendation for future American actions in the Cold War. Viewing the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR) as inherently in conflict, NSC-68 interpreted the ultimate Soviet goal to be worldwide domination. The document also estimated that by 1954 the USSR would have enough atomic bombs (and means of delivery) to offset the U.S. nuclear arsenal.¹ NSC-68 concluded that the chief limitation of American power was a lack of conventional military force, thus providing justification for a great expansion of U.S. military forces based on the view that 1954 was the "year of maximum danger" of a Soviet attack.² The result of this policy was that the size of the U.S. military was set to double from 1.5 million personnel in 1950 to 3.3 million by 1954.³

¹ Douglas Kinnard, *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), 6.

² *Ibid.*, 7-8.

³ "FY 1951 End Strengths Authorized and Budgeted," Doris M. Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Office of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1988), 240.

Eisenhower took a different stance. Instead of perceiving the Soviets as an enemy poised to attack immediately, Eisenhower believed the Soviet Union would not attack the West for the foreseeable future. As he wrote in his journal in January 1952, Eisenhower believed that, “There is no greater probability of war [with the Soviet Union] today than there was two years ago; and no one can say for certain that there is any greater probability of deliberately provoked war at the end of this year or of the next than there is now.”⁴ Thus, Eisenhower thought that there was no need for the United States to incur the deficit spending likely to result from the NSC-68 budgets, which provoke the presumed dangers of inflation. Eisenhower assumed that federal spending in excess of income would cause inflation, which would in turn disrupt the American economy.⁵ Re-emphasizing the equipping of foreign armies, moving American troops back to the United States from their overseas stations, and relying on nuclear weapons to deter aggression offered Eisenhower ways to save money in the hopes of achieving a balanced budget. Eisenhower disagreed with Truman’s execution of his strategy after the outbreak of the Korean War, but not the entirety of the framework itself.

Interpretations of Eisenhower’s thought process regarding the “New Look” vary. Some authors have pointed to Eisenhower’s economic concerns as the primary factor in his national security thinking. In *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (1990), Stephen Ambrose insisted that domestic economics dominated Eisenhower’s thoughts, stating, “All of Eisenhower’s major goals—peace, lower taxes, a balanced budget, no inflation were dependent upon his cutting the defense budget.”⁶ Michael Hogan argued the same in *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State* (1998). He explained that, “Eisenhower ... [was] convinced defense spending would exhaust the Treasury, bankrupt the taxpayer, and end in destructive inflation or economic controls.”⁷ Even the contemporary renowned economist James

⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Diary Entry, 22 January 1952,” *The Eisenhower Diaries*, ed. by Robert H. Ferrell (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 213.

⁵ Robert M. Collins, *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 55.

⁶ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 321.

⁷ Michael Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 474-5.

Tobin asserted in his 1958 article “Defense, Dollars, and Doctrines” that the “New Look” was a doctrine “made as much in Treasury as in State.”⁸

Other historians have emphasized that Eisenhower’s talented advisers shaped the president’s thinking. Douglas Kinnard argued in *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management: A Study in Defense Politics* (1977) that Eisenhower managed “a very powerful set of political and military appointees” to create the “New Look.”⁹ John Lewis Gaddis concluded in *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (1982) that the “curious Eisenhower-Dulles ‘partnership’” created the “New Look.”¹⁰ According to Gaddis, while “Eisenhower largely defined the interests his administration sought,” Secretary of State John Foster Dulles shaped the “prevailing [U.S.] perception of threat[s]” imposed by the Soviet Union.¹¹ The “New Look,” according to Gaddis, was in essence a combination of the views of Eisenhower and Dulles.

The above interpretations are certainly valid analyses of Eisenhower’s thinking on national security. Yet these interpretations largely overlook a critical factor that influenced the “New Look.” As pointed out by General Andrew J. Goodpaster, Staff Secretary to Eisenhower in 1954-1961, the key aspects of the “New Look” were “foreshadowed in Eisenhower’s service as commander of NATO in 1951 and 1952.”¹² Prior to becoming president, Eisenhower spent nearly eighteen months as the first Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In this capacity as the top military commander of NATO, Eisenhower gained experience implementing Truman’s defense policy that reinforced Eisenhower’s own economic thinking during the formation of the “New Look” and guided his actions while implementing the “New Look” in Western Europe.

After leaving NATO for the Oval Office, Eisenhower spent the majority of his first year as president defining his defense policy. A major part of the “New Look” was the necessity of reducing the number of personnel in the U.S. military. While his comments clearly demonstrate that he understood the economic benefits of a small military, evidence indicates that

⁸ James Tobin, “Defense, Dollars, and Doctrines,” *The Yale Review* 47 (March 1958): 324-25; as cited in Collins, *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America*, 55.

⁹ Kinnard, *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management*, 136.

¹⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 129.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹² General Andrew J. Goodpaster, “Foreword,” in *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy*, Richard R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), v.

Eisenhower's experience as SACEUR strengthened his belief in the wisdom of a small military. As SACEUR, Eisenhower had firsthand knowledge of the growing strength of NATO's military forces. Additionally, Eisenhower's time working with NATO also made him extremely wary of how the Cold War situation in Europe affected Allied perceptions of American action concerning NATO. A larger U.S. military could cause the Western Europeans to reduce their own troop commitments to NATO in favor of more American troops. These views, reinforced by his service as NATO Supreme Commander, underpinned Eisenhower's stance on the size of the U.S. military.

Another major topic of the "New Look" was the potential use of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Eisenhower made the immediate use of tactical nuclear weapons a cornerstone of the "New Look" as a way to deter Soviet aggression against Western Europe. Although he did not leave behind much evidence detailing the progression of his thoughts on nuclear weapons, Eisenhower dealt extensively with the possible use of nuclear weapons in Western Europe as SACEUR. As NATO's top military commander, Eisenhower received briefings on tactical nuclear weapons, and at one point the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) gave Eisenhower complete control over targeting priorities for nuclear weapons in Europe.¹³ Although he did not discuss this experience much as president, it is reasonable to assume that this experience influenced Eisenhower's thinking while working through the details of the "New Look."

Once he outlined the "New Look" with the help of his national security staff, Eisenhower's experiences as SACEUR also shaped how he chose to implement this policy in Western Europe. Eisenhower thought that part of the solution to making NATO stronger was developing greater cohesion among the NATO allies. Eisenhower's time as SACEUR convinced him that the only way to achieve this unity was through an organization known as the European Defense Community (EDC). The EDC Treaty called for the Western European Allies to create a supra-national army that combined troops from all nations under a single military structure. Eisenhower believed this supra-national organization would lay the groundwork for natural progression toward a unified Europe. Consequently, Eisenhower aggressively pursued ratification of the EDC as president.

¹³ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, Vol. XIII, ed. by Louis P. Galambos (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1989), 1226.

Eisenhower's experience working with the NATO Allies also shaped his approach to integrating tactical nuclear weapons into the Western European alliance. Some officials in the U.S. government, particularly among the Joint Chiefs, advocated that nuclear weapons remain under control of American forces only.¹⁴ Eisenhower's experience caused him to take a more open approach, however. He constantly stressed that the United States had to trust the NATO allies more; consequently, he worked for U.S. legislation allowing greater sharing of nuclear information with America's allies. In these two aspects, Eisenhower's service at NATO Headquarters influenced his implementation of the "New Look."

When using primary evidence to compare Eisenhower's thoughts on national defense from his time at NATO with his service as president, it becomes evident that Eisenhower's experiences as NATO played an important role in the creation and realization of some pieces of the "New Look" policy. Earlier works have not fully explored the continuity between these two offices held by Eisenhower. Stephen Ambrose and John Lewis Gaddis, for example, only briefly mention Eisenhower's service as SACEUR when discussing Eisenhower's support of the EDC and NATO in general.¹⁵ As a result, the historical interpretation of Eisenhower's role in the "New Look" is skewed. Ultimately, analyzing this continuity provides a broader understanding of both the inner working of the Eisenhower White House and the "New Look" policy as a whole.

This essay starts by analyzing the prominent themes of Eisenhower's service as SACEUR during the period from January 1951 through May 1952. The second chapter then moves into Eisenhower's first year as president and interprets how his eighteen-month service at NATO Headquarters influenced some of Eisenhower's stances on the "New Look" policy. Finally, the third chapter examines how Eisenhower's time as NATO Supreme Commander shaped his approach on implementing the "New Look" in Europe.

The majority of the primary documents in the essay were drawn from collections at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas, or from printed documents in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series published by the Department of State. This essay also draws upon primary evidence published in *The Eisenhower Diaries* edited by Robert H. Ferrell, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower* edited by Louis P. Galambos, and the *Public Papers of*

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President*, 301, 334; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 127.

the Presidents of the United States, 1953, compiled by the U.S. National Archives. Finally, this essay uses a variety of secondary books and articles listed in the bibliography to support various points of the argument.

CHAPTER 1 - Eisenhower as NATO Supreme Commander, December 1950-May 1952

When he accepted the nomination to become the first SACEUR of NATO in December 1950, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower called it “a job of transcendent importance to the United States.”¹⁶ He shared President Truman’s conviction that “Western Europe is the keystone of the defensive arch we are trying to build up.”¹⁷ Indeed, Eisenhower remarked to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in January 1951 that strengthening the NATO Alliance was a task he was “willing to devote the rest of [his] life to try to make work.”¹⁸ Yet though the twelve NATO countries had ratified the North Atlantic Treaty in April 1949 with full American support, the Alliance had made little progress toward stable collective security in the succeeding year and a half.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites were increasing in strength at a much faster rate. By the end of 1950, it was clear that NATO needed a strong and trustworthy leader to build the alliance into an effective counterpoint to the Soviet bloc. To fill this critical positions, Truman called Eisenhower out of retirement and offered him the newly created post of NATO Supreme Commander.²⁰

Eisenhower went to NATO Headquarters ready to carry out Truman’s policy toward Europe: make the Western European Allies strong enough to defend themselves. While he had some idea of the challenges ahead from experiences with a coalition during the Second World War, NATO command introduced Eisenhower to the dynamics of a European alliance in the Cold War environment. Building the NATO Alliance into a viable defensive organization would require all of Eisenhower’s skills as a military commander and diplomat. Ultimately, as he worked to enact Truman’s policy, Eisenhower’s experiences at NATO reinforced his conviction

¹⁶ Chester J. Pach, Jr. and Elmo Richardson, *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, rev. ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 2.

¹⁷ Letter from Eisenhower to President Harry Truman, 16 December 1950, Dwight David Eisenhower Library (DDEL), Dwight David Eisenhower (DDE) Papers, Pre-Presidential 1916-52, Box 116, Truman File #2.

¹⁸ Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 340.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 309.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 334.

that the United States needed to continue to support the NATO alliance, a belief that would shape Eisenhower's efforts as president.

Eisenhower's job as SACEUR was building a conventional (non-nuclear) army that could defend Western Europe against Soviet attack. While the United States had been nuclear-capable since mid-1945, its nuclear stockpile was still quite small when Eisenhower left for Europe (despite Truman's appropriation of more than \$2 billion for atomic weapons research in 1949).²¹ Additionally, the NATO defense concept Truman had accepted in January 1950 stipulated that strategic air power based within the United States would provide the nuclear deterrent to Soviet aggression in Europe.²² Consequently, Eisenhower's primary concern was strengthening the conventional military power of NATO.

Eisenhower began his duties by conducting a tour of the allied capitals in January 1951 with two purposes in mind: 1) to bolster allied morale by confirming the American commitment to European defense and 2) to investigate the current state of the conventional forces he would command as SACEUR. In his earliest conversations with Truman concerning NATO, Eisenhower made it clear that one of the most pressing tasks the United States faced in Europe was raising the morale of the allied nations. In a letter to President Truman dated 16 December 1950, Eisenhower stated, "The most pressing thing needed in Western Europe is the *will* to fight—confidence. It is in this realization that we have ... engaged ourselves to participate in the defense of that region."²³ From the very beginning, perhaps as a result of his World War II experience as the Allied Supreme Commander, Eisenhower was well aware of the intangible effects an American commitment would have.

Eisenhower also agreed with Truman that the United States was unable to allocate enough American troops to defend the entirety of Europe. While he had hoped for as many as twenty U.S. divisions in December 1950 and actually asked for ten to twelve the following

²¹ Ibid., 467.

²² "Memorandum from Secretary of North Atlantic Defense Committee (NADC) to NADC," *FRUS 1949*, Vol IV, "Western Europe," 355; see also Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 311, and David Alan Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy," paper presented at the US Military Academy, 21 April 1982, published within *The National Security: Its Theory and Practice, 1945-1960*, ed. Norman A. Graebner (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 133. Beginning in 1949, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assigned the U.S. Air Force's Strategic Air Command (organized by the Air Force in hopes of becoming America's primary nuclear delivery force) to retard any Soviet advances into Western Europe.

²³ Eisenhower to Truman, 16 December 1950, p. 3.

month, Eisenhower insisted that the U.S. reinforcements were only a part of the defense plan requiring the NATO Allies to provide fifty to sixty divisions themselves.²⁴ Further restricting the United States from reinforcing NATO was the Korean War. As Eisenhower commented in his December letter to President Truman, “Now we have engaged to assume national responsibility for command in [Western Europe], *but we have done this at a time when we are badly extended in the East and there is only a modicum of readily available strength in the United States.*”²⁵

The challenge facing Eisenhower was enormous. During his initial tour, Eisenhower found that there were fewer than fifteen divisions of questionable readiness and only 1,000 aircraft of various types to defend all of NATO. One British officer in occupied West Germany remarked in May 1950 that only the two U.S. divisions (out of the fifteen available) were combat ready.²⁶ Meanwhile, NATO intelligence estimated that the Soviets had at least twenty-five divisions and 6,000 aircraft in Eastern Europe alone (with many more units and aircraft available in the Soviet Union proper).²⁷ Even after Eisenhower received another four U.S. divisions (instead of the ten to twelve he requested), thereby raising the total U.S. commitment to six divisions, the Soviets still held a large manpower advantage.²⁸

Eisenhower also quickly concluded upon arriving in Europe that, even if Truman had wanted to, the massive effort required for the United States to compete on an even basis with the Soviet Union was likely beyond American capabilities (though this conclusion was perhaps self-evident to Eisenhower, as one of the American assumptions regarding NATO was that the Europeans would expand their own defense commitments²⁹). In speaking with the Belgian Prime Minister, Eisenhower explained that to help defend Europe the United States was “planning for the largest fleet any nation has ever had in peace time, and a very large air force of some 90 groups. We expect, under present plans, to have some 3,500,000 men in uniform.”³⁰ Also, the United States already planned to supply over 12,000 tanks and combat vehicles, 3,725

²⁴ Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 340.

²⁵ Eisenhower to Truman, 16 Dec 1950, p. 3-4. Emphasis in the original.

²⁶ Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 369.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 312.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 340-1.

²⁹ Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement 1945-1963* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 100.

³⁰ Conversation between Eisenhower and Belgian Prime Minister, 10 January 1951, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential 1916-52, Box 201, SHAPE #1 Round Robin (Conversation Vol I).

aircraft, and 13,100 artillery pieces to NATO allies under the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP).³¹ But, Eisenhower pointed out, “both are very expensive” and “we are paying extremely high taxes” trying to pay for them.³² The United States could not fund the entirety of European defense, and the only way NATO could succeed was “if each of the 12 nations was ready to make sacrifices and to stand together.”³³

The United States needed a strong NATO alliance to establish a viable collective defense, so Eisenhower faced the challenge of unifying all of the allied countries toward a common goal. A prerequisite for the European allies in building any substantial military force was a greater sense of unity. In a letter to Averell Harriman, Special Assistant on Foreign Affairs to President Truman, on 2 April 1951, Eisenhower recalled from his prior coalition experience in Europe that “each [European nation] should be regarded as an equal partner... but it is certain that their performance will be effective only if each feels an urgent requirement to do the best that is possible.”³⁴ Yet the lack of progress toward this unity shocked Eisenhower. In the same letter to Harriman, Eisenhower wrote, “I came to Europe laboring under a misunderstanding, in that I thought much had already been accomplished in the way of over-all agreement concerning numerous details of collective administration.”³⁵ Especially frustrating to Eisenhower was his impression that “the idea of urgency seems to be completely refuted” among some of the allies.³⁶ Eisenhower viewed himself as SACEUR as only “one-twelfth American,” and he regarded many of the petty disagreements among the allies as unwanted distractions from the common effort.³⁷ For example, the French government voted forty-five to fifteen against delegating a piece of government land for the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) buildings because “there was no need to allocate ground for the use of *American* officers.”³⁸

³¹ Stanley L. Scott, “The Military Aid Program,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 278 (Nov. 1951): 53.

³² Conversation between Eisenhower and Belgian Prime Minister, 10 January 1951; see also Conversation between Eisenhower and Belgian Defense Minister, 10 January 1951, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential 1916-52, Box 201, SHAPE #1 Round Robin (Conversation Vol I).

³³ Conversation between Eisenhower and Belgian Prime Minister, 10 January 1951.

³⁴ Letter from Eisenhower to Averell Harriman, 12 December 1950, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential 1916-52, Box 55, Harriman File #5.

³⁵ Letter from Eisenhower to Averell Harriman, 2 April 1951, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential 1916-52, Box 55, Harriman File #4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Colonel Robert J. Wood, “The First Year of SHAPE,” *International Organization* 6.2 (May 1952), 175.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Emphasis in the original.

Yet West Germany posed the biggest obstacle to European unity facing Eisenhower.³⁹ By early 1950, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had come to believe that a viable defense of Europe required the participation of still-occupied West Germany.⁴⁰ When he first arrived in Europe, however, Eisenhower was extremely reluctant to discuss the idea. In fact, when the French Prime Minister in their January 1951 meeting directly asked what his view was on Germany, General Eisenhower refused to discuss this issue.⁴¹ In a letter to George C. Marshall, then serving as Secretary of Defense, Eisenhower stated that he initially refused to organize any “European Army” because it seemed “to include every kind of obstacle, difficulty, and fantastic notion that misguided humans could put together in one package.”⁴² Eisenhower thought the issue of West German rearmament was so divisive that it was better to focus on other things until he had more firmly established himself as SACEUR.

By August, however, Eisenhower’s position had changed. After working tirelessly to unify the NATO allies under a single banner, Eisenhower told Secretary Marshall in the same letter that “the [European Army] plan offers the only immediate hope that I can see of developing, on a basis acceptable to other European countries, the German strength that is vital to us.”⁴³ As SHAPE solidified, Eisenhower recognized that an adequate defense of Western Europe was impossible without resolving the German question. The general explained his newfound views on Germany during a March 1952 dinner conversation with French General Chaban-Delmas, French Deputy and Mayor of Bordeaux: “Western Europe [needs] a defense line as far to the east in Germany as possible to give the necessary depth. It would be unthinkable to have Germans defended by allied forces with the Germans sitting calmly on their hands and doing nothing.”⁴⁴

Eisenhower was cognizant of other issues with Germany besides NATO’s defense line. He understood the complications for NATO if West Germany either rearmed independently or

³⁹ At this point in time, West Germany remained an occupied country and did not exercise full national sovereignty. See Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 103, 110.

⁴⁰ Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 317.

⁴¹ Conversation between Eisenhower with Rene Pleven (French Prime Minister), 24 January 1951, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential 1916-52, Box 201, SHAPE #1 Round Robin (Conversation Vol I).

⁴² Letter from Eisenhower to George C. Marshall, 03 August 1951, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential 1916-52, Box 80, Marshall File #1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Memorandum of Conversation between Eisenhower and General Chaban-Delmas, 20 March 1952, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential 1916-52, Box 136, Memos of Conversations (SHAPE) File.

aligned itself with the Soviet Union. In the same dinner conversation Eisenhower related, “It [is] unthinkable to let Germany rearm independently... the Germans might be disposed to play the Soviet Union off the West or... make some sort of alliance with the Soviet Union for tactical purposes... If this should ever occur, the defense posture of Western Europe... would be very difficult, to say the least.”⁴⁵ Given the alternatives and their consequences, Eisenhower was convinced that, despite the difficulties, West Germany needed rearmament in a way that “would tie Germany solidly and effectively in with the Western world.”⁴⁶ Thus, despite the inherent difficulties surrounding this issue, Eisenhower pushed for the resolution of West Germany’s political status and the details of its conventional rearmament as a means to secure the unity of NATO.

Eisenhower found that much of the resistance to a West German rearmament program came from the French. Following eighty years of major conflicts with Germany dating back to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, the French had an almost pathological fear of a militarized German state. The French government had harbored suspicions that Germany “would eventually side with the Soviets as the most powerful force in Europe.”⁴⁷ In the French mind, this development was entirely plausible in the same vein as the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union.⁴⁸ Further increasing French fears was the worry that American and British support for NATO would not last, leaving France to face a rearmed Germany on its own. Great Britain had already shown some reluctance to become deeply entrenched on the continent, and the small number of troops the United States initially dispatched to the continent called into question American resolve to support long-term Western European security.⁴⁹

The French, along with the other NATO allies, were also highly conscious of the Soviet reaction. Since NATO had been established, Soviet unease about Western Europe had steadily increased. The government in Moscow was particularly wary of any attempts to create a revived Germany. At an October 1950 meeting of the Eastern European foreign ministers, the Soviets

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 325.

⁴⁸ Conversation between Eisenhower and General Chaban-Delmas, 20 March 1952.

⁴⁹ Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 331.

demanded a NATO agreement not to rearm Germany.⁵⁰ When the NATO Defense Committee meetings continued in earnest to secure a plan for West German rearmament, the Soviets went a step further. In November 1950, Soviet ambassadors sent notes to each of the three occupying powers in West Germany (Great Britain, France, and the United States) stating, “[M]easures to revive the German army in West Germany would not be tolerated.”⁵¹ The Soviet government also called for a meeting to complete the 1945 Potsdam Agreement to demilitarize Germany.⁵²

Regardless of this hesitation, Eisenhower managed, with the full support of Truman, to put enough pressure on France to make some tentative progress on the German question. One of the last major conferences that occurred during Eisenhower’s tenure as SACEUR was in February 1952 in Lisbon, Portugal. During the Lisbon Conference, the NATO allies endorsed the concept of the European Defense Community (EDC).⁵³ Placed on the negotiating table by the French, the proposed EDC Treaty called for the establishment of a European Defense Force composed of all nations under the command of the NATO Supreme Commander. This Defense Force would act on a supra-national level, wearing a common uniform and having the same equipment no matter what the nationality of the individual units.⁵⁴ The EDC concept was not very different from the “European Army” idea Eisenhower had been advocating (although he had earlier opposed it). The French government believed the EDC provided for an adequate compromise between U.S. pressure to integrate West Germany and its own fears of an independent and rearmed German nation. Under the EDC, West Germany could not re-create a separate national army or general staff and had limits on the number of troops it could equip.⁵⁵ While Eisenhower himself had his doubts about the military effectiveness of the EDC, Eisenhower thought the only way to achieve greater unity of the NATO Alliance was through collaborative organizations such as the EDC. Eisenhower believed that military cohesion among the allies would pave the way for later political unification.⁵⁶ The United States and the other

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 390.

⁵⁴ Josef L. Kunz, “Treaty Establishing the European Defense Community,” *The American Journal of International Law* 47 (Apr 1953): 277.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 275.

⁵⁶ Letter from Eisenhower to George C. Marshall, 03 August 1951, p. 3. Referring to the EDC, Eisenhower told Marshall, “I am certain that there is going to be no real progress toward a greater unification of Europe except through the medium of programs of this kind.” See also Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 122.

allies signed a contractual agreement extending NATO defense commitments to the planned EDC in May 1952, thus in principle integrating Germany into Western Europe's collective security without making it an equal member of NATO.⁵⁷

While this was undoubtedly an important step toward greater European unity, the contractual agreements of May 1952 were contingent upon the ratification of the EDC Treaty by the member nations.⁵⁸ In several of the NATO countries, however, significant internal opposition to the EDC existed. Some French officials warned that the majority of the French National Assembly did not support the EDC. René Pleven, French Prime Minister and strong supporter of European integration, had rushed the EDC Treaty to the table without consulting either the French military authorities or the Foreign Ministry.⁵⁹ The Socialist Party in the French National Assembly worried that the EDC threatened national sovereignty and did not do enough to curb their fears over Germany.⁶⁰ There was also concern that the heavy commitment of French forces to Indochina would leave France stretched too thin to oppose a German army concentrated in central Europe.⁶¹

West German politicians did not view the EDC favorably either, believing it imposed too many restrictions solely on their nation. Konrad Adenauer, the West German chancellor, entered into the EDC negotiations dedicated to the principle of "equality of rights."⁶² The West Germans agreed to enter into any integration plan as long as any controls of armaments applied equally to all EDC members (such as forced troop-level restrictions or limits on arms manufacturing), but as negotiations progressed it appeared the Germany would be more heavily restricted than the other nations.⁶³ Adenauer also remained uneasy with the EDC-NATO relationship. When proposing the EDC concept, France had included a provision calling for simultaneous declarations from both the EDC and NATO that an attack on one meant an attack on the other.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 391.

⁵⁸ Gunnar Skogmar, *The United States and the Nuclear Dimension of European Integration* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 37.

⁵⁹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 110.

⁶⁰ Skogmar, *The United States and the Nuclear Dimension of European Integration*, 49, 145.

⁶¹ Letter from Secretary of State Dean Acheson to President Truman, 26 May 1952, published in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1952-54*, Vol. V, "Western European Security," 682.

⁶² Skogmar, *The United States and the Nuclear Dimension of European Integration*, 37.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶⁴ US Dept of State background paper, "EDC and the German Contribution to European Defense," prepared 31 January 1952, published within *FRUS 1952-54*, Vol. V, 603.

The problem for Adenauer, however, was that West Germany was not a member of NATO. In effect, a situation could arise where NATO could make decisions affecting the EDC without Germany having any representation to voice concerns or objections.⁶⁵ While Adenauer wanted Germany more integrated into the Western alliance, to him the EDC Treaty represented a flawed solution and required further negotiation.

Serious doubts remained in Great Britain also. Initially, the British Parliament favored the idea of a “European” system independent of the American-dominated NATO alliance that could provide a “third force” balance to both the United States and the Soviet Union.⁶⁶ Upon analyzing the provisions of the planned EDC, however, the British realized that Western Europe would not be strong enough to stand on its own without American support and leadership.⁶⁷ An EDC independent of the U.S. would prove disastrous because while French plans called for a supra-national European army, no supra-national political structure accompanied it. Only the post of SACEUR in NATO could provide the requisite leadership.⁶⁸ Because of this dynamic, the British looked to downplay the EDC in favor of the existing NATO structure to keep the United States closely linked to its trans-Atlantic neighbors.⁶⁹

Thus, while the Western allies had made their first steps towards a greater sense of cohesion, the journey towards lasting unity in Europe was far from over. If the EDC Treaty came to a standstill during debates in the allied capitals, Eisenhower would have to start from scratch to create a new compromise agreeable to all the NATO participants. Even if ratified, the EDC and its European Army would take many months to organize. Eisenhower had yet to realize Truman’s ultimate goal of forging a Western Europe that could stand on its own, but he viewed the EDC as a viable solution to easing the tensions among the Western European allies.

As he worked to solve the problems of NATO, Eisenhower faced a different type of pressure from within the United States: the pressure of the mainstream political parties. As far back as 1948, Eisenhower had faced pressure from both the Republican and Democratic Parties to run as a candidate. In 1952, given his fame and reputation among the American people, both parties accepted that Eisenhower represented the best hope to secure victory in the upcoming

⁶⁵ Ibid., 604.

⁶⁶ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 117.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 120.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 117.

presidential election.⁷⁰ Despite his own sharp political intellect, however, Eisenhower told prominent visitors to SHAPE in the last half of 1951 that, “I do not want to be president of the United States and I want no other political office or political connection of any kind.”⁷¹ Furthermore, he explained that any partisan political activity was incompatible with his current responsibilities as supreme commander of NATO.⁷²

By the beginning of 1952, however, Eisenhower had begun to shift his position. Instead of viewing it as a hindrance to his current duties, Eisenhower envisioned political office as an extension of his original oath as a soldier to serve the country. As Pach and Richardson explain in *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, Eisenhower’s admirers and associates persuaded the general that the American people were “genuinely calling him to a higher, political service.”⁷³ After Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., one of the most powerful figures in the GOP, announced that he was entering Eisenhower’s name in the New Hampshire primary, Eisenhower decided to act. In January 1952, he released a statement indicating he would leave the post of SACEUR if “called to a more important service, such as accepting the Republican nomination for president.”⁷⁴

Eisenhower still needed to secure the terms of his release from active duty with President Truman. In a letter dated 2 April 1952, General Eisenhower wrote the president to request that the Secretary of Defense release him from his current post in the next sixty days.⁷⁵ In the letter, while he acknowledged that “by June the work of SHAPE will not be finished,” Eisenhower detailed for Truman that he could not “ignore the influence of a number of American political incidents of the past winter.”⁷⁶ Accordingly, Eisenhower believed that circumstances forced him to “seek early termination of my military assignment so that any political activity centering about me cannot possibly affect the military service.”⁷⁷ President Truman granted the request, and in

⁷⁰ Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President*, 239; Pach and Richardson, 1.

⁷¹ Pach and Richardson, *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 1.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷⁵ Letter from Eisenhower to President Harry Truman, 2 April 1952, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential 1916-52, Box 116, Truman File #1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

June Eisenhower officially relinquished the post of NATO Supreme Commander to campaign for the presidency.⁷⁸

As he returned home an American hero, General Eisenhower had clearly left a lasting legacy on the still fledgling NATO Alliance. The general's efforts over the year and a half of his command provided the groundwork for the continued expansion of collective security in Western Europe. In his letter of resignation to President Truman, Eisenhower himself observed that "the special organizational and initial planning missions that were deemed critical in the late weeks of 1950 have now been accomplished.... [P]rogress will ... follow the lines that have ... been marked out."⁷⁹ When Eisenhower stepped down in mid-1952, the Western Alliance was slowly but surely forming a strong counterweight to Soviet power in the Eastern Europe.

More importantly, Eisenhower's efforts to enact Truman's European policy allowed him to draw two main conclusions about a viable Cold War strategy. First, Eisenhower, drawing upon his previous experience with a large European coalition, went to NATO in early 1951 in complete agreement with President Truman's assumption that it was cheaper for the United States to arm its allies than to shoulder the burden of collective security by itself.⁸⁰ Judging by his statements to Truman as he left SHAPE, Eisenhower's service at NATO only strengthened his conviction. It stands to reason that, if his experience as SACEUR had been a largely negative experience, Eisenhower would have said as much to Truman. Also, as detailed in the next chapter, if Eisenhower left Europe believing the NATO concept was faulty, he would not have made it a major piece of his own defense policy.

Second, Eisenhower left Europe as a supporter of the EDC. He thought, given the complexities of the interactions between the European allies, that the only way to achieve greater unity in NATO was through the realization of the "European Army" concept. Although the success or failure of the EDC Treaty was yet to be decided, in Eisenhower's mind it was necessary for the United States to support the ratification of the EDC Treaty. As Marc Trachtenberg concluded in *A Constructed Peace*, "the Eisenhower administration had its heart set on the EDC."⁸¹

⁷⁸ Pach and Richardson, *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 21.

⁷⁹ Letter from Eisenhower to President Harry Truman, 2 April 1952.

⁸⁰ Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, 323.

⁸¹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 121.

As he moved from NATO Headquarters to the Oval Office, Eisenhower took these convictions with him. Eisenhower believed that President Truman had been correct in his “Europe First” policy and that the American effort to unify NATO had borne fruit in the form of the EDC Treaty. Consequently, as detailed in the next two chapters, because of his experiences as SACEUR, Eisenhower made the U.S. commitment to NATO and the ratification of the EDC Treaty key points of his own defense policy as president.

CHAPTER 2 - Building the “New Look” Strategy, 1953

After assuming the presidency in January 1953, crafting a national defense policy was at the forefront of Eisenhower’s mind. The new president, along with his national security staff, began working toward a defense policy that focused on three main concepts: maintaining a sound American economy, continuing to strengthen the NATO alliance, and delineating a clear policy on the use of nuclear weapons. After less than a year in office, Eisenhower approved the “New Look” policy described by his National Security Council advisers in NSC document 162/2 on 30 October 1953. While working with his NSC staff to craft this policy (including officials from the State, Defense, and Treasury Departments along with his Cabinet), Eisenhower’s experiences at NATO reinforced his economic thinking on the importance of foreign troops and reliance on nuclear weapons as part of the “New Look.”

Despite its catchy moniker, the policy delineated in NSC-162/2 was not a radical break from the defense policy set by Truman. Indeed, Eisenhower did not fundamentally change Truman’s defense framework. As Donald Mrozek, a distinguished professor at Kansas State University and long-time Eisenhower Era historian, argued in his 1974 article “A New Look at ‘Balanced Forces’: Defense Continuities from Truman to Eisenhower,” “The strategic framework that Eisenhower accepted with the start of his Administration was that of the Truman defense system.”⁸² John Gaddis also asserted in *Strategies of Containment* that “Eisenhower had supported each of the [Truman] administration’s major diplomatic and strategic initiatives.”⁸³

These arguments ring especially true when analyzing the continuity between Truman and Eisenhower regarding two major aspects of the “New Look”: the NATO alliance and nuclear weapons. As explained later in this chapter, Eisenhower was in complete agreement with Truman on the importance of the NATO alliance as well as the necessity of getting the Western European allies to contribute to their own defense. Accordingly, Eisenhower’s NSC staff

⁸² Donald J. Mrozek, “A New Look at ‘Balanced Forces’: Defense Continuities from Truman to Eisenhower,” *Military Affairs* 38 (December 1974): 150.

⁸³ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 127.

integrated into NSC-162/2 the explicit statement that, “The United States cannot... meet its defense needs, even at exorbitant cost, without support of the allies.”⁸⁴

Concerning nuclear weapons, Truman’s paradigm was that America’s strategic bombers provided a deterrent against Soviet aggression not just against the United States but also against Western Europe.⁸⁵ While acting as the temporary presiding officer of the Joint Chiefs in 1949, Eisenhower had agreed with this assertion, and he continued to do so during his own presidency.⁸⁶ As declared in NSC-162/2, “The major deterrent to aggression against Western Europe is the manifest determination of the United States to use its atomic capability and massive retaliatory striking power if the area is attacked.”⁸⁷ Eisenhower continued funneling monies to the expansion of the American nuclear stockpile just as Truman had been doing since 1950.⁸⁸

Thus, Eisenhower’s views on national defense while acting as SACEUR and later as president present a historical continuum suggesting that his experiences at NATO did not cause him to break with the policies started by Truman. Instead, Eisenhower’s service as NATO Supreme Commander reinforced his belief that Truman was pursuing a faulty execution of these policies with the adoption of the strategy detailed in NSC-68. As Mrozek concluded, Eisenhower thought Truman’s error had been “mismanagement, not misconception.”⁸⁹

NSC-68, the national security document detailing the U.S. defense strategy adopted by Truman in September 1950, explained that its base assumption was that by 1954 “the Soviet will possess the military capability of delivering a surprise attack,” and, in response, “the United States must have substantially increased air, ground, and sea strength, atomic capabilities... to deter war.”⁹⁰ To achieve such an expansion without radically increasing budget deficits or lowering the domestic standard of living, the authors of NSC-68 (an ad-hoc committee of officials from the State and Defense Departments) proposed that government spending in war-related industries would expand the size of the economy and thereby absorb the increase in

⁸⁴ NSC-162/2, *FRUS 1952-54*, Vol. II, “National Security Affairs,” 583.

⁸⁵ See Chapter 2.

⁸⁶ Steven L. Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume I: The Formative Years 1947-1950* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Office of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1984), 373.

⁸⁷ NSC-162/2, *FRUS 1952-54*, Vol. II, 585.

⁸⁸ See David Alan Rosenberg’s article, “The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy” for a full explanation of the procurement of nuclear weapons during the decade of the 1950s.

⁸⁹ Mrozek, “A New Look at ‘Balanced Forces’: Defense Continuities from Truman to Eisenhower,” 150.

⁹⁰ NSC-68, 7 April 1950, *FRUS 1950*, Vol. I, “National Security Policy,” 265-266, 278-288.

defense expenditures without long-term harm to the health of the U.S. economy.⁹¹ As the authors pointed out in NSC-68, “One of the most significant lessons of our World War II experience was that the American economy, when it operates at a level approaching full efficiency, can provide enormous resources for purposes other than civilian consumption while simultaneously providing a higher standard of living.”⁹² NSC-68, along with further arguments from Leon Keyserling, a prominent economist who espoused the Keynesian economic expansion theory similar to that found in NSC-68, convinced Truman to change his approach to defense spending and force structure.⁹³ Prior to the Korean War, Truman had set a maximum cap on the defense budget at approximately \$15 billion, a measure with which Eisenhower whole-heartedly agreed.⁹⁴ After approving NSC-68 and its underlying assumptions on the economy and the nature of an immediate Soviet threat, however, Truman increased the defense budget to a sum of nearly \$48 billion for Fiscal Year (FY) 1951, with approximately \$210 billion in future expenditures through FY 1954.⁹⁵ A major part of this expansion in defense spending went toward a huge increase in the conventional U.S. military force structure from 1.5 million personnel in 1950 to 3.3 million by 1954.⁹⁶

Eisenhower objected to Truman’s adoption of NSC-68 and its related force structure because he did not believe in their underlying premise of the Soviets presenting an immediate threat. Writing in his journal in January 1952, Eisenhower related his belief that “There is no

⁹¹ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 93.

⁹² NSC-68, 7 April 1950, *FRUS 1950*, Vol. I, “National Security Policy,” 256-258.

⁹³ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 94.

⁹⁴ Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 224.

The first defense budget for Fiscal Year 1951 submitted to Congress before the outbreak of the Korean War set the project defense budget at just over \$13 billion dollars; Dwight Eisenhower, “Diary Entry, 22 January 1952,” *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 210-11. Eisenhower agreed with President Truman that to avoid deficits and inflation national security expenditures had to be weighed against the requirements of a sound economy, and that the \$15 billion spending cap was sufficient to balance the two.

⁹⁵ “Fiscal Year 1951 Appropriations, New Obligation Authority,” Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 228, 241, 247; David T. Fautua, “The ‘Long Pull’ Army: NSC 68, the Korean War, and the Creation of the Cold War U.S. Army,” *The Journal of Military History* 61 (Jan 1997): 95. The consensus among historians as to why President Truman authorized such a large increase in defense expenditures is that the outbreak of hostilities on the Korean peninsula, combined with the successful nuclear detonation by the Soviet Union, changed Truman’s conception of the Cold War. See Paul Y. Hammond, “NSC 68: Prologue to Rearmament,” in Warner R. Schilling, Paul Y. Hammond, and Glenn Snyder, *Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 318-9; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 113.

⁹⁶ “FY 1951 End Strengths Authorized and Budgeted,” Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 240.

greater probability of war [with the Soviet Union] today than there was two years ago; and no one can say for certain that there is any greater probability of deliberately provoked war at the end of this year or of the next than there is now.”⁹⁷ Because he did not foresee an immediate threat of war, Eisenhower rejected the idea that “we must build up to a maximum attainable strength for some specific date theoretically fixed for a specific time in the future.”⁹⁸ Eisenhower also thought that the United States should subject itself to the budget deficits possible under the expanded Truman budgets of FYs 1951-1954 only in the “immediate prospects of war.”⁹⁹ Because he believed Truman meant to continue this higher level of spending “indefinitely into the future,” Eisenhower assumed the United States would suffer from “unconscionable inflation” that would ruin the national economy.¹⁰⁰ According to Robert Collins in *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America*, Eisenhower believed that economic growth revolved around price stability, and that inflation would disrupt the economic business cycle through price fluctuations.¹⁰¹ Consequently, Eisenhower entered the White House intent on modifying the military force structure and spending program outlined in NSC-68 in the hopes of achieving a balanced budget.¹⁰² As recorded at a February 1953 meeting of the NSC, Eisenhower believed there was “a growing complacency in this country which appeared to believe that the United States could go on spending as it pleased without regard for its income.”¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Eisenhower, “Diary Entry, 22 January 1952,” *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 213.

⁹⁸ U.S. National Archives, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, 1953* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 242.

⁹⁹ Eisenhower, “Diary Entry, 22 January 1952,” 212.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 213.

¹⁰¹ Collins, *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America*, 43.

¹⁰² The issue of inflation and government spending is also part of larger debate in the 1950s over two economic approaches. The economic paradigm advocated by Edwin Nourse, one of Truman’s primary economic advisers in the late 1940s, argued that there was a choice between a sound economy or “wasteful” expenses on the military, and budgets had to be balanced to maintain a strong economy. The economic theory advocated by Leon Keyserling, on the other hand, followed the ideas of John Maynard Keynes and explained that increased government spending could stimulate dynamic economic growth. Eisenhower appears to have agreed more with Nourse’s version by his desire to maintain a balanced budget as president. See Lester H. Brune, “Guns and Butter: The Pre-Korean War Dispute over Budget Allocations: Nourse’s Conservative Keynesianism Loses Favor against Keyserling’s Economic Expansion Plan,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 48 (July 1989): 368; Collins, *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America*, 22-4, 37-8; John Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 134-5.

¹⁰³ Staff Secretary notes of the 132nd NSC Meeting, p. 8, 18 February 1953, DDEL (Ann Whitman File [AWF]), NSC Series, Box 4, “132nd NSC Meeting, 18 Feb 1953.”

In particular, Eisenhower disagreed with the provision in NSC-68 that called for a rapid expansion of conventional U.S. military forces. Eisenhower knew from his service as Army Chief of Staff during the post-World War II demobilization that the number of military personnel, above anything else, was the most expensive factor in defense spending.¹⁰⁴ Cutting the number of U.S. military personnel could result in substantial savings.

The strength of Eisenhower's conviction on the economic benefits of reducing American personnel levels is evidenced by comments he made throughout high-level discussions on the "New Look" policy. In February 1953, Eisenhower told the NSC that, "if we could actually get the European defense plan and European armies into being, it would cost less than a fifth of the price it would require... to do it ourselves."¹⁰⁵ The next month, Eisenhower told the Joint Chiefs that "the cost of maintaining an American soldier in the field is fantastically higher than the cost of maintaining a foreign soldier ... [It is] far cheaper to provide assistance to create and maintain foreign divisions ... than to go ahead so rapidly in the development of additional U.S. divisions."¹⁰⁶ Eisenhower clearly recognized and pursued the economic benefits of maintaining a smaller U.S. military than the one envisioned under NSC-68.

As important as the economic argument was in Eisenhower's mindset, primary evidence indicates that another factor strengthened Eisenhower's thinking regarding the size of the American military: his experience at NATO Headquarters. Eisenhower's time as SACEUR had shown him that the United States did not need a large conventional force of its own to ensure its national security. While acting as SACEUR, one of the main premises Eisenhower advocated was the necessity of the European allies pulling their own weight regarding NATO defense spending (in accordance with the guidelines set by Truman). Eisenhower continually stressed to the NATO Allies that the United States "could not ... go to every spot in the world where our enemies may use force ... and defend those nations."¹⁰⁷

While progress towards this goal was slow, Eisenhower's firsthand experience in NATO had shown him that the Western European allies had made considerable gains toward providing for their own defense. In January 1952, Eisenhower wrote in his diary, "Europe is much closer

¹⁰⁴ Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President*, 219.

¹⁰⁵ Staff Secretary notes of the 132nd NSC Meeting, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ Staff Secretary notes of the 138th NSC Meeting, p. 5, 25 March 1953, DDEL (AWF), NSC Series, Box 4, "138th NSC Meeting, 25 March 1953."

¹⁰⁷ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 133.

than ever before to establishing... safety and prosperity.”¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, although the EDC and its accompanying “European Army” was far from complete, Eisenhower told Truman in his letter of resignation from SHAPE that the NATO signatories had accomplished “a marked degree of success in the task of building a viable defense structure.”¹⁰⁹ In fact, by November 1951, the NATO conventional force had risen to thirty-five divisions (including six U.S. divisions but no German units) and almost 3,000 aircraft.¹¹⁰

It is possible that Eisenhower’s observations on the growing strength of NATO contributed to his skepticism of the need for a large U.S. conventional force. With the growing strength of the NATO conventional forces (which as of yet did not incorporate a planned twelve German divisions¹¹¹), the United States had no need to increase its own troop levels in Europe. However, because Eisenhower did not discuss this aspect in his statements on the “New Look,” there can be no definitive conclusion on this point.

What is clear from the available primary evidence is that Eisenhower’s aversion to an expansion of the conventional U.S. military connected to NATO’s defense for another reason: a larger U.S. military would increase the tendency for the NATO Allies to absolve themselves of their commitments to the collective security of Western Europe. This issue had worried Eisenhower since accepting the nomination to become SACEUR. Writing to W. Averell Harriman on 12 December 1950, Eisenhower remarked, “It is only human nature to try to throw responsibility upon others” and that in the same vein the Western European allies could “feel the United States [was] responsible for them ... [and] will tend to relieve themselves” of responsibility for NATO.¹¹² Eisenhower said much the same in a letter dated 16 December, stating his belief that the American commitment to Europe, if not handled correctly, “might create an even greater European tendency to sit back and wait in a renewed confidence that the United States has assumed an inescapable and publicly stated responsibility.”¹¹³ Eisenhower recognized at the outset of his term as NATO Supreme Commander that the United States had to

¹⁰⁸ Eisenhower, “Diary Entry, 29 January 1952,” *The Eisenhower Diaries*, 214.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Eisenhower to Truman, 02 April 1952, p. 2, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential Papers 1916-52, Box 116, Truman File #1.

¹¹⁰ Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 374.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 391-2.

¹¹² Letter from Eisenhower to W. Averell Harriman, 12 December 1950, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential Papers 1916-52, Box 55, Harriman File #5.

¹¹³ Letter from Eisenhower to President Truman, 16 December 1950, p. 4, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential Papers 1916-52, Box 116, Truman File #2.

walk a fine line between showing its full support for NATO and preventing the Europeans from becoming completely reliant on the presence of U.S. divisions in Western Europe. The Europeans had to provide the great bulk of ground forces needed.¹¹⁴ As Eisenhower later commented to the NSC, “the stationing of U.S. divisions in Europe had been at the outset an emergency measure not intended to last indefinitely.”¹¹⁵

Throughout his time at SHAPE, Eisenhower was always conscious of this balancing act. In a letter to George C. Marshall in August 1951, Eisenhower related his belief that “we must show every nation that it is serving its own interests when it places NATO matters in top priority.”¹¹⁶ Eisenhower continued by stating that he had given every effort to “securing fervent European adherence to the essentials of the NATO concept,” but that “throughout West Europe, there is needed greater understanding, greater fervor, greater faith.”¹¹⁷ The danger was always present that the NATO signatories would become too dependent on the United States, and, for Eisenhower, maintaining this balance was his never-ending task as SACEUR.

Eisenhower’s comments during the debates over the “New Look” illustrate that European perceptions of American conventional strength continued to prey on his mind. As president, Eisenhower apparently thought an expansion of the U.S. conventional military would send the wrong message to the Western Allies; his observations as SACEUR had shown him that the Allies were adopting the attitude he had feared since late 1950. Eisenhower lamented in October 1953, “Unhappily, the European nations have been slow in building their own military forces and had now come to expect our forces to remain in Europe indefinitely.”¹¹⁸ Eisenhower was so convinced of this fact that he explained to the NSC his belief that the public announcement of even a small reduction of the U.S. ground force in Europe would “completely destroy” the progress made thus far.¹¹⁹ Thus, Eisenhower’s experiences as SACEUR demonstrated to him that building a large U.S. conventional capability would likely exacerbate the hands-off feeling

¹¹⁴ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 151.

¹¹⁵ Staff Secretary notes of 165th NSC Meeting, 7 October 1953, p. 14, DDEL (AWF), NSC Series, Box 4, “165th NSC Meeting.”

¹¹⁶ Letter from Eisenhower to George C. Marshall, 03 August 1951, p. 4, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential Papers 1916-52, Box 80, Marshall File #1.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Staff Secretary notes of 165th NSC Meeting, 7 October 1953, p. 14.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

in NATO as the signatory nations had domestic reasons for wanting reductions in their own conventional defense pledges.¹²⁰

As a result of these concerns, the approved NSC-162/2 emphasized the continued build-up of Allied conventional forces over that of the United States. NSC-162/2 insisted that, while existing under the umbrella of U.S. strategic nuclear deterrence, “the ground forces required to counter local aggressions must be supplied largely by our allies.”¹²¹ While much progress had been made “especially since 1950 to build up the strength, cohesion, and common determination of the free world,” it was an absolute necessity that Western European states continue to “build and maintain maximum feasible defensive strength.”¹²² The collective defense of NATO relied on Allied conventional forces rather than an increased U.S. presence.

While Eisenhower’s experiences at NATO undoubtedly influenced his view on the necessity of a large conventional force, the origins of Eisenhower’s thinking on nuclear weapons are harder to define. As explained earlier, Eisenhower’s opinion that Europe could be protected with U.S.-based strategic nuclear bombers had remained constant since 1949. The real change in Eisenhower’s thinking was that, under the “New Look” policy, nuclear weapons were necessary to deter both conventional and nuclear aggression by the Soviet Union.¹²³ As David Alan Rosenberg argues in “The Origins of Overkill,” his article delineating the development of American nuclear policy 1945-1960, a large element of Eisenhower’s nuclear strategy was “defense against local aggression, especially in Western Europe.”¹²⁴ Rosenberg also asserts that, for the first time in U.S. defense policy, the “New Look” defense program identified the provision of tactical atomic support for United States or allied military forces.¹²⁵

As with the issue of conventional forces, Eisenhower made statements demonstrating he recognized the clear economic benefits of relying on nuclear weapons, especially tactical warheads. In November 1953, Eisenhower wrote that “the dependence that we are placing on new [atomic] weapons would justify completely some reduction in conventional forces.”¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Kinnard, *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management*, 124.

¹²¹ NSC-162/2, *FRUS 1952-54*, Vol II, 591.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 585.

¹²³ For the purposes of this paper, the definition of “tactical nuclear weapon” is a bomb of 1-50 kiloton yield delivered by a small fighter aircraft or artillery cannon at a distance of 25-50 miles behind the line of battle.

¹²⁴ Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy,” 143.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹²⁶ Eisenhower memorandum, 11 November 1953, *FRUS 1952-54*, Vol II, 597.

Eisenhower saw that an increased reliance on nuclear weapons further reduced the need for a large conventional force because the weapons would further deter Soviet aggression against NATO.

Additionally, Eisenhower received copious advice on the advantages of tactical nuclear weapons that may have shaped his thinking. John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower's Secretary of State, wrote a memorandum to the president in the fall of 1953 on the subject of nuclear weapons. Recognizing the "difficult task of building up adequate forces to counter the threat of Soviet aggression ... [with] limitations imposed by the economy and manpower of the United States, as well as of our allies," Dulles argued that the U.S. military had "reached a stage where the number, diversity, and power of atomic weapons, together with their application to tactical situations, make necessary the adoption of a general policy for their use in the event of hostilities."¹²⁷ Dulles, as one of Eisenhower's most trusted advisers, undoubtedly had an important impact on the president's decision-making regarding nuclear weapons.¹²⁸ Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told Eisenhower their belief that the new tactical atomic weapons would be needed just to "prevent the overrunning of a large portion of Europe in the opening phases of a war."¹²⁹ This advice could have shaped Eisenhower's thinking regarding the potential use of tactical nuclear weapons or merely reinforced his own thoughts.

Yet the origins of Eisenhower's thinking on nuclear weapons may have formed during the eighteen-month period he had acted as the top military commander for NATO. In this capacity, Eisenhower was at the very least aware of the military possibilities regarding tactical nuclear weapons. In December 1951, Eisenhower received a briefing on the conclusions of the Project VISTA study group, a September 1950 Defense Department study conducted by the California Institute of Technology on the possible employment of tactical nuclear weapons.¹³⁰ To correct the serious imbalances in numbers of military personnel and aircraft between NATO and the Soviet Union, the Cal Tech scientists assigned to Project VISTA group estimated that as

¹²⁷ Memorandum from John Foster Dulles to President Eisenhower, Fall 1953, p. 1, DDEL, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series, Box 8, "General Foreign Policy Matters (3)."

¹²⁸ Kinnard, *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management*, 18.

¹²⁹ Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 381.

¹³⁰ David C. Elliot, "Project Vista and Nuclear Weapons in Europe," *International Security* 11.1 (Summer 1986), 175. In his article, while Elliot found the recommendations of the Project VISTA report compelling and ultimately correct, he concludes that the impact of the report itself was minimal. By the time Project VISTA published its final report in February 1952, the Joint Chiefs had already decided on planning for the use of tactical nuclear weapons and largely ignored the report's recommendations.

Eisenhower's experience as SACEUR had convinced him that the only way for the United States ever to have a chance to pull its troops out of Europe was to develop a strong Franco-German coalition. This entente between the two former enemies could weld the other Western European nations into a strong defense pact that would not rely on heavy American assistance. As SACEUR, Eisenhower believed the EDC had the best chance of laying the groundwork for this closer cooperation among the Western Europeans. Eisenhower saw the EDC as the only way to resolve the intricacies present in the current Western European alliance.

As 1954 progressed and French ratification of the EDC Treaty became unlikely, however, Eisenhower refused to investigate other options. Consequently, when the French National Assembly did not ratify the EDC Treaty, the United States was completely unprepared for any alternative action.¹⁷¹ Eisenhower, through Secretary Dulles, had received Britain's WEU-NATO proposal just prior to the French vote on the EDC, but stood by the EDC until the end.¹⁷² In this case, it appears that Eisenhower's strong stance on the EDC, which grew out of his experience as NATO Supreme Commander, actually impeded greater European unity instead of securing it. Only the actions of the British government secured the admittance of West Germany into NATO and greater cohesion among the Western European nations.

As wrangling over the EDC and later the WEU-NATO compromise continued through 1954, Eisenhower and his advisers also dealt with the nuclear weapons issue. The NATO allies doubted the wisdom of an increased reliance on nuclear weapons. Always fearful of a complete U.S. withdrawal from Europe, some allied officials believed that reliance on nuclear weapons was another step in Eisenhower's plan to abandon NATO altogether. Others had misgivings about the strength of the American nuclear guarantee given that the United States faced a growing Soviet nuclear arsenal. In particular, they worried whether America would resort to nuclear warfare to save Europe when facing a Soviet counterstrike against the American homeland.¹⁷³ Finally, the Soviet detonation of its own thermonuclear device in August 1953 inspired fears of a European nuclear wasteland in the event of World War III.¹⁷⁴ At the outset of

¹⁷¹ Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy Money, and the New Look 1953-1956*, 575.

¹⁷² "Telegram from Prime Minister Churchill to the Secretary of State," 19 August 1954, "Telegram from the Secretary of State to Prime Minister," 20 August 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. V, 1050-52.

¹⁷³ Skogmar, *The United States and the Nuclear Dimension of European Integration*, 21.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 21, 24.

few as 100 small atomic bombs could tip the scale in favor of the NATO allies.¹³¹ The VISTA group also forcefully argued that the efficient and successful use of atomic weapons might well be “the decisive factor in the defense of Europe.”¹³² Additionally, in January 1952 the Joint Chiefs authorized the first planning exercises that included nuclear weapons.¹³³ It is reasonable to assume that Eisenhower’s assessment of the military situation in Europe affected his thinking on the utility of tactical nuclear weapons.

Strangely, however, Eisenhower left behind no evidence to this effect. He appears to have never used his own military assessment of tactical nuclear weapons when discussing the “New Look.” While it seems unreasonable to think that his own military perspectives on tactical nuclear weapons were not on his mind, a lack of direct evidence prevents any definitive conclusion.

In the discussions leading to NSC-162/2, it is clear that Eisenhower’s economic beliefs played a prominent role. Because of his disagreements with some of the base assumptions in NSC-68 concerning the economy and the Soviet threat, Eisenhower questioned some aspects of Truman’s approach to waging the Cold War. Eisenhower thought the policy outlined in NSC-68, especially its provision for a large American conventional force, was faulty execution of Truman’s strategy because of its assumed economic repercussions (namely Eisenhower’s belief that deficit spending would spark high inflation). Based on these preconceptions, Eisenhower explained time and again that supporting NATO and relying on nuclear weapons would save the United States money and bring it closer to a balanced budget.

Eisenhower’s experience at SHAPE served to reinforce this economic perspective. As SACEUR, Eisenhower had witnessed the expansion of NATO’s conventional capabilities. Eisenhower’s experience also made him highly sensitive to European attitudes towards the American commitment to Western Europe. Rather than building a large American conventional force, which he believed might send the wrong message to the Europeans, Eisenhower insisted that the United States should focus on supporting the NATO countries in their efforts to increase

¹³¹ Memorandum from the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force on “VISTA” p. 4, 03 December 1951, DDEL, Lauris Norstad Papers 1930-87, Box 41, File #15.

¹³² Project VISTA Final Report, Vol. I, 93, as cited in Elliot, “Project Vista and Nuclear Weapons in Europe,” 170.

¹³³ Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy,” 143.

their own conventional strength. Therefore, Eisenhower's experience reinforced his economic stance regarding the necessity of having smaller conventional U.S. military forces.

Regarding nuclear weapons, although evidence is tenuous at best, it is reasonable to infer that Eisenhower's experiences dealing with tactical nuclear weapons as SACEUR affected his thinking as president. The evidence definitely indicates that Eisenhower dealt with the issue of tactical nuclear weapons as SACEUR, and, as Rosenberg points out, tactical nuclear weapons were a part of the "New Look" policy. There is not enough evidence, however, to assess accurately the degree to which Eisenhower's service played a part in his approach to tactical nuclear weapons in the "New Look."

As described in this chapter, Eisenhower made supporting NATO a major piece of his defense policy. This emphasis on NATO involved securing the greater unity of the Western European nations. For Eisenhower, greater unity had to come in the form of the European Defense Community. As he moved forward to implement the "New Look," finalizing the EDC became Eisenhower's priority.

CHAPTER 3 - Implementing the “New Look” in Western Europe, 1954

As detailed in the previous chapter, Eisenhower’s experiences as SACEUR reinforced his economic assumptions underlying the “New Look.” Yet the influence of Eisenhower’s time as NATO Supreme Commander did not end with the approval of NSC-162/2 in October 1953. With emphasis on strengthening the NATO coalition and a greater reliance on nuclear weapons to deter local aggression as major pieces of the “New Look,” Eisenhower’s experiences as SACEUR determined how he implemented these two elements of his defense policy for Western Europe. For Eisenhower, experience in Europe had convinced him that strengthening the NATO coalition meant fully supporting the ratification of the European Defense Community (EDC) Treaty. Regarding nuclear weapons, Eisenhower believed the United States needed to bring the NATO allies closer by allowing them access to sensitive information on the nuclear weapons deployed for possible use in continental Europe.

The EDC Treaty, while initially appearing to represent a workable compromise for the integration of West German military resources, had quickly lost momentum during the ratification process. This was unacceptable to Eisenhower, who saw the EDC’s military provisions as essential to future political cooperation among the West Europeans. Eisenhower thought the real point of the EDC was to weld France and Germany together as the core of a strong, independent European federation that could stand against the Soviets on its own, thus making it possible for American forces to withdraw from Europe in the near future.¹³⁴ As Eisenhower was reported to have told the French Prime Minister and French Foreign Minister in their December 1953 meeting, “the only practical way to insure the defense of the free world lay in the development of a greater unity on continental Europe by the by the association of France and Germany.”¹³⁵ From this perspective, the contribution of West German troops to NATO was not nearly as important as unifying the Allies. Eisenhower explained as much when discussing

¹³⁴ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 121-2.

¹³⁵ “Eisenhower-Laniel Meeting, December 5, 1953,” *FRUS 1952-1954* Vol. V, 1770.

the possibility of a West German national army as opposed to the EDC: “to resort to a national army [is] a choice so far behind the EDC that there could be no comparison.”¹³⁶

Eisenhower strongly believed in the unifying effects of the EDC and its European Army. In fact, in January 1953, Eisenhower commented in his diary that “until Europe makes a success of the European Army ... we can have little confidence of its future.”¹³⁷ Additionally, as he said in the December 1953 meeting with French officials, Eisenhower was convinced that “the EDC was not only practical and feasible, but absolutely essential to any permanent solution” in achieving “a much greater degree of unity” in Europe.¹³⁸ Eisenhower even went as far as saying that he could see “no acceptable alternative to the EDC.”¹³⁹ Indeed, a few days later Eisenhower told the NSC that “our one great objective at the moment was to secure the ratification of the EDC.”¹⁴⁰

Eisenhower’s conviction of the necessity of the EDC stemmed from his experience as SACEUR. As early as January 1952, Eisenhower had been stressing the need for the Western European allies to move quickly on the agreeing to the EDC.¹⁴¹ Speaking to members of the Dutch Parliament, Eisenhower explained that he “strongly believed that the EDC ... would prove necessary for further federative steps and would thus hasten union” among Western European countries.¹⁴²

Eisenhower’s thoughts on the EDC while acting as SACEUR are even more evident in his final conversation with Chancellor Adenauer of West Germany (which occurred on 3 May 1952). Speaking of the greater unity of Western Europe, Eisenhower said, “Signature of the EDC ... is essential as a first step toward the process of European federation.”¹⁴³ Eisenhower elaborated by stating that “at the heart of the problem is the question of understanding between

¹³⁶ Ibid., 1783.

¹³⁷ Eisenhower, “Diary Entry, 06 January 1953,” *Eisenhower Diaries*, 222.

¹³⁸ “Eisenhower-Laniel Meeting, December 5, 1953,” *FRUS 1952-1954* Vol. V, 1770.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 174th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 10 December 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. V, 451.

¹⁴¹ “Telegram, Ambassador in France to the Department of State,” 12 January 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. V, 584.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ “Telegram, Ambassador in France to the Department of State,” 03 May 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. V, 650.

France and Germany.”¹⁴⁴ Indeed, Eisenhower maintained that the “overall and essential objective” of the EDC was “a real Franco-German entente.”¹⁴⁵

Thus, as he entered the Oval Office, Eisenhower already had the ideas in mind that he expressed to French officials in December 1953. The real question was how to push the EDC towards complete ratification. Support for the EDC Treaty quickly dwindled in the Western European capitals, particularly in France, where partisan debate over the EDC had become particularly heated. Eisenhower’s original hope had been that the NATO allies would ratify the EDC Treaty by the beginning of 1953, with the first six of twelve West German divisions scheduled to be at full strength by the end of the year.¹⁴⁶ At the end of April 1953, however, Secretary of State Dulles reported to Eisenhower that the anticipated delay in the ratification of the EDC made any progress towards a Franco-German union unlikely before October.¹⁴⁷ As his December 1953 comments demonstrate, Eisenhower was dissatisfied with the ratification delays in Europe.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington were also growing impatient with the lack of progress. Viewing the EDC primarily as a military solution for the defense of NATO, Eisenhower’s military advisers stressed that the twelve German divisions were indispensable to NATO war planning, and that without them in the event of war the United States would likely have to forfeit all of West Germany (and perhaps even a substantial portion of France) if the Germans could not militarily reinforce the six American divisions stationed within their country.¹⁴⁸ The Joint Chiefs also reminded Eisenhower that, in any case, there would be a substantial delay between ratification and the employment of full-strength German units. The mountains of equipment slated for German units remained in the United States pending EDC ratification, and the shipment of these supplies to West Germany was not going to be instantaneous.¹⁴⁹ In addition, Germany would need time to recruit, organize, and train the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Richard M. Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy Money, and the New Look 1953-1956* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2001), 566.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 558.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 568. Referred to as the “insular-peninsular peripheral” strategy, the Joint Chiefs envisioned NATO forces having to fall back behind the natural barriers of the Pyrenees and Alps mountains in Italy and Spain in the face of Soviet onslaught. The U.S. and NATO allies would then launch a World War II-style invasion of Europe to push the communist forces back into Eastern Europe.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 567.

necessary personnel. The Joint Chiefs requested that Eisenhower set a deadline for ratification of the EDC Treaty, after which time the United States would pursue the unilateral rearmament of West Germany.¹⁵⁰

Eisenhower continued to urge patience among the Joint Chiefs because his service at NATO made him sensitive to problems within European countries over the EDC Treaty. Eisenhower was especially familiar with French concerns. As he told Chancellor Adenauer in May 1952, Eisenhower “had spent much time in ... France and he thought France had come a long way” in solving its problems regarding the EDC, although France “had serious problems with parliamentary and public opinion based on historical experiences with Germany.”¹⁵¹ Eisenhower reiterated his commitment to assuaging French complaints in a letter to French Premier Joseph Laniel in September 1953. In this letter, Eisenhower explained that he recognized the difficulties in France of ratifying the EDC because he was “not blind to history” concerning Germany and that he did not view delays as failure.¹⁵² For Eisenhower, France was the linchpin to the future security of NATO through the EDC. On several occasions, Eisenhower commented that he had “strong skepticism as to whether there was any really effective alternative to French membership in the EDC.”¹⁵³ Because of this consideration for France, Eisenhower quashed the idea of American unilateral rearmament of Germany, given the French government’s “almost hysterical fear” of abandonment by the United States.¹⁵⁴ Eisenhower made it clear that unilateral action was not yet a plausible option for the United States, as the French only needed more time to resolve their internal issues and ratify the EDC Treaty.

The disagreement between the Joint Chiefs and Eisenhower continued into the summer of 1953. At the NSC meeting of 13 August, the Joint Chiefs pressured Eisenhower to agree to a 1 January 1954 deadline that they had suggested a few weeks earlier in response to their growing concern over the availability of the German divisions.¹⁵⁵ Secretary Dulles, reflecting the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 566.

¹⁵¹ “Telegram, Ambassador in France to the Department of State,” 03 May 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. V, 650.

¹⁵² Letter from Eisenhower to Joseph Laniel, 21 September 1953, as cited in Ambrose, 334.

¹⁵³ Memorandum of Discussion at 164th NSC Meeting, 1 October 1953, as cited in Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy, Money, and the New Look 1953-1956*, 568.

¹⁵⁴ Staff Secretary notes of 174th NSC Meeting, 10 December 1953, p. 6, DDEL (AWF), NSC Series, Box 5, “174th NSC Meeting 10 Dec 1953.”

¹⁵⁵ Staff Secretary notes of 159th NSC Meeting, 13 August 1953, p. 4, DDEL (AWF), NSC Series, Box 4, “159th NSC Meeting 13 Aug 1953.”

president's own view, commented that "any arbitrary date... would be nothing less than catastrophic [and] destroy the possibility of realizing an integrated Europe."¹⁵⁶ France was the lynchpin for Eisenhower, and he remained adamant that the prospect of rearming Germany unilaterally would do more harm than good.¹⁵⁷ Ultimately, the president set a deadline of 1 April 1954 for the ratification of the EDC Treaty, although he did not adhere to this deadline as he "could not see what direction" the United States was going to take in the event of the failure of the EDC.¹⁵⁸

France dragged its feet on ratification of the EDC for a variety of reasons. The Gaullist Party and other nationalist groups within the National Assembly objected to relinquishing control of French troops to the supra-national "European Army."¹⁵⁹ Further complicating matters was the failing French effort in Indochina, which had fallen apart in May following the surrender of the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu. When Eisenhower pledged only monetary support and not U.S. military forces to help stabilize the French position in Indochina, French political opinion swung even further against the EDC.¹⁶⁰ Ultimately, a majority in the French National Assembly tabled the EDC Treaty without a vote on 30 August 1954.¹⁶¹

With this action, the French government destroyed Eisenhower's hopes for the EDC and greater Western European unity. The defeat of the EDC Treaty within the French National Assembly meant Eisenhower had no way to realize either the supra-national "European Army" or the strong Franco-German alliance that he had pushed for since his days as SACEUR. Without this central unity among the Europeans, Eisenhower knew from experience that America could not withdraw its own conventional forces from NATO. Without the stability he presumed to be inherent in the EDC, Eisenhower told the NSC that he "had no slight idea of

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy Money, and the New Look 1953-1956*, 568-9.

¹⁵⁹ Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 64.

¹⁶⁰ "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor of the Department of State," 8 December 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. V, 1840. Eisenhower remarked that he was concerned "by the apparent French tendency to request additional commitments from the United States and United Kingdom as a sort of condition for French ratification of the EDC." Eisenhower specifically mentioned the \$350,000,000 which had been granted to France for Indochina and stated his recollection that this had been granted on the condition that France ratify the EDC.

¹⁶¹ Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy Money, and the New Look 1953-1956*, 575.

reducing the number of [U.S.] forces in Europe in the next two years” because “The European nations are not yet ready to take up the slack.”¹⁶²

The British government, however, which had for some time been pushing for German rearmament, saw the demise of the EDC as an opportunity.¹⁶³ British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden called for a conference in London and Paris to discuss admitting Germany into the Western European Union (WEU). Great Britain, France, and the Benelux nations had formed this mutual defense organization in 1948 under the title of the Western Union, which had since become virtually defunct.¹⁶⁴ Great Britain saw the WEU as a medium to bring West Germany into NATO itself. The WEU would be able to control Germany’s manufacture of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, as well as naval warships and strategic bombers, but would do so as part of the larger NATO effort.¹⁶⁵ In addition, the WEU firmly tied the United Kingdom to the continent, assuaging French fears of facing a rearmed Germany on its own.¹⁶⁶

The British effort resulted in the London and Paris Conferences (28 September-3 October and 20-23 October, respectively).¹⁶⁷ After negotiating aspects of the British proposal over the course of a month, all the major NATO parties agreed to the restoration of full sovereignty to West Germany. On 23 October, the foreign ministers of the NATO countries signed the “Paris Accords,” declaring the end of the occupation of West Germany and the recognition of its sovereignty under the provisions of the North Atlantic Treaty.¹⁶⁸ The accords also established the goal of a 12-division, 500,000-man army for West Germany.¹⁶⁹ By the end of 1954, one of Eisenhower’s major policy goals was complete. Western Europe was more unified than it had been since the formation of NATO five years earlier, and this new-found cohesion could ultimately result in a decrease in the American ground forces committed to European defense.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶² “Memorandum of Discussion at the 187th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 05 March 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. 5, 889.

¹⁶³ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 65.

¹⁶⁴ Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy Money, and the New Look 1953-1956*, 579.

¹⁶⁵ “Annex IV of Protocols to the Brussels Treaty,” 22 October 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. V, 1450.

¹⁶⁶ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 65.

¹⁶⁷ These two meetings are also referred to as the Nine-power and Four-Power Conferences in some works.

¹⁶⁸ “Resolution on Results of the Four- and Nine-Power Meetings,” 22 October 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. V, 1430.

¹⁶⁹ Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy Money, and the New Look 1953-1956*, 580.

¹⁷⁰ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 125; Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 66.

1954, it was unclear whether the NATO Allies would follow Eisenhower's lead in adopting a theater nuclear deterrent strategy for Western Europe.

In October 1953, just as Eisenhower was finalizing NSC-162/2, the Joint Chiefs' Annual Review reaffirmed that NATO war planning must be based on "atomic as well as conventional weapons" and that the alliance must be prepared to counter a Soviet attack "by atomic retaliation."¹⁷⁵ The Joint Chiefs' further concluded that the United States must begin to "provision our NATO allies with such atomic information as is required to carry out effective planning."¹⁷⁶ Eisenhower, who thought there were a number of benefits to relying on tactical nuclear weapons,¹⁷⁷ approved NSC-151/2, "Disclosure of Atomic Information to Allied Countries." This document stated that "the United States should increase its disclosure to selected allied governments of information in the atomic energy field."¹⁷⁸ More specifically, "NATO countries should be given an approximation of the kilotonnage and the numbers of weapons within various yield ranges which will be available for tactical support of NATO forces in the event of war," including "the tactical use to which the United States would put atomic weapons."¹⁷⁹

The provisions of NSC-151/2, however, conflicted with the Atomic Energy Act of 1946, also known as the McMahon Act. This act was the basic legislation for providing civilian control of atomic energy. Meant to protect the American nuclear monopoly, the McMahon Act included provisions preventing the exchange of nuclear information with foreign governments.¹⁸⁰ Both the U.S. Congress and the Joint Chiefs remained hesitant about releasing details on the capabilities of the American nuclear arsenal.

Eisenhower, because of his experiences as SACEUR, argued strongly for the sharing of nuclear information with the NATO allies as an extension of his earlier sentiment that "each

¹⁷⁵ Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy Money, and the New Look 1953-1956*, 565.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ See Chapter 3.

¹⁷⁸ "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on Disclosure of Atomic Information to Allied Countries," *FRUS 1952-54*, Vol. II, 1257.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 1258.

¹⁸⁰ Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy Money, and the New Look 1953-1956*, 564.

[European nation] should be regarded as an equal partner” in the defense of Europe.¹⁸¹ Recalling his duties at NATO in an NSC meeting on 3 December 1953, Eisenhower stated “with some heat... [that] he had a good deal of experience in dealing with the allies, and... you had to treat them as though they were allies.”¹⁸² Eisenhower elaborated by stating that while “we were not obliged to reveal everything,” the allies could not be kept in the dark completely.¹⁸³ The United States was “asking [the] allies to take some pretty terrible risks to stand with America, and “it was certainly incumbent [upon the United States] to give them some good idea of the magnitude [of nuclear weapons] which would be available for their defense.”¹⁸⁴ Thus, Eisenhower concluded, “we should be in a position to reveal to them the nature and character of the military impact that our atomic weapons could have against an enemy attack.”¹⁸⁵ From these comments, it is reasonable to conclude that Eisenhower’s firsthand experience dealing with the NATO countries as SACEUR reinforced his belief that the United States needed to be more open with the allies on defense (and especially nuclear) matters.

Eisenhower sent a special message to Congress the next year and helped to get the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 passed despite initial resistance by Democratic senators representing the Tennessee Valley Authority (who were more worried over the commercial development of atomic energy than nuclear weapons).¹⁸⁶ This revision of the 1946 Act liberalized the security provisions in several minor ways, allowing the United States to train its allies on how to employ nuclear weapons.¹⁸⁷ Explicitly excluded from this act, however, was authority to share detailed information on the manufacture, design, and numbers of atomic weapons.¹⁸⁸

Just before Christmas 1953, there had been a NATO Ministers’ meeting at which Dulles first broached the subject of nuclear weapons. In his report to the NSC, Dulles stated that he

¹⁸¹ Letter from Eisenhower to Averell Harriman, 12 December 1950, DDEL, DDE Papers, Pre-Presidential 1916-52, Box 55, Harriman File #5.

¹⁸² Staff Secretary notes of the 173rd NSC Meeting, p. 12, 03 December 1953, DDEL (AWF), NSC Series, Box 5, “173rd NSC Meeting 3 Dec 1953.”

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy Money, and the New Look 1953-1956*, 576.

¹⁸⁷ Kinnard, *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management*, 36.

¹⁸⁸ Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy Money, and the New Look 1953-1956*, 566.

made “every effort to get the other NATO ministers to think in something like our terms of atomic weapons and of the atomic age.”¹⁸⁹ Dulles explained to the Allies “how very difficult it would be for the United States to continue to finance the cost of two separate kinds of armament and to plan for two possible kinds of war.”¹⁹⁰ Dulles reiterated that “our allies must try to understand the problem” and agree to President Eisenhower’s views on the nuclear issue.¹⁹¹ Despite his best efforts, however, Dulles told the NSC that the NATO Allies “were still very frightened at the atomic prospect” and that “the United States would be unable to secure from its allies any agreement in advance to the use of [nuclear] weapons.”¹⁹²

Eisenhower and Dulles prepared their statements for the next meeting of the North Atlantic Council, scheduled for the end of April 1954. Eisenhower wanted Dulles to hold a single closed session at the meeting to clarify the American position on atomic and thermonuclear weapons.¹⁹³ At this meeting, held on 23 April, Dulles summarized Eisenhower’s views by explaining, “Without the availability for use of atomic weapons, the security of all NATO forces in Europe would be in grave jeopardy in the event of a surprise Soviet attack.”¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, because “Soviet rulers will make use of atomic weapons with maximum surprise,” Dulles argued, “it is indispensable that the free world possesses and maintains a capacity for instant and formidable retaliation.”¹⁹⁵ Dulles concluded by declaring: “It should be our agreed policy ... to use atomic weapons as conventional weapons against the military assets of the enemy.”¹⁹⁶

Following this meeting, with the American stance on nuclear weapons in Europe clear, there remained only a few details left to work out. For example, the question remained on how West Germany would figure into the tactical nuclear weapons scenario. Eisenhower had perceived as SACEUR that, while the French were understandably terrified of a nuclear-capable West Germany, the Soviets were even more wary of this prospect. In fact, Eisenhower thought a

¹⁸⁹ Staff Secretary notes of the 177th NSC Meeting, p. 7, DDEL (AWF), NSC Series, Box 5, “177th NSC Meeting 24 Dec 1953.”

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Editorial Note, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. V, 508.

¹⁹⁴ “Statement by the Secretary of State to the North Atlantic Council Closed Ministerial Session, Paris, April 23, 1954,” printed within *FRUS 1952-54*, Vol. V, 511.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 510-11.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 512.

nationally manufactured and controlled nuclear arsenal within West Germany itself might trigger an immediate Soviet preemptive attack.¹⁹⁷ Fortunately, the British compromise with the WEU-NATO transition addressed this specific issue by requiring a majority vote of the Council of the Western European Union in order for West Germany to develop any type of nuclear weapon.¹⁹⁸

The result was that on 22 November 1954, NATO's Military Committee approved MC-48, "Resolution on the Most Effective Pattern of NATO Military Strength for the Next Few Years."¹⁹⁹ This document explicitly stated that for the "foreseeable future... superiority in atomic weapons and the capability to deliver them will be the most important factor in a major war." MC-48 also assumed that NATO would "use atomic and thermonuclear weapons in defense from the outset" of any Soviet attack.²⁰⁰ When the Military Committee submitted the document to the General Assembly of NATO on 17 December, the Western European allies had come to accept Eisenhower's views. The vote on MC-48 was unanimous, and the resolution quickly passed.²⁰¹

Eisenhower's goals for the implementation of the "New Look" policy had now been achieved. With West Germany's formal admission into NATO on 6 May 1955, the European allies were much more closely tied together than they had been when Eisenhower entered the Oval Office. Also, with the adoption of MC-48 by the allies, a reliance on tactical nuclear weapons (under the strategic nuclear umbrella provided by the United States) became a cornerstone of NATO defense strategy. By the end of 1954, Western Europe was completely in line with the defense policy Eisenhower had formulated during his first year in office.

Eisenhower's experiences as NATO Supreme Commander affected the implementation of the "New Look" in Europe in a variety of ways. It was while Eisenhower was acting as SACEUR that he had first developed the idea of creating a strong tie between France and Germany as the core of a European-led and managed defense pact that would set the groundwork for future political cohesion in Western Europe. Eisenhower while SACEUR accordingly came to see that the EDC Treaty offered the best hope to accomplish this goal. After advocating the

¹⁹⁷ Skogmar, *The United States and the Nuclear Dimension of European Integration*, 34.

¹⁹⁸ "Protocols to the Brussels Treaty, Protocol No. III, Part II, Article 3," 22 October 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. V, 1446-47.

¹⁹⁹ "Memorandum Prepared by the Department of State," December 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. V, 541-42.

²⁰⁰ Text of NATO document MC-48, 18 November 1954, cited in Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 159.

²⁰¹ Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume III: Strategy Money, and the New Look 1953-1956*, 600.

EDC while serving as NATO Supreme Commander, Eisenhower as president continued to push for the ratification of the treaty. Even after the EDC became untenable in the summer of 1954, Eisenhower's NATO service had him so utterly convinced of the need for the EDC as a stepping stone for a stronger Western Europe that he ignored other options until the EDC Treaty actually failed at the end of August 1954.

Regarding the nuclear issue, while his SACEUR duties had already reinforced his thinking on the necessity of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe,²⁰² Eisenhower's service at NATO Headquarters also shaped how the president sought to integrate nuclear weapons into NATO. Eisenhower could have decided that only the United States should know how to use tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Eisenhower's service as SACEUR gave him a much broader approach to the situation. Judging by his December 1953 comments to the NSC, after working with the Western European allies firsthand as SACEUR Eisenhower saw that the United States needed to be open with its allies concerning tactical nuclear weapons. If NATO was ever going to adopt a theater nuclear deterrence strategy, it was only logical that the United States share information on the capabilities of a nuclear arsenal in Western Europe. Therefore, Eisenhower's approach toward tactical nuclear weapons in Western Europe was an inclusive policy involving the allies as opposed to an exclusively American venture. Thus, after helping to shape the "New Look" policy itself, Eisenhower's experiences as SACEUR also shaped how the president chose to implement the major aspects of his policy.

²⁰² See Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 4 - Summary and Conclusions

No historian writing on Eisenhower and the “New Look” has focused on the continuity of Eisenhower’s thoughts on national defense as SACEUR with his views as president. Yet there are several instances where Eisenhower’s experiences as SACEUR played an important part in Eisenhower’s thinking on both the “New Look” itself and its implementation in Western Europe. This approach also provides a broader understanding of Eisenhower’s thinking in the first half of the 1950s as well as previously unrecognized factors that influenced defense policy in the Eisenhower era.

When Eisenhower accepted the nomination to become SACEUR in December 1950, the Cold War was in full swing. The Soviet Union had solidified its iron grip over its European satellites with huge formations of Soviet troops posted in Eastern and Central Europe.²⁰³ Meanwhile, the member countries of the NATO alliance were very weak. The majority of the Western European nations had yet to recover fully from the widespread destruction of the Second World War. Rivalries between the allies further complicated the situation by dividing the alliance and preventing a coordinated effort toward a stable collective defense. In short, at the end of 1950, serious defense by NATO against any Soviet aggression was nothing but a dream.

As part of Truman’s strategy to strengthen America’s allies in Europe, Eisenhower went to NATO to increase the cohesion of the Western European nations by building a strong international conventional military force. From January 1951 through May 1952, Eisenhower devoted all his energies toward this project, working closely with allied political and military leaders to increase the military capability of NATO. To a large degree, Eisenhower’s efforts were successful. When Eisenhower left NATO in the spring of 1952, NATO had nearly doubled the number of available combat divisions and tripled the number of combat ready aircraft.²⁰⁴ Additionally, the Western Europeans had taken steps toward greater unity with tentative agreement to the EDC Treaty.

²⁰³ As mentioned, American intelligence estimated as many as thirty Soviet divisions in East Germany alone in 1948. Refer to Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 72.

²⁰⁴ Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Volume II: The Test of War 1950-1953*, 374.

Eisenhower's service as SACEUR was not important solely for his accomplishment as NATO's top military commander. Eisenhower's time at NATO also shaped his thinking on U.S. defense policy towards Europe. When he accepted the nomination to become SACEUR, Eisenhower did so because, having previously commanded a coalition in Europe during World War II, he agreed with Truman that a strong Western Europe was the cornerstone to future American security. His service at NATO Headquarters reinforced this belief. Eisenhower left NATO confident that Truman's approach to Europe had been correct and that NATO could continue to grow in strength with future American support.

Eisenhower also left Europe as a strong supporter of the EDC Treaty. After working tirelessly to resolve the intricacies of the interactions between the Western European nations (namely the issue of what to do about West Germany), Eisenhower thought the supra-national "European Army" concept of the EDC was the only way to create greater cohesion in NATO. Eisenhower thought that the international "European Army," with a strong Franco-German coalition at its core, would naturally lead to more cohesion in Western Europe. These observations from Eisenhower's service as SACEUR formed the background for his own defense policy, as continued support for NATO and the ratification of the EDC became two major goals for Eisenhower as president.

Eisenhower also entered the presidency with very specific ideas on the economy and defense spending. Because he thought the Soviets were not going to attack any time soon, Eisenhower assumed that there was no reason to incur what he saw as the likely deficit spending of the NSC-68 budgets. A major reason for the expansion of the defense budget was a planned increase in U.S. military personnel. From his previous service as U.S. Army Chief of Staff in 1946 during the World War II demobilization, Eisenhower knew that personnel were always the largest expense in defense budgets.²⁰⁵ Eisenhower therefore presumed he had a strong economic incentive to reduce the planned expansion of the U.S. military.

Eisenhower's service as SACEUR reinforced this economic stance while he was formulating the "New Look" policy. As NATO Supreme Commander, Eisenhower was well aware of the progress the NATO allies had made to increase their own military capability. This knowledge and further expected increases in NATO's military forces likely prompted Eisenhower to view a larger American military as unnecessary to Western European defense.

²⁰⁵ Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President*, 219.

Furthermore, Eisenhower's experience at NATO Headquarters made him very conscious of the European perceptions of American actions. Eisenhower was aware from the beginning of his tour as SACEUR that a large American presence in Europe could cause the allies to drag their feet on their own defense commitments. In essence, the Europeans would clamor for more American units instead of providing their own troops. Eisenhower was wary that building a large U.S. military would only serve to increase this sentiment among some of the NATO countries. Thus, Eisenhower's experiences as SACEUR served to reinforce his economic stance on the desired size of the U.S. military.

The influence of Eisenhower's SACEUR experience dealing with nuclear weapons is less clear. While acting as SACEUR, Eisenhower was exposed to the military possibilities of tactical nuclear weapons (i.e., the Project VISTA report and the Joint Chiefs' nuclear targeting authorization) and later authorized war planning exercises for the use of these weapons in the event of war. Eisenhower was therefore well aware of the advantages offered by tactical nuclear weapons in the defense of Western Europe.

Yet as president, while he made references to the economic benefits of using tactical nuclear weapons (nuclear weapons in exchange for manpower, meaning fewer troops and smaller defense expenditures), Eisenhower does not appear to have ever specifically referred to his experiences at NATO working with nuclear weapons. It would be strange if Eisenhower, a man with a wealth of firsthand military knowledge on the topic of nuclear weapons in Europe, never used his personal experience to help determine his defense policy. It is likely that Eisenhower did use this experience but merely left behind little evidence of it.

Eisenhower's experience at NATO also shaped the president's realization of this strategy in Western Europe. As described above, Eisenhower left NATO a firm supporter of the EDC Treaty. Eisenhower, like Truman before him, wanted the Western European nations strong enough to stand on their own without heavy American aid. The only way to achieve this was to create a greater sense of cohesion among the Western Europeans.

Eisenhower's service at NATO convinced him that EDC was the best way to achieve this greater unity. Eisenhower thought France and Germany (by nature of their population size, availability of resources, and geographic location) held the dominating role in a strong Western Europe. Eisenhower explained time and again that, if France and Germany could be welded together in pursuit of a single goal, these two nations could provide the core for a successful

defense pact in Europe. Eisenhower thought that the “European Army” provision of the EDC would serve perfectly as this single goal, because he believed the pooling of resources towards a single military force would lay the groundwork for future political cooperation. In Eisenhower’s mind, the military program of the EDC was merely a medium for the greater political unity of Western Europe.

As a result, Eisenhower made ratification of the EDC the cornerstone of his policy to keep strengthening the NATO countries, and through 1953-1954 Eisenhower pursued this goal single-mindedly in his foreign policy in Western Europe. Even as the chances of ratification worsened with increasing French objections to the EDC in the spring and summer of 1954, Eisenhower refused to investigate other options. In fact, it was only after the ratification effort completely failed in France in August 1954 that Eisenhower accepted the British proposal to use the WEU to integrate West Germany into NATO with full sovereignty. While the compromise lacked the strong Franco-German pact that Eisenhower envisioned, it did bring the NATO countries closer together than ever before. Eisenhower’s fervent support of the EDC clearly originated from his experience as SACEUR and influenced his actions as president.

Eisenhower’s duties at NATO also helped shape his position on the integration of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. In January 1952, the JCS had given Eisenhower nuclear targeting authority as SACEUR with the caveat that only American officers were supposed to have the classified information on tactical nuclear weapons necessary for planning purposes.²⁰⁶ Eisenhower’s experiences convinced him this was the wrong approach to take. As he said on several occasions, the only way that NATO was going to work was if the allies were included in all aspects of planning for collective defense. In essence, Eisenhower thought the United States needed to trust its allies more than it had up to that point. Consequently, Eisenhower fought for the changes in U.S. laws on the sharing of nuclear information. In due course, Eisenhower created an environment where the United States gave the European allies previously withheld nuclear information that enabled the NATO allies to participate in nuclear war planning.

Thus, Eisenhower’s experiences as SACEUR influenced his thoughts on national defense policy as president. While there were certainly other factors at work (the formation of any national defense policy is, after all, a complicated and lengthy process involving more

²⁰⁶ Dwight Eisenhower, *Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, Vol. XIII, 1226.

government officials than just the president), it cannot be denied that Eisenhower's service at NATO helped to clarify his thinking and guide his actions while in the Oval Office.

The purpose of this essay has not been to discount other interpretations regarding the "New Look" policy; rather, the goal has been to expand the interpretative framework on the subject. Other historians have only briefly mentioned Eisenhower's service as the NATO Supreme Commander, but this work has shown how crucial this experience was to Eisenhower's thoughts on the "New Look."

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