Chapter 11

DÉTENTE

As the war in Southeast Asia wound down, the Joint Chiefs of Staff began a slow and sometimes uncomfortable reassessment of their military plans and policies. Similar reassessments had followed previous wars and invariably had given rise to passionate inter-Service rivalries and intense competition for resources. Some of these elements, to be sure, were present in the aftermath of Vietnam. But compared to the build-downs that followed World War II and Korea, the transition following Vietnam was relatively smooth and easy. Indeed, the most serious problems that arose were in developing military policies and a force posture compatible with a rapidly changing international environment dominated by the prospect of a new era in Soviet-American relations known as "détente."

An evolving process, détente was the outgrowth of a series of Soviet-American initiatives, some dating from the 1950s, to establish what political scientist Stanley Hoffmann termed "a stable structure of peace."[1] Coming to fruition in the early 1970s, détente lasted roughly from the signing of the SALT I accords in 1972 until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Historians generally agree that, while the two sides shared certain common interests, they approached them from different perspectives and expected different outcomes. Hence the friction and disagreements that sometimes accompanied détente and ultimately brought its demise. For President Nixon and his national security advisor, Henry A. Kissinger, détente was integral to the post-Vietnam restructuring of American foreign relations and related defense policies. Persuaded that the two previous administrations had concentrated too much on the Third World, Nixon and Kissinger set about redefining the country's vital interests. Shifting the focus from Asia to Europe, they wanted to strengthen relationships with traditional allies and revitalize NATO, which had gone into decline during the American preoccupation with Vietnam. At the same time, acknowledging that the United States could never regain the strategic superiority it had enjoyed into the early 1960s, they accepted parity in strategic nuclear power with the Soviet Union as a fact of life and sought agreements with Moscow that would curtail growth in both sides' strategic arsenals. Overall, they envisioned a new "era of negotiations" that would ease East-West tensions, facilitate the resolution of long-standing Cold War issues (e.g., Vietnam and Berlin), break new ground

in arms control, and improve avenues of communication with the two Communist behemoths, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. As for obtaining lasting results, Nixon was cautiously optimistic. "All we can hope from détente," he later wrote, "is that it will minimize confrontation in marginal areas and provide, at least, alternative possibilities in major ones."[2]

In assessing the military requirements of détente, the Joint Chiefs found themselves under more pressure than usual to exercise restraint and to hold down requests for new programs, despite a continuing buildup in Soviet military forces. Looking beyond Vietnam, the JCS contemplated a list of requirements that included not only the replacement of weapons and equipment worn out or lost in the war, but also the modernization of the force structure to stay current with emerging technologies and recent increases and improvements in Soviet capabilities. Strategic retaliatory forces, they believed, were in especially urgent need of attention. Yet with détente the watchword, a buildup on the scale and scope the JCS believed necessary became increasingly unlikely. The Services might receive some of the modernization and improvements they wanted, and the Armed Forces would continue to be an important instrument in American foreign policy. But after Vietnam, the emphasis for nearly a decade would be increasingly on nonmilitary solutions to Cold War problems.

SALT I

The linchpin in the Nixon-Kissinger strategy of détente was the arms control process, organized around the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). Conceived under the Johnson administration, SALT was supposed to have started in the fall of 1968 but was called off at the last minute by the United States to protest the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia that snuffed out the reformist government of Alexander Dubček. Revived under Nixon, SALT finally got underway in November 1969. Once a distant adjunct of defense policy, arms control by the late 1960s was becoming a critical element in shaping the size and capabilities of the country's strategic arsenal. After years of heavy military spending and bloodshed in Vietnam, SALT seemed a welcome respite and soon acquired a high degree of popular and congressional support. For many it also became a fairly accurate barometer of U.S.-Soviet relations in general. Indeed, by the time SALT I was underway, the idea had taken hold, both in the executive branch and in Congress, that progress in controlling nuclear weapons would give impetus to progress in resolving other thorny Cold War issues as well.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff welcomed progress in arms control that led to improved U.S.-Soviet relations, but not if it meant crippling the country's strategic

deterrent or postponing its modernization. Still chafing from the constraints imposed by McNamara, the JCS felt increasingly hard-pressed to maintain credible strategic nuclear deterrence in the face of a Soviet missile buildup of unprecedented proportions. By 1969, while still inferior in the overall number of intercontinental delivery vehicles, the Soviets had surpassed the United States in operational ICBM launchers.[3] To cope with this threat, even if arms control talks proved productive, the Joint Chiefs wanted a new manned strategic bomber (the B–1) and a new fleet of ballistic missile submarines (the *Trident* class) and were awaiting the outcome of further developmental studies by the Air Force concerning an advanced ICBM.[4]

As for the specifics of an arms control accord, the Joint Chiefs insisted that, above all, it should be fully verifiable, a view shared by key members of Congress who would be passing judgment on whatever agreements the administration might reach with the Soviets.[5] For years, the Joint Chiefs had argued that on-site inspections were the only ironclad way of determining whether the Soviets were in compliance. But in March 1967, they amended their position and agreed to accept the results of unilateral verification derived from space-based satellites, known in arms control parlance as "national technical means." Under these rules, it would be up to each side to determine whether the other was in compliance. This requirement virtually assured that any agreement reached between the United States and the Soviet Union would deal, in the first instance, with numerical limitations on launchers and only secondarily with payload, deployment mode, and performance characteristics.[6]

The preparatory round of SALT I opened in Helsinki on November 17, 1969, and lasted about 4 weeks. For the next 2½ years, negotiations alternated between Helsinki and Vienna, averaging a round of talks every 3 months.[7] A major difference between these negotiations and earlier arms control efforts like the negotiation of the Test Ban Treaty under the Kennedy administration, was the presence throughout SALT of JCS representation on the U.S. delegation owing to the persistence of General Earle G. Wheeler, USA, the JCS Chairman. During Senate deliberations over the Test Ban Treaty, General Wheeler heard grumblings from Congress over the exclusion of the JCS from the negotiations. Using these signs of discontent as his opening wedge, he arranged for the JCS, in the summer of 1968, to be part of an ad hoc arms control study group in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, chaired by Morton H. Halperin, that was starting to draft a negotiating position. To represent the JCS, Wheeler brought in Major General (later Lieutenant General) Royal B. Allison, USAF, who had headed strategic planning at CINCPAC. Authorized a small staff, Allison acquired the title of Assistant to the Chairman for Strategic Arms Negotiations (ACSAN), but reported to the Joint Chiefs collectively through the Director, Joint Staff. According to John Newhouse's generally reliable behind-the-scenes

account of SALT I, *Cold Dawn*, Wheeler bypassed the Joint Staff in selecting Allison because he lacked confidence in the arms control component in J-5 to provide reliable advice. When the Nixon administration took office, Allison continued to represent the Joint Chiefs in the interagency arena and became their member on the U.S. delegation to SALT I.[8]

SALT's ostensible goal, from the American standpoint, was to put a cap on the further buildup of strategic arms. U.S. intelligence estimates routinely confirmed that the Soviets were continuing to add to their arsenal of ICBMs, but shed little light on the intentions behind the buildup. As a rule, the CIA and the State Department downplayed the danger of a fundamental shift in the strategic balance, whereas the Joint Chiefs, OSD, and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) refused to rule out such a possibility. Speaking publicly, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird declared that the Soviets were seeking nothing less than a disarming "first-strike" strategic capability.[9] President Nixon, however, refused to be quite so specific. According to Kissinger, Nixon disdained the technicalities of arms control (the details bored him) and regarded SALT mainly as a vehicle for improving relations with Moscow.[10] Going into the talks, the President approved a highly generalized set of instructions that glossed over disagreements among his advisors on Soviet intentions. For negotiating purposes, the President left the door open to a wide range of limitations as long as they were verifiable and did not hinder efforts by the United States to preserve "strategic sufficiency," a rather vague concept that the White House defined as rough parity in strategic nuclear power with the Soviet Union.[11] Adopting a wait-and-see attitude, the Joint Chiefs declined to recommend their own specific proposals, arguing that as advisors to the President and the Secretary of Defense, it was not their place.[12]

The Soviets, on the other hand, had a fairly firm SALT agenda that included protecting the gains they had made in offensive strategic missiles in the 1960s and curbing U.S. progress in ballistic missile defense (BMD). At the outset of the talks, the Soviets also sought a broad definition of strategic systems that embraced any nuclear weapon capable of hitting the other side's homeland. This definition would have encompassed all American aircraft carriers and nearly every theater system in Europe and Asia, but not similar forward-based systems deployed by the Soviet Union. Not surprisingly, the American side found it unacceptable.[13] Eventually, the talks concentrated on only two sets of offensive systems—ICBMs and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs).

In addition to the formal talks held in Helsinki and Vienna, Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin engaged in substantive "backchannel" negotiations in Washington. Carefully concealed from practically everyone, including the

Joint Chiefs, these backchannel talks gave Nixon and Kissinger a direct link to the Kremlin and quickly became the true forum of the SALT I negotiations. Out of these exchanges, it soon became clear that the best result SALT I could hope to produce on offensive strategic arms was a temporary moratorium or "freeze" on "new starts."[14] On May 20, 1971, Washington and Moscow jointly issued a brief statement dampening the immediate prospects for a permanent offensive arms accord and instructing negotiators to devote their energies for the next year to a treaty limiting antiballistic missiles (ABMs).[15] This "breakthrough," as the White House characterized it, completely surprised the Joint Chiefs and left them somewhat confused. Indeed, Admiral Moorer, the JCS Chairman, initially misunderstood the deal and thought it continued to link an agreement on offensive weapons with an agreement on defensive ones.[16] Broadly worded and open to several interpretations, the freeze imposed loose restrictions and left both sides more or less free to complete additions and improvements to their arsenals where construction was already underway.

In the absence of progress on controlling offensive weapons, missile defense became the only area of U.S.-Soviet competition to be subjected to permanent constraints as a result of SALT I. While both sides had ABM programs, the consensus within the American intelligence and scientific communities was that the United States had a definite advantage owing to its work on phased-array radars. Even so, the systems under consideration were exceedingly expensive and far from foolproof. Citing high costs and continuing technical difficulties, the Johnson administration had rejected JCS arguments in favor of a nationwide system and had endorsed only a "point defense" ABM, known as Sentinel, to protect Minuteman missile fields. But it had left the decision on actual deployment up to the next administration.[17] Though ambivalent about the military value of BMD, Nixon recognized its potential as a bargaining chip with the Soviets and in March 1969 announced that the United States would proceed with deployment of a limited ABM system, now called Safeguard. Nixon's decision kept the program alive, but it also touched off a sharp debate in Congress that came down to a narrow Senate victory for the administration's authorization bill in August 1969.[18]

Like the agreement to "freeze" offensive forces, negotiations on the ABM issue took place to a considerable extent outside the official SALT framework. The accord finally reached was largely the product of an informal exchange of views between Paul H. Nitze, the OSD representative to SALT, and his Soviet counterpart, Aleksandr Shchukin, an expert in radio wave electronics. A Deputy Secretary of Defense in the Johnson administration and most well known as the "author" of NSC 68, Nitze had been in the forefront of the lobbying effort as a private citizen to preserve ABM during the congressional debate in the summer of 1969. Now,

as a member of the SALT delegation, he took a leading role in negotiating ABM away. The shift in Nitze's thinking came from his realization, based on that experience, that for political reasons the current U.S. ABM effort faced an uncertain future. "If the negotiations failed," he believed, "we still were not going to have an ABM program because the Senate wasn't going to give it to us." Out of his talks with Shchukin between late 1971 and early 1972 emerged an agreement on radars and associated technical matters that set the stage for the ABM Treaty. According to Gerard Smith, who headed the U.S. SALT negotiating team, Nitze's persistence resulted in far more precise constraints on ABM radars than delegation members expected to achieve or than agencies in Washington, including the Joint Chiefs, would have preferred.[19]

At their Moscow summit in May 1972, Nixon and Soviet General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev unveiled the results of SALT I: an "interim" agreement imposing a 5-year freeze on both sides' offensive strategic missile launchers as of the date of the agreement; a permanent treaty sharply limiting ABMs; and a set of statements explaining and interpreting the agreements. For verification purposes, each side was on its own. Disagreements would be referred to a U.S.-Soviet Standing Consultative Commission, which would assist with implementation.[20] Reveling in the accomplishments of SALT I, the Soviets clearly saw it as confirmation of their superpower status on a par with the United States. That U.S. warplanes were at the time engaged in a heavy bombardment of Moscow's ally, North Vietnam, and Communist positions in South Vietnam in retaliation for Hanoi's "Easter Offensive," seemed outwardly of little consequence to Brezhnev and his colleagues. To them, all that mattered was that détente had officially arrived.

Back home, critics assailed SALT I as a limited success. In defense of the accords, the Nixon administration insisted that the interim agreement and the ABM Treaty were mutually reinforcing and that a permanent, more restrictive offensive arms accord would follow shortly. Even so, there were murmurings of dissatisfaction with the deal, especially among the Joint Chiefs. As far as the JCS were concerned, the "frozen" numbers spoke for themselves: an American arsenal of 1,054 ICBMs, 41 missile submarines, and 656 SLBM launchers, versus a Soviet force of more than 1,600 ICBMs, 43 missile submarines, and 740 SLBMs.[21] The JCS were incredulous that between the announcement of May 20, 1971, that had supposedly suspended the negotiation of an offensive arms treaty and the signing of the SALT I accords a year later, Nixon and Kissinger had allowed the Soviets to add 91 ICBM launchers to their arsenal (silos under construction at the time of the announcement) without a word of protest. At the same time, the White House had dawdled on nailing down an SLBM agreement, and in the end, much to the Joint Chiefs' consternation, had

given the Soviets virtually free rein to upgrade their fleet ballistic missile submarine force.[22] The administration's defenders took the position that the United States still had a two-and-a-half to one lead in long-range bombers (unaffected by SALT I) and a substantial advantage in targetable warheads through the ongoing retrofitting of many U.S. missiles with MIRVed reentry vehicles (RVs). But as the chiefs and others were quick to point out, land-based bombers were the most vulnerable part of the strategic triad, and the American lead in MIRVed RVs was temporary since the Soviets were now well along on their own MIRV program.[23]

Despite misgivings, the Joint Chiefs supported the SALT I accords, provided the administration and Congress took the necessary steps to monitor Soviet compliance, modernize the U.S. strategic deterrent, and support "vigorous" research and development.[24] During a briefing for congressional leaders just prior to the signing of the SALT I agreements, Admiral Moorer acknowledged that the Soviets "were outstripping U.S. in every category with the exception of bombers." To prevent the United States from slipping farther behind, Moorer stressed the need for continuing modernization of the U.S. strategic arsenal and mentioned specifically the B–1 bomber and the Trident missile submarine. Without these improvements, he insisted, "we could not live with this proposed agreement."[25]

While sympathetic to the chiefs' concerns, most in Congress shared the President's view that the SALT I agreements marked a major turning point in U.S.-Soviet relations and that their political and diplomatic benefits outweighed their military drawbacks. With major restrictions on the further deployment of ABMs and emerging parity in strategic offensive power, some theorists contended that a new era, based on deterrence through "mutual assured destruction," or MAD, had arrived. The Senate approved the ABM Treaty on August 3, 1972, and the interim agreement on September 14. Acceptance of the latter, however, carried an amendment, sponsored by Democratic Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington, stipulating that there should be equality in the number of launchers in any future treaty on ICBMs.[26]

Several years later, columnist Marquis Childs asserted that Senator Jackson had harassed witnesses who had helped to negotiate SALT I when they appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Childs said that the Chairman's arms control assistant, Lieutenant General Allison, had received the "heaviest Jackson fire" because he had publicly gone along with the agreement even though privately he believed it would leave the United States vulnerable to a Soviet first strike. Convinced that Allison had not been completely candid with the committee, Jackson sent word to the JCS, Childs said, that he would "blackball" any promotion for Lieutenant General Allison in the Air Force or his nomination to any future

government post. The upshot was that the Joint Chiefs relieved Allison of his duties in February 1973 and he took early retirement.[27]

Tape recordings made by Nixon of Oval Office conversations confirm that Jackson did indeed put pressure on the White House to "purge" the American SALT negotiating team and that Lieutenant General Allison was one of those he singled out.[28] That the senator's views could have had such an impact suggests not only the influential role he played in arms control and related issues, but also the highly charged politics that surrounded the SALT process. In fact, within a year of signing the SALT I accords, U.S. intelligence detected Soviet tests of four new ICBMs, three of them—the SS–17, the SS–18, and the SS–19—with a demonstrated MIRV capability.[29] SALT I had not provided much respite from the competition in strategic arms. Time would tell if SALT II would do a better job.

SHORING UP THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE

At the same time as the Joint Chiefs were wrestling with SALT, they faced the equally challenging problem of revitalizing the Atlantic Alliance. The war in Vietnam had shifted American attention from Europe to the Far East and in the process had raised serious questions about whether the United States remained committed to Europe's security and welfare. Lacking the consistent American interest and leadership it had known in the past, NATO had begun to drift. To be sure, MC 14/3, the 1967 NATO strategy blueprint endorsing the "flexible response" doctrine, and the Harmel Report, approved around the same time and calling for stepped-up negotiations with the Soviets, had helped to paper over some of the emerging differences and disagreements. But for the longer term, the repairs needed to go deeper, perhaps as far as forging a new transatlantic partnership.

On paper, the American commitment to NATO at the end of the 1960s appeared nearly as sound and robust as ever—41/3 divisions, 2 armored cavalry regiments, 32 air squadrons totaling 640 planes, and 25 combatant ships of the Sixth Fleet, all at NATO's disposal in the event of emergency. Under the "swing strategy" adopted in the 1950s, the Joint Chiefs also earmarked certain air and naval units for emergency transfer from the Pacific to Europe. Although Vietnam had depleted the strategic reserve available from the United States, plans initiated under the Johnson administration to preposition equipment in Europe promised to help surmount these problems, save money, and over time improve NATO's conventional capabilities. But as the Joint Chiefs were acutely aware, these plans were still in the early stages of implementation. Moreover, many of the units stationed in Europe were in "hollow"

condition, stripped of experienced personnel and lacking up-to-date equipment. Overall, U.S. troop strength was about 28 percent below what it had been toward the beginning of the decade. Despite the increased emphasis in NATO planning on forward defense and flexible response, the Alliance's true capacity to deter continued to rest on a combination of U.S. strategic power and NATO's tactical nuclear arsenal.[30]

Even though the Nixon administration wanted to demonstrate a renewed interest in European security, it had no plans for deploying additional forces or going beyond routine modernization of those that were there. President Nixon wanted to appear tough and strong to the Europeans and restore their confidence in the United States, but he also wanted to avoid precipitous action that might jeopardize détente or drive up defense costs at home. Relying on diplomacy to achieve their objectives, Nixon and Kissinger embarked on a series of initiatives in keeping with the spirit of détente and the Harmel Report to lessen tensions by opening a broad dialogue with the East. Among the results were a quadripartite modus vivendi on Berlin, the normalization of relations between East and West Germany, the creation of an East-West confidence-building forum (the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, or CSCE), and the launching of talks, parallel to SALT, on mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) in conventional capabilities between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Under the "Guam Doctrine," a concept casually disclosed during a trip to Asia in the summer of 1969, President Nixon acknowledged that there were limits to American power and that thenceforth, apart from its existing treaty commitments, the United States would avoid anything other than financial or military aid to the Third World. Europe, by implication, had moved back to the top of the U.S. agenda.[31]

With diplomacy in the forefront, NATO's military problems practically slipped from general view. Almost unnoticed was a progressive erosion of its capabilities that left the Alliance effectively incapable of fighting as a single entity by the late 1960s. Despite its unified command and elaborate mechanisms for consultation and collaboration, NATO remained a hodgepodge of armies, having made little progress since the 1950s toward standardizing equipment or integrating communications. Practically no one, least of all the West Germans, seriously entertained the idea of fighting a war in Europe, conventional or otherwise. To save money, the European allies had cut back on stockpiling to the point that the FRG had only enough artillery shells for a week of fighting, rather than the 30-day combat period prescribed in NATO planning documents. Worst of all, these deficiencies appeared to be fully known to Warsaw Pact commanders, who claimed to have ready access to such information from well-placed spies inside NATO headquarters.[32]

Meantime, NATO faced an increasingly imposing Warsaw Pact threat. While paying lip-service to détente, the Soviets pursued a steady modernization of Warsaw Pact forces, with the apparent purpose of enabling them to operate effectively in either a nuclear-chemical or conventional environment. Dating from the mid-1960s, the Warsaw Pact's modernization plan stressed the introduction, at almost double the normal replacement rate, of new and improved tanks, artillery, armored personnel carriers, and tactical fighter aircraft.[33] In the Joint Chiefs' estimation, however, the most dramatic and unsettling new development was the emergence of a significant Warsaw Pact tactical nuclear capability, organized around a new generation of more accurate and more usable short-range surface-to-surface missiles. Comparing nuclear capabilities, the JCS rated the Warsaw Pact's as "militarily superior to NATO's." Whereas NATO's tactical nuclear weapons were mainly aging show pieces for deterrence, the Warsaw Pact's were more tailored-effect weapons for waging war. The Joint Chiefs further found that NATO's conventional forces alone could not survive a concerted tactical nuclear attack by the Warsaw Pact. For years, the Joint Chiefs and other Western military planners had taken it for granted that, despite NATO's conventional inferiority vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact, its superiority in tactical nuclear weapons gave it a definite edge in a showdown. Now the tables were turned.[34]

Efforts by the Joint Chiefs to draw attention to the Warsaw Pact buildup and to elicit support for offsetting measures met with limited success. On Capitol Hill, American involvement in Vietnam, the strategic arms race, and worries about the mounting expense of keeping U.S. troops abroad continually overshadowed European security concerns. The issue of costs had been a constant refrain in congressional debates since the early 1950s, when the United States first assigned large numbers of troops to the Alliance. By the early 1970s, with inflation on the rise and the dollar weakened by heavy expenditures on the Vietnam War, it was a cause célèbre in some circles. Especially active in drawing attention to the problem was Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana, whose quasi-isolationist views dovetailed neatly with the antiwar, antimilitary sentiments of his liberal Democratic colleagues. Convinced that the Europeans could—and should—contribute more, Mansfield thought the United States could halve its presence "without adversely affecting either our resolve or ability to meet our commitment under the North Atlantic Treaty."[35]

Though the Nixon administration successfully fought off Mansfield's attacks, it had its hands full and in the process became all the more cautious in considering measures to bolster the Alliance.[36] According to Secretary of State William P. Rogers, the United States would be doing well to keep forces at "essentially present

levels."[37] At the same time, disagreements within the Intelligence Community over how to assess the Warsaw Pact buildup—whether it constituted an attempt by the Soviets to achieve outright military superiority, as DIA, J-2, and the military intelligence staffs believed, or whether, in the CIA's view, such dangers were overblown—further complicated the administration's efforts to develop a response.[38] In November 1970, following a lengthy interagency debate, President Nixon finally approved policy guidance (NSDM 95) that leaned toward the JCS on the need for preserving a strong U.S. posture in Europe, with near-term emphasis on improving conventional deterrence. Whether tactical nuclear capabilities should be addressed as well was held over for further study.[39] Ostensibly a victory for the Joint Chiefs, the triumph was short-lived when, in implementing the President's decision, Secretary of Defense Laird gave the lead to his Systems Analysis organization, which took a more flexible view of NATO requirements than did the JCS. There ensued 7 more months of bickering in the Pentagon between the Joint Staff and OSD, culminating in yet another Presidential decision (NSDM 133) that relaxed overall improvement goals.[40]

Whether NATO could ever achieve a level of conventional capabilities on a par with those of the Warsaw Pact remained a matter of debate and conjecture, both in Washington and in Europe, throughout the remainder of the Nixon administration and on into the Presidencies of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. Although practically everyone agreed that there was room for improvement, there was no consensus on what to do or how to go about it. As a general objective, Secretary Laird suggested the Allies aim for a 4 percent real increase in their annual military spending, a goal the Europeans summarily rejected as beyond their means. More to their liking was the European Defense Improvement Program (EDIP), a low-budget approach to upgrading communications and infrastructure put forth by Britain, West Germany, and eight other European nations in December 1970. A broader initiative, drafted at NATO headquarters and known as AD–70, appeared at the same time. Projecting across-the-board improvements, AD–70 was the brainchild of General Andrew J. Goodpaster, USA, who had become Supreme Allied Commander the year before. A former aide to President Eisenhower and once Director of the Joint Staff, Goodpaster was a highly respected figure on both sides of the Atlantic. An inventory of deficiencies and anomalies rather than a plan of action, AD–70 elicited mixed pledges of support from the Allies. But because it bore Goodpaster's imprimatur, it probably received a more favorable reception than would otherwise have been the case.[41]

By 1973—the "Year of Europe" as the Nixon administration proclaimed it—NATO realized that it faced major problems and was taking steps to upgrade its equipment and improve interallied coordination and integration of functions.

Slowly but surely, the EDIP and AD–70 were bearing fruit.[42] Just how far the Alliance had progressed toward strengthening itself became the subject of yet another Nixon administration internal review (NSSM 168), launched early in 1973, with the Army and OSD (Systems Analysis) leading the effort.[43] Additional inputs came from the new Secretary of Defense, James R. Schlesinger, who followed in McNamara's footsteps in believing that NATO could indeed mount a credible conventional defense. All things considered, Schlesinger found NATO to be better prepared and equipped to deal with a conventional threat at the outset of a war than it had been only 3 or 4 years earlier. Because of limitations on naval forces, however, he was less sanguine about NATO's prospects in the event of a prolonged conflict requiring U.S. reinforcements who might not arrive in time to stave off an escalation of the conflict.[44]

Though obviously more committed than they had been for some time, European NATO leaders continued to shy away from elaborate and expensive modernization plans. As a rule, they preferred the less costly piecemeal approach that involved improvements in selected areas such as anti-armor, aircraft shelters, and stockpiling. Moreover, just as NATO was beginning to take a closer look at its deficiencies and do something about them, the Yom Kippur War of October 1973 erupted in the Middle East, causing the United States to divert equipment and munitions to Israel, much of it drawn from stockpiles allocated to NATO. Meanwhile, the Watergate scandal continued to engulf Washington. Increasingly preoccupied with its domestic difficulties, the Nixon administration had significantly less time for NATO and saw its influence and authority within the Alliance steadily recede. Others, most notably the West Germans, stepped up to take America's place, so that by the mid-1970s the initiative in nuclear modernization and other key areas had passed from Washington to Bonn.

NATO was making strides to improve itself, but it was still an Alliance with serious problems. Raw numbers purporting to show enhancements to NATO capabilities covered up the underlying malaise. According to General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., who succeeded Goodpaster as SACEUR in 1974, NATO forces faced pervasive morale and discipline issues. "Alcoholism and drug abuse were serious and widespread," Haig found. "Our state of readiness was way below acceptable standards. . . . There was little sense of organized purpose imposed from above, little communication among subordinate commands."[45] In assessing NATO's prospects, the Joint Chiefs remained confident that the Alliance would survive and even prosper as the bulwark of Western security. But despite the end of the Vietnam War and the redeployment of U.S. forces, NATO seemed to be achieving limited headway toward making a difference and redressing the strategic balance in Europe.

CHINA: THE QUASI-ALLIANCE

Nixon and Kissinger realized that NATO's chronic difficulties in raising and maintaining forces could not be solved in isolation. Thus, instead of trying to meet the Soviet threat to Europe head on, they sought to offset Soviet power via other means—by attempting to curb the buildup of arms, encouraging détente, and last but not least, exploiting the Soviet Union's deteriorating relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC).[46] Evidence of worsening relations and ideological conflict between the two Communist giants had been accumulating for years, steadily undermining the concept theretofore accepted in the West of a Communist monolith.[47] By the late 1960s, there were reports of a buildup of opposing forces and armed clashes along the Sino-Soviet border. Sensing a golden opportunity, Nixon had indicated that forging a rapprochement between the United States and the PRC would be part of his agenda if he was elected.[48] Once in office, he and Kissinger made a determined effort not only to mend differences with Beijing, but also to convince skeptics—the Joint Chiefs of Staff among them—that a rapprochement with China would in the long run pay handsome dividends for the United States. The resulting improvement in Sino-American relations, as Kissinger later described it, amounted to nothing less than a "quasi-alliance."[49]

The opening gambit in the White House's effort to bring the Joint Chiefs around to its point of view on China was a military posture review (NSSM 3) ordered by President Nixon the day after taking office.[50] Characterized by Kissinger as "a highly esoteric discussion of military strategy," the review's unstated purpose was to reexamine the Johnson administration's practice of developing military plans in the expectation of waging two-and-a-half wars—one in Europe, another in Korea or Southeast Asia, and a smaller third contingency like the 1965 intervention in the Dominican Republic. Though there had never been sufficient forces to execute such a strategy with any confidence of success, it remained an integral part of the Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP), the Joint Chiefs' annual assignment of assets to meet theater and strategic requirements.

From the review they had ordered, Kissinger and Nixon envisioned a wholesale reordering of strategic priorities. At issue was whether it was still realistic and feasible to allocate resources on the basis of a two-and-a-half war scenario, or whether a more limited definition of risks, assuming minimal chances of a major conflict involving the PRC, would serve American interests just as well, if not better.[51] To be sure, a major incentive for downgrading the prospects of a war with China was budgetary, since a key finding of the posture review was that a fully-funded two-and-a-half war strategy would cost at least twenty percent more annually than

adoption of a one-and-a-half war strategy.[52] But there were also important political and diplomatic considerations involved. "The reorientation of our strategy signaled to the People's Republic of China," Kissinger said, "that we saw its purpose as separable from the Soviet Union's, that our military policy did not see China as a principal threat."[53]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff initially took a different view, arguing that the changes Nixon and Kissinger were proposing would invite aggression, complicate the allocation of resources, and invite the early use of nuclear weapons in certain circumstances.[54] No one doubted that one key underlying purpose was simply to save money. Yet throughout the defense establishment, the implications were nothing short of ominous. Indeed, for those in uniform, Communist China remained a hostile power whose interests and worldview were sharply at variance with those of the United States. Less than 2 decades earlier, U.S. and Communist Chinese forces had fought pitched battles on the Korean Peninsula. Long-range appraisals done since then by the Joint Chiefs and by the Intelligence Community had routinely stressed China's commitment to achieving political dominance in Asia, its support for Communist insurgencies, and its close identification with leftist revolutionary causes around the globe.[55] A nuclear power since 1964, China had also acquired a thermonuclear capability in 1967, ostensibly the motivating factor in Secretary of Defense McNamara's decision to propose the deployment of a limited ABM system. Against this background of conflict and antagonism, a rapprochement with China was, in the Joint Chiefs' eyes, both hard to imagine and ill advised.

Brushing aside JCS objections, President Nixon formally embraced the one-and-a-half war strategy in his first annual report on U.S. foreign policy issued in February 1970. In explaining the change, the President insisted that he was only trying to harmonize strategy with capabilities.[56] By then, however, Nixon had firmly made up his mind to improve relations with Beijing and was heavily engaged in exploratory talks using the American and Chinese Ambassadors to Poland. The change in American military strategy was meant as an inducement to the Chinese. Later, not getting the cooperation they wanted from the State Department, Nixon and Kissinger turned to sensitive backchannel contacts established through Pakistan to finalize a deal with the Chinese. The net effect was an extraordinarily high degree of secrecy that sealed off the talks from practically anyone outside the White House (including the Joint Chiefs) who had an interest in the matter and to present them when the time came with a fait accompli.

Meanwhile, Nixon and Kissinger kept the State and Defense Departments occupied by commissioning a succession of studies through the NSC examining various aspects of the China issue. The most serious impediment to a Sino-American

rapprochement to be identified was the U.S. relationship with the Republic of China (ROC), the rival government on Taiwan headed by the venerable Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, which the United States recognized as the de jure regime. A staunch anti-Communist and long-time U.S. ally, Chiang once had a loyal following in the United States, which had made sure over the years that the ROC received unstinting American assistance. On at least two occasions—in 1954 and in 1958—the United States had almost gone to war with Communist China in support of the ROC's continuing occupation of several offshore island groups in the Taiwan Strait.

Since the late 1950s, however, things had changed. Tensions over the offshore islands had eased, the China Lobby that had been so active on Chiang's behalf had lost its clout in Washington, and more and more countries were recognizing the PRC as the legitimate government of China. In October 1971, the UN General Assembly expelled the ROC, forcing it to cede its seat on the Security Council to the People's Republic. Despite its declining fortunes, however, the ROC retained a corps of supporters in Congress and continued to play a key role in American defense policy for East Asia. Once described by General Douglas MacArthur as "an unsinkable aircraft carrier," Taiwan provided the United States with access to basing and staging areas from which to control the Taiwan Strait, to assist in maintaining lines of communication, and to bring military power to bear quickly against the mainland should the need arise.[57] All in all, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered Taiwan to be an essential link in their Pacific defense perimeter and, as such, a crucial part of the "close-in" containment strategy applied against Communist China.[58]

Still, as the Vietnam War wound down, Taiwan's usefulness to American defense planners steadily diminished, resulting in the closure of numerous installations, the withdrawal of personnel, and reductions in U.S. subsidies and assistance to the ROC. One of the cutbacks was the elimination of the Taiwan Strait Patrol, a money-saving move instigated by the Nixon administration in mid-November 1969. Initiated by President Truman in 1950 to protect Nationalist China from Communist attack, the Taiwan Strait Patrol tied up the use of two U.S. destroyers. Recognizing that the patrol had become largely symbolic, the Joint Chiefs accepted its elimination as a sensible alternative to the reduction of naval forces elsewhere. Thenceforth, ships of the Seventh Fleet transiting the Taiwan Strait would do the job. A small "gesture to remove an irritant," as Kissinger described it, the elimination of the Taiwan Strait Patrol figured squarely, along with the adoption of the one-and-a-half war strategy concept, in the administration's ongoing effort to improve Sino-American relations.[59]

Continuing to pursue a conciliatory approach, Kissinger wanted to offer further concessions—a nonaggression pact and/or the withdrawal of U.S. forces from

Taiwan—to demonstrate U.S. readiness to extend détente to the mainland. But he met with stiff resistance from the JCS, who urged caution in dealing with Beijing and no change in security arrangements with Chiang's regime. Any new concessions, the Joint Chiefs insisted, should be on a quid pro quo basis.[60] Undaunted, Kissinger set off for a secret rendezvous with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai) in the summer of 1971. Even though Kissinger tried to disguise the purpose of his trip, Admiral Moorer, the JCS Chairman, later confirmed that he was able to follow developments closely because Kissinger and Nixon used a special Navy communications system part of the time to stay in touch.[61] Directed mainly at improving the atmosphere of Sino-American relations, the principal accomplishment of Kissinger's meeting with the Chinese was the "announcement that shook the world" on July 15, 1971, that President Nixon would visit China during the early months of the new year.[62]

Despite the prospect of improved relations with mainland China, the Joint Chiefs continued to oppose any major concessions. Still unresolved by the time of the President's visit to Beijing in February 1972 was a firm administration position on the future of U.S.-ROC defense arrangements, a matter of key importance to the JCS.[63] But in attempting to raise the matter and make their views known, they encountered repeated rebuffs from the White House and were unsuccessful in securing an interagency review prior to the President's departure.[64] Kissinger alone handled the agenda and other details of the summit in one-on-one talks with Zhou Enlai during a return trip to Beijing in October 1971.[65]

A momentous event that attracted intensive news coverage, Nixon's trip to China seemed to herald a new era in Sino-American relations. Despite a large entourage, no members of the Joint Chiefs accompanied the President, an apparently intentional omission aimed at playing down military matters. Still, there were strong politico-military overtones throughout the visit, with the threat posed by the Soviet Union a subject of mutual interest and, from all appearances, the number-one Chinese security concern. Though there were no discussions of specific collaboration against that threat, President Nixon recalled that the Chinese took great pleasure in the discomfort his visit seemed to cause to leaders in Moscow.[66]

Taiwan also figured large in the discussions, though it was not the obstacle that many (including the JCS) expected it to be. During an earlier exchange of views, the Chinese had indicated that the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Taiwan and from the Taiwan Strait should be the "first question" addressed at any summit meeting.[67] During his talks with Zhou in October 1971, however, Kissinger had served notice that the United States was not prepared to take a definitive position on Taiwan's future. The Chinese had backed off and during their meetings in February 1972,

Nixon and his hosts—Zhou and Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong—downplayed the Taiwan issue. While the summit's communiqué confirmed that the United States regarded the withdrawal of its forces from Taiwan as the "ultimate objective," it mentioned nothing about a timetable or other commitments.[68] "The overwhelming impression left by Chou, as by Mao," Kissinger recalled, "was that continuing differences over Taiwan were secondary to our primary mutual concern over the international equilibrium."[69]

The Joint Chiefs greeted the outcome of the President's trip with relief and reassurance. Major changes were clearly taking place in Sino-American relations. But for the time being, the American security posture in the Far East remained essentially unchanged. Even so, a Sino-American entente was beginning to take shape. About a month after the President's trip, the North Vietnamese launched their "Easter Offensive" against South Vietnam, to which Nixon retaliated with the mining of Haiphong harbor and two massive air campaigns (*Linebacker I* and *II*) that brought American planes perilously close to the Chinese border. A few years earlier, such actions by the United States might have provoked an overtly hostile Chinese response, perhaps even direct intervention in the war. But by 1972, in light of the recent Sino-American rapprochement and continuing tensions between Moscow and Beijing, the threat of Chinese intervention barely figured in Nixon's calculations. In the event, Chinese forbearance spoke for itself. Though there were the customary public denunciations of American behavior, the PRC veered toward neutrality and offered only token help to the North Vietnamese.[70] Most telling of all was Beijing's rejection of a plan, jointly put forth by the Kremlin and Hanoi, to bypass the American bombing and mining of Haiphong by off-loading cargos at Chinese ports and bringing supplies overland into North Vietnam.[71] Equally important was the Joint Chiefs' tacit appreciation of Chinese restraint. Indeed, from that point on, JCS objections to further improvements in relations with the PRC became less frequent and their tone in support of Taiwan less strident. The establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the United States and the PRC was still some years away. But increasingly, it seemed to the Joint Chiefs to be the next logical step.

DEEPENING INVOLVEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

If the American rapprochement with China seemed to test the durability of détente with the Soviet Union, developments in the Middle East toward the end of Nixon's Presidency nearly brought it to a premature end. Here, more than anywhere else, Soviet-American relations threatened to come full circle back to the confrontational policies and behavior of the 1950s and early 1960s. The precipitating event

was the Arab-Israeli Yom Kippur War of October 1973. In many respects a "proxy conflict," the Yom Kippur War tested Eastern Bloc weapons and tactics used by the Arabs against those of the West as adapted by the Israelis. At the outset, it seemed that cooperation between Washington and Moscow would succeed in containing the conflict. Intensifying instead, it brought the threat of Soviet intervention and prompted the Joint Chiefs to place U.S. nuclear forces on increased alert, making it the most serious East-West confrontation since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. That détente survived the ordeal, at least for a while, suggests an underlying degree of mutual respect brought on not only by the general improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations, but also by the realities of nuclear parity and the resulting caution that both sides felt compelled to observe.

Behind the headlines of the October War was the larger issue of American involvement in Middle East security, a role that had been growing steadily since the Suez crisis of 1956. With heavy obligations in Europe and the Western Pacific, the Joint Chiefs had generally been averse to commitments in the Middle East and had been content to rely on diplomacy and/or intervention by the British or the French to hold matters in check. But after the Suez debacle, the 1958 coup in Iraq, and the collapse of the Baghdad Pact, the Joint Chiefs had found themselves taking a more direct hand in the management of the region's security. Three issues predominated—the containment of Soviet power and influence, the protection of Western access to Persian Gulf oil fields, and the security of Israel.

While all three issues were interrelated, the Israeli situation overshadowed all others. Offering arms and other assistance from the mid-1950s on, the Soviets played on Arab nationalism and hostility toward the Jewish state in order to make inroads across the region, notably in the confrontation states of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. To check the growth of Moscow's influence, the United States cultivated closer ties with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and other Arab moderates, and encouraged Iran (a Muslim but non-Arab country) to become an anti-Soviet bulwark protecting the Persian Gulf. For domestic political reasons, however, shoring up Israel's security became Washington's top regional priority, and led to a policy of occasional, selective sales of sophisticated weapons, including tanks and Hawk antiaircraft missiles. By the 1960s, U.S. arms transfers to Israel well outpaced American military assistance to the Arab world. Predicting Middle East "polarization" should this trend continue, the Joint Chiefs found the United States increasingly identified with Israeli interests and the Soviet Union with those of the Arabs.[72]

Tensions peaked during the Six Day War of June 1967, in which Israeli forces seized the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and East Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan. Never close to begin with, relations between

the Joint Chiefs and Israel's high command grew even farther apart during the conflict when Israeli warplanes and torpedo boats attacked USS *Liberty*, an American electronic intelligence ship operating in international waters off the Sinai coast. Owing to an almost complete breakdown of inter-Service cooperation in transmitting communications, the *Liberty* was actually operating closer to shore than the Joint Chiefs had intended; orders for it to pull back were in transit at the time of the attack.[73] Later, the Israelis insisted that they had mistaken the *Liberty* for an Egyptian ship known to be in the area. The attack inflicted heavy casualties on the U.S. crew and elicited deep regrets from the Israeli government. Insisting that the United States was as much to blame as they were, however, the Israelis refused to acknowledge any negligence and characterized the incident as an unfortunate "chain of errors."[74] The Joint Chiefs did not belabor the point, but at both the Pentagon and the White House suspicions lingered that the attack had not been accidental.[75]

In the aftermath of the Six Day War, the Joint Chiefs found the Middle East becoming more polarized than ever, a ripe environment for further strife.[76] Alarmed by the rapidity with which Moscow replenished Egypt's depleted arsenal, the Johnson administration responded in kind, by stepping up deliveries of tanks, fighter aircraft (including Navy A–4 "Skyhawks," then in critically short supply in Vietnam), and other weapons to bolster Israel's defenses.[77] A "war of attrition" ensued, during which Israeli and Egyptian gunners routinely exchanged fire across the Suez Canal, Israeli commandos launched attacks across the Gulf of Suez, and the Israeli Air Force, flying freshly acquired U.S.-made F–4 "Phantoms," carried out deep-penetration raids into Egypt. Worried that the United States might find itself isolated, the JCS urged the Nixon administration to curtail arms sales to Israel and to use its leverage to expedite a regional peace settlement through the United Nations. As part of an overall agreement, the Chairman, General Wheeler, suggested a protocol, backed by the "Big Four" (the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France), guaranteeing enforcement of any settlement.[78]

While the Nixon administration's declared intention was a more balanced policy in the Middle East, popular and congressional pressure preserved the tilt toward Israel. As a result, there were few significant curbs on arms deliveries and no significant pressure applied on the Israelis to make concessions toward a peace settlement.[79] To maintain a "military balance" in the Middle East, the Joint Chiefs advocated selling sufficient weapons and equipment to the Israeli armed forces to defend Israel against an Arab attack "without destabilizing losses."[80] But as a practical matter, until the October War exposed serious shortfalls and weaknesses in Israeli defenses, it was hard to gauge how this principle applied. At the same time, despite progress elsewhere on détente, U.S.-Soviet competition in the Middle East reached

a new level of intensity. By the early 1970s, the Soviets were augmenting their naval forces in the eastern Mediterranean and had markedly increased their personnel strength in Egypt. Soviet pilots flew patrols in MiG–21s with Egyptian markings and Soviet technicians operated a network of SA–3 surface-to-air point defense missiles to prevent the Israelis from conducting further deep-penetration raids.[81] A U.S.-brokered ceasefire ended the war of attrition along the canal in August 1970, but beneath the superficial calm that settled over the region, Arab-Israeli tensions remained high.

A key turning point was the decision by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to expel his Soviet advisors in July 1972, barely more than a year after signing a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Moscow. Exactly how many Soviets were involved is unclear, though an Egyptian source states that as many as 21,000 went home.[82] A career army officer, Sadat had come to power shortly after the death of Egypt's charismatic Gamal Abdul Nasser in September 1970. While he vowed to follow in Nasser's footsteps, Sadat found the current situation of "no war, no peace" an intolerable obstacle to his first priority—reviving Egypt's economy. Seeking Western investment, he knew he would have to create an economic and political environment more hospitable to capitalism, which meant moving away from socialism (manifest most clearly by the Soviet presence) and making peace with Israel.

While relations between Cairo and Moscow remained cool for some months after the expulsion of July 1972, Egypt continued to need Soviet military and economic support. For the moment, Sadat only wanted to change the basis of his relationship with the Soviet Union, not end it. At the same time, seeking to improve his contacts with the West, he reopened a backchannel, originally established in April 1972, with the Nixon White House to discuss ending the Israeli occupation of the Sinai.[83] Sadat would have preferred a negotiated settlement, but he knew he had little bargaining power and resolved to improve his position through the only means available—military action against Israel. Expelling the Soviets was the first phase of his plan, since he suspected, not without cause, that Moscow would never risk jeopardizing détente by overtly cooperating in launching a war. Sadat did not expect to achieve a clear-cut military victory, but if Egypt could demonstrate a credible limited war capability, he thought he stood a good chance of restoring his country's self esteem and prestige and of forcing the Israelis into negotiations.[84]

On October 6, 1973 (Yom Kippur in Israel, Ramadan in Arab countries), Egyptian forces mounted a successful surprise assault across the Suez Canal, timed to coincide with a Syrian attack against Israeli positions on the Golan Heights. According to the "leaked" findings of a congressional investigation, NSA intercepts routinely available to the Joint Chiefs would have confirmed that the Egyptians

were planning an attack; however, the sheer volume of the message traffic and the inability of the NSA and DIA to process all the data efficiently gave rise to an "intelligence failure." The Israelis were similarly caught off guard.[85] Named Operation "Badr" after the first victory of the Prophet Mohammad in 630 AD, the Egyptian assault quickly breached Israeli defenses (the Bar-Lev Line) but carried only a few kilometers into the Sinai. Following an initial period of indecision and confusion, the Israelis regrouped and on October 8 launched a counterattack that thwarted Egyptian efforts to extend their bridgehead.

A see-saw battle ensued over the next few days, during which time the Soviet Union and the United States made half-hearted attempts to arrange a ceasefire through the UN. Meanwhile, Washington and Moscow both expedited the airlift of weapons and supplies to their clients. By October 15, Israeli forces had gained the offensive. As a UN-brokered ceasefire was about to take effect, they broke through Egyptian lines, crossed the Suez Canal with makeshift pontoon bridges, and proceeded to envelop the Egyptian Third Army—45,000 troops in all—trapping it on the eastern side of the canal. With some of his best forces facing imminent annihilation or surrender, Sadat appealed to Brezhnev for help. On October 24, the Soviet leader responded. Declaring Israel to be in violation of the ceasefire, he served President Nixon with an "ultimatum," as Kissinger characterized it, warning that the Soviet Union was prepared to take "appropriate steps unilaterally" to bring the conflict to an end.[86]

Until Brezhnev's ultimatum, the Joint Chiefs played a low profile in the crisis. For coordination they relied on the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG), an interagency crisis-management subcommittee of the NSC that included Admiral Moorer among its members and Kissinger as chairman.[87] Preoccupied with the escalating Watergate affair and a separate scandal involving allegations of financial wrongdoing by Vice President Spiro Agnew (culminating in Agnew's resignation on October 10, 1973), Nixon deferred increasingly to Kissinger and the WSAG to guide American policy. The Yom Kippur war, Nixon later observed, "could not have come at a more complicated domestic juncture."[88] The Joint Chiefs' job during those hectic days was to monitor events on the battlefield, expedite the transfer of supplies to the Israelis, and take precautionary steps by reviewing contingency plans for the evacuation of Americans and the deployment as necessary of U.S. forces.

Once the fighting began, the WSAG sought to establish and maintain a position of quasi-neutrality insofar as the pro-Israeli bent of the United States would allow. Despite a surge of Soviet naval power into the eastern Mediterranean, the United States confined its presence there to a single naval task group. Organized around the carrier *Independence*, the task group took up station southwest of Crete

on October 7 where it remained for the duration of the crisis. Sixth Fleet's most urgent function was surveillance of the Soviet naval presence. To carry out his mission, Sixth Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Daniel J. Murphy, Sr., proposed to move his ships closer to the conflict and augment them with a second carrier, the *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, then operating off Sicily. Moorer and the WSAG, however, refused Murphy's request. Citing policy constraints, they reminded him that he was to distance himself from possible involvement in keeping with the administration's "low-key, even-handed approach toward the hostilities."[89]

A similar policy of restraint initially governed American assistance to Israel. For the first few days of the conflict, the Israelis could have whatever they reasonably required as long as they transported it themselves. While the Joint Chiefs never had occasion to adopt a corporate position, most of them—Moorer especially—believed the United States was playing a dangerous game by giving the Israelis even limited help. Only the CNO, Admiral Zumwalt, a self-described "strong proponent of resupplying Israel," felt the United States should be more forthcoming.[90] But as the fighting intensified and Israeli losses climbed, the voices of caution at the Pentagon became drowned out by those in Congress and the public who demanded that restrictions on aid to Israel be relaxed, if not lifted altogether. By October 10, Israel's situation had become precarious. Even if Israel did not lose the war, it would emerge from the conflict severely battered and crippled. Rumors spread that in a last-ditch effort to save the country, the Israeli cabinet had authorized the deployment of nuclear-armed Jericho missiles.[91] Adding further to the tension were indications that the Soviets had mobilized several elite airborne divisions for possible deployment to Egypt and the "ominous news," as Kissinger called it, that Moscow had launched an airlift to Syria.[92]

Meanwhile, a standoff had developed between Kissinger and Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger over the processing of Israeli assistance requests. The results were a slow-down of deliveries and a rising level of irritation on Capitol Hill that threatened President Nixon's chances of surviving the Watergate scandal. On October 12, demonstrating that he was still in charge, the President flung open American arsenals to the Israelis. Authorizing the use of jumbo C–5A transport planes to expedite deliveries, he brushed aside objections from the Joint Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense that his actions "might blight our relations with the Arabs" and dangerously deplete U.S. war reserves. In the end, the American airlift allowed the Israelis to prevail. But as the Joint Chiefs had feared, it raised other problems in the form of Arab retaliation through an oil embargo against the West, and friction within NATO over the draw-down of supplies allocated to Alliance defense and the use of European bases for intelligence-gathering.[93]

Still, it was Brezhnev's ultimatum that captured the Joint Chiefs' attention more than anything. By itself, Brezhnev's threat to take unilateral action might have been dismissed as diplomatic bluster. In all likelihood, as British foreign policy expert Gordon S. Barrass has pointed out, it did not reflect his true views.[94] But coming on top of the Soviet naval buildup in the eastern Mediterranean, the mobilization of combat divisions trained in rapid deployment, and stepped-up Soviet air activity, there was every reason for the chiefs to be concerned. The ensuing decision to place U.S. nuclear forces on heightened alert (DEFCON 3) emerged from a late night WSAG meeting in the White House Situation Room on October 24.[95] Nixon took no part in the deliberations and remained well out of the way, attended by Alexander Haig, who was then Kissinger's deputy.[96] Immediately after the meeting, Moorer returned to the Pentagon and arranged that the alert be carried out in conspicuous fashion to attract the attention of Soviet intelligence. A few hours later, the fully assembled Joint Chiefs met with Secretary of Defense Schlesinger to discuss further moves, including the possibility of raising the alert to DEFCON 2, a level not used since the Cuban Missile Crisis. But by morning, a fresh message from Moscow couched in conciliatory language laid the matter to rest. By late the next day all U.S. commands had resumed their normal alert posture.[97]

While Israel prevailed in the October War, it was at a tremendous cost that approached a Pyrrhic victory: as many as 2,800 dead and another 9,000 wounded. Arab losses were substantially larger. JCS estimates of the outcome hesitated to proclaim a clear-cut winner. Most predicted that another war was only a matter of time and that in the long run the continuing identification of the United States with Israel would work to the detriment of U.S. interests in the Middle East. Indeed, the more closely the United States became aligned with Israel, the less influence and credibility it was apt to have in Arab countries and in the economically and strategically important Persian Gulf. It followed, in the JCS view, that the most important objectives in the aftermath of the October War were to reestablish stable relations with the moderate Arab states like Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and to shore up ties elsewhere in the Muslim world, especially with Iran and Pakistan. Yet given the political realities in the United States, it was altogether likely that Washington would continue to pursue a divided policy that supported Israel while trying to placate the Arabs and curb further Soviet inroads.

Whether the Middle East was ready for peace remained to be seen. Détente had helped to avoid a great power confrontation during the October War, but in the aftermath of the fighting it did little to promote a more hospitable environment for resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. Celebrated in the Arab world as a great victory, the October War demonstrated that Israel was far from invincible and lifted Sadat's

reputation and prestige to unprecedented heights. Yet in moving toward a peace settlement, he was practically alone. A multinational Geneva peace conference, co-organized by the United States and the Soviet Union in November 1973, attracted little participation from the Arab world and broke up inconclusively almost as soon as it began. Thenceforth, it would be up to the Egyptians and Israelis themselves, negotiating bilaterally and relying on the United States as intermediary, to reach a modus vivendi.

Meanwhile, the Cold War, like the Arab-Israeli conflict, refused to go away, détente notwithstanding. In his final posture statement to Congress, submitted shortly before the end of his term as Chairman in July 1974, Admiral Moorer cited the ABM Treaty and the SALT I interim agreement as "first steps . . . to establish some control over the deployment of significantly increased strategic forces by both the U.S. and the USSR." As encouraging as these agreements might have been, however, Moorer remained concerned by the Soviet Union's "aggressive modernization programs" in everything from strategic offensive weapons to general purpose forces for ground, sea, and air warfare. Drawing on the recent experience of the October War, he saw lessons to be learned. One was "that the military balance must be assessed on the capabilities of potential adversaries rather than on their announced or estimated intentions." Détente, he argued, had created an atmosphere of increased "good will" between the United States and the Soviet Union. But it had yet to slow the arms race or curb the potential for confrontation that the competition implied.[98]

NOTES

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16 MFR by CJCS (M-41-71), "Meeting with the President, 20 May 1971," entry May 20, 1971, Moorer Diary, cited in Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, 165.

17 Ibid., chap. 8.

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19 Interview No. 2 with Nitze by James C. Hasdorff, May 20, 1981, U.S. Air Force Oral History Collection, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 480 (quote); Paul H. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision—A Memoir* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 314–320; Gerard Smith, *Doubletalk: The Story of SALT I* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 41–42.

20 For the text of these agreements, see U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements: Texts and Histories of Negotiations* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1982), 132–157.

21 Roger Labrie, ed., *SALT Hand Book: Key Documents and Issues, 1972–1979* (Washington, DC; American Enterprise Institute, 1979), 13–14. Under the interim agreement, the United States could build up to 44 fleet ballistic submarines and 710 launchers; the Soviets could go as high as 950 SLBMs and 62 submarines but would have to make off-setting reductions in land-based ICBMs to stay within the freeze.

22 Freedman, U.S. *Intelligence and the Soviet Strategic Threat*, 165–166; Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, 178–191.

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35 Quoted in Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 131.

36 See Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), 134.

37 *The New York Times*, December 7, 1969, 18; see also John S. Duffield, *Power Rules: The Evolution of NATO's Conventional Force Posture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 196.

38 Kugler, 252.

39 NSDM 95, November 25, 1970, "US Strategy and Forces for NATO," box H-208, Nixon Presidential Material; and <http://nixon.archives.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nsdm/nsdm_095.pdf>.

40 Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, 207–210; NSDM 133, September 22, 1971, "US Strategy and Forces for NATO; Allied Force Improvements," box H-208, Nixon Presidential Materials, available at <http://nixon.archives.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nsdm/nsdm_133.pdf>.

41 Lewis Sorley, "Goodpaster: Maintaining Deterrence during Détente," in Robert S. Jordan, ed., *Generals in International Politics: NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 130–133; Kugler, 269–271; Duffield, 197–201. AD-70 was short for "Alliance Defense in the Seventies."

42 How fast and effectively NATO was moving on these issues remained a matter of debate. According to Goodpaster, "in true NATO style, you have to measure [progress] in millimeters." Quoted in Sorley, "Goodpaster," 131.

43 NSSM 168, February 13, 1973, "US NATO Policies and Programs," box H-207, Nixon Presidential Materials, available at <http://nixon.archives.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nssm/nssm_168.pdf>.

44 Kugler, 302–304.

45 Alexander M. Haig, Jr., *Inner Circles: How America Changed the World—A Memoir* (New York: Warner Books, 1992), 521.

46 Kissinger vehemently denied that the administration's policy was to play off China against the Soviet Union. He used the curious explanation: "We could not 'exploit' that rivalry; it exploited itself." See Kissinger, *White House Years*, 763.

47 Donald S. Zagoria, *The Sino–Soviet Conflict, 1956–1961* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), was among the earliest to expose the "split" within the communist bloc.

48 Richard M. Nixon, "Asia After Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs* 56 (October 1967), 111–125.

49 Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 275 and passim.

50 NSSM 3, January 21, 1969, "US Military Posture and the Balance of Power," box H-207, Nixon Presidential Materials, available at <http://nixon.archives.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nssm/nssm_003.pdf>.

51 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 220–221.

52 "US Military Posture and the Balance of Power: General Purpose Forces Section," September 5, 1969, 24, enclosure to Memo, DepSECDEF to NSC Members et al., September 5, 1969, "Final Report on U.S. Military Posture and the Balance of Power," JCS 2101/554-54, cited in Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, 23–25.

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55 SNIE 13–69, March 6, 1969, "Communist China and Asia," in Allen, Carver, and Elmore, eds., *Tracking the Dragon*, 527–539.

56 "First Annual Report to the Congress on U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970s," February 18, 1970, *Nixon Public Papers, 1970*, 176–177.

57 MacArthur quoted in D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur*, vol. III, *Triumph and Disaster, 1945–1964* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1985), 460.

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59 CM-4764-69 to SECDEF, December 6, 1969, "Taiwan Strait Patrol," JCS 1966/172; *CINCPAC Command History, 1969*, I, 141–144; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 187; Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, 445–446.

60 Talking Paper for SECDEF and CJCS for NSC Meeting, March 25, 1971, "United States China Policy (NSSM 106)," JCS 2118/262-8; Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, 431–432.

61 See Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, "JCS and National Policy, 1969–72," 434, fn. 46.

62 "Remarks Announcing Acceptance of an Invitation to Visit the PRC," July 15, 1971, *Nixon Public Papers, 1971*, 819–820; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 742–755.

63 JCSM-446-71 to SECDEF, October 6, 1971, "Military Considerations for the Pending Presidential Visit to the PRC," JCS 2270/44-1; Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, 436–437.

64 CNOM 18-72 to JCS, February 3, 1972, "Military Considerations Concerning the President's Discussions with the PRC," JCS 2270/47; JCSM-58-72 to SECDEF, February 16, 1972, same subject, JCS 2270/47-1; Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, 437–438.

65 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 774–784.

66 Nixon, *RN*, 567–568.

67 Message, Zhou Enlai to Nixon, May 29, 1971, *FRUS 1969–76*, vol. XVII, *China, 1969–72*, 332.

68 "Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the PRC," February 27, 1972, *Nixon Public Papers, 1972*, 378.

69 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 783–784, 1073–1074 (quote).

70 The most significant assistance provided by the PRC was the dispatch of 12 minesweepers to North Vietnam, which cleared 46 mines between July 1972 and August 1973. Official U.S. sources indicate that the Navy laid down "thousands" of mines during the operation. See Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 202–204; and Edward J. Marolda, ed., *Operation End Sweep: A History of Minesweeping Operations in North Vietnam* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1993), xi.

71 Garthoff, 291.

72 JCSM-337-65 to SECDEF, May 6, 1965, "Impact on Area Arms Balance of Military Sales to Israel," JCS 2369/12-2; Poole, "JCS and National Policy, 1965–68," Pt. II, chap. X.

73 Thomas R. Johnson, *American Cryptology during the Cold War, 1945-1989*, Book II, *Centralization Wins, 1960-1972* (Washington, DC: National Security Agency, 1995), 432–39 (declassified), available at <http://www.nsa.gov/public_info/_files/cryptologic_histories/cold_war_ii.pdf>, details the *Liberty's* mission.

74 Israel Defence Forces, *Attack on the "Liberty" Incident, 8 June 1967* (Tel Aviv: History Department, Research and Instruction Branch, June 1982), 31.

75 Edward J. Drea, *McNamara, Clifford, and the Burdens of Vietnam, 1965–1969* (Washington, DC: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2011), chap. 16; James Scott, *The Attack on the* Liberty (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 138–141, 153–155.

76 JCSM-374-67 to SECDEF, June 29, 1967, "US Military Interests in the Near East," JCS 1887/720-.

77 Drea, *McNamara, Clifford, and Vietnam*, chap. 16.

78 Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, 297–300.

79 See Kissinger, *White House Years*, 363–377.

80 JCSM-521-71 to SECDEF, November 30, 1971, "Combat Aircraft Sales to Israel," JCS 2369/46; also quoted and summarized in Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, 328–329.

81 "The Military Balance in the Middle East," May 27, 1970, enclosure to JCS 2369/37-1; Poole, Jaffe, and Dzwonchyk, 300–301.

82 Mohamed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan* (New York: Quadrangle, 1975), 175. Other sources place the size of the Soviet contingent in Egypt at between 10,000 and 15,000.

83 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 192–193; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 204–205.

84 See Anwar Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 215 and passim.

85 CIA, *The Pike Report* (Nottingham, UK: Spokesman Books, 1977), 26–94. See also Gerald K. Haines, "The Pike Committee Investigations and the CIA," *Studies in Intelligence* (Winter 1998–1999; unclassified edition), 81–92; and Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1995), 390–392.

86 Letter, Brezhnev to Nixon, October 24, 1973, Nixon Presidential Materials, Henry A. Kissinger Files, box 69, Dobrynin/Kissinger vol. 20 (October 12–November 27, 1973); Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 583.

87 Kissinger at this time served in a dual capacity. Appointed Secretary of State in September 1973, he continued to serve also as the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs.

88 Nixon, *RN*, 922.

89 Zumwalt, *On Watch*, 434–436; Robert W. Love, Jr., *History of the U.S. Navy* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1992), II, 654.

90 Zumwalt, *On Watch*, 434.

91 Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 517. According to U.S. intelligence, the Jericho had a range of 260 miles and was unsuitable for conventional munitions. See SNIE 4-1-74, "Prospects for Further Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," August 23, 1974 (declassified with deletions), 2, 22, National Security Archive, GWU, and <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB240/snie.pdf>.

92 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 497.

93 Nixon, *RN*, 924; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 493.

94 Barrass, *Great Cold War*, 185, recounts Brezhnev's growing frustration with the Arabs.

95 Message, CJCS 2733 to CINCPAC et al., October 25, 1973, National Security Archive, GWU.

96 Haig, *Inner Circles*, 415–416.

97 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 586–589; Entry, October 26, 1973, Moorer Diary; Strategic Air Command, "Chronology: Middle East Crisis" (SAC History Study #139, December 12, 1973), 13 (declassified with deletions); Message, CJCS 5694 to CINCPAC et al. October 28, 1973, National Security Archive, GWU.

98 *United States Military Posture for FY 1975*, 1–6.

James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense, 1973–1975