Chapter 4

MILITARIZING THE COLD WAR

Between 1945 and 1950, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union underwent a 180-degree transformation. Erstwhile allies in the war against Germany and Japan, they became antagonists in a new global rivalry marked by the ominous expansion of Communist power and influence. While the Joint Chiefs of Staff repeatedly urged stronger military power to deal with this situation, their warnings had had limited effect on the Truman administration's fiscal or defense policies. Exercising tight control over military spending, Truman preferred to address the Communist challenge with political, economic, and diplomatic initiatives. Bowing to these realities, the JCS fashioned a defense posture and war plans oriented toward a single contingency—an all-out global conflict. Maintenance of balanced conventional forces with flexible capabilities gave way to reliance on strategic bombardment with nuclear weapons as the country's principal deterrent and first line of defense. Not everyone agreed that this was a sound course or that it adequately addressed the country's increasingly diverse security needs. But at the time, reliance on strategic bombing with nuclear weapons was the country's most practical, effective, and affordable form of defense.

PRESSURES FOR CHANGE

While nonmilitary responses to Soviet expansion had generally met with success, the growing intensity of the Cold War by 1950 was steadily pushing the Truman administration toward an expansion of U.S. military power. Despite its best efforts to avoid it, the "militarization" of the Cold War loomed larger than ever as pressures converged from three directions at roughly the same time: from Europe, where the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in April 1949 created a new transatlantic community of security interests; from China, where the collapse of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist regime ushered in a Communist People's Republic headed by Mao Zedong with apparent designs on extending its power and influence across

Asia; and from the Soviet Union, where the detonation of a nuclear device in late August 1949 ended the American monopoly on the atomic bomb years ahead of predictions. Any one of those events could have triggered substantial alterations in American foreign and defense policy. Taken together, they were the catalysts for a wholesale transformation that would, with the sudden outbreak of the Korea conflict in June 1950, interject military power into the forefront of American responses to the escalating Cold War.

Prior to the Korean War, the administration's only clear-cut commitment embracing the possible use of military force to thwart Communist expansion was the North Atlantic Treaty. During preliminary consideration of the Alliance in the spring of 1948, the Joint Chiefs had endorsed the broad concept of a mutual security pact between Europe and the United States, but had warned against "major military involvement" without adequate preparations.[1] The White House and State Department noted the chiefs' concerns, but as Undersecretary of State Robert A. Lovett explained it, the Alliance's primary function was consultation in support of possible collective action. Like an insurance policy, its immediate role was to bolster Europe's confidence, expedite completion of the Economic Recovery Program, and deter the Soviets.[2]

The principal military component associated with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP), a companion measure enacted in October 1949 to help rearm the European allies.[3] When the State Department unveiled the program, the Joint Chiefs balked out of concern that the Services might have to pay for MDAP out of their own budgets.[4] Though assured that assistance to NATO through MDAP would be a separate appropriation, the JCS remained uneasy lest it quickly deplete the dwindling war reserves left over from World War II and divert funding for routine military appropriations. In part to guard against NATO becoming a drain on American resources, the Joint Chiefs proposed an elaborate structure of councils, committees, boards, and regional planning groups to give the JCS detailed oversight powers of NATO's activities.[5] Secretary of State Dean Acheson acknowledged that as NATO became more established, pressures were bound to arise for a larger U.S. military role and a more complex organization. But for the time being he saw no pressing need and vetoed the chiefs' plan in preference for a simpler alliance structure that played down direct American military involvement and responsibility.[6]

Meanwhile, the disintegration of Nationalist rule on the China mainland was reshaping the security situation in the Far East. Given the leadership problems and poor performance of Nationalist Chinese forces during World War II, Chiang Kai-shek's collapse came as no surprise to the Joint Chiefs, who never had much confidence

in the Generalissimo's ability to lead China out of the war as a great power. But because of China's strategic location, large population, and latent military potential, the JCS were also averse to a Communist takeover of the country and a loss of U.S. influence. As a result, throughout the postwar period, they consistently supported infusions of military aid to prop up the Generalissimo's regime, even as Chiang's rule began to crumble.

Of the President's various advisors, the most reluctant to come to Chiang's rescue was former Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall. In November 1945, President Truman had persuaded Marshall to go to China as his special representative. Marshall had served in China in the 1920s as a junior officer, and during World War II he had suffered through Stilwell's ordeal with Chiang. Like Stilwell, he had little confidence in the Generalissimo's leadership, reliability as an ally, or capacity to make effective use of U.S. assistance. But as a loyal soldier he felt duty-bound to accept the mission. Through Marshall's good offices, Truman hoped to broker a power-sharing agreement between Chiang and his Communist rival, Mao Zedong, a nominal ally of the Soviet Union, that would buy time for Chiang to strengthen his position and, with U.S. assistance and logistical support, move his troops into positions where they could effectively confront Mao's forces.[7] Chiang ignored Marshall's advice to seek a political compromise and sought to use his three-to-one advantage in troop strength to achieve a military solution. Exuding confidence, he overextended his forces into North China and Manchuria where they suffered one setback after another.[8]

By 1949, Chiang's military fortunes had declined to such an extent that he was taking steps to relocate his regime from the mainland to the island of Taiwan (Formosa) for what appeared to be a last stand. Short of massive U.S. intervention, the Joint Chiefs saw nothing that might turn the tide. Though they hoped to keep Taiwan (with or without Chiang there) from falling into Communist hands, they did not consider it sufficiently important to merit large-scale military action. The most they would recommend was the deployment of a few ships for deterrence purposes and the use of diplomatic leverage.[9] Since the Nationalist regime had strong political support in Washington, however, the JCS cautioned against abandoning Chiang altogether "at the eleventh hour" and urged the continuation of military assistance as long as Nationalist armies offered organized resistance.[10] Above all, they wanted to keep an American military presence on the China mainland and fought a losing battle with the State Department and the White House to keep the U.S. naval base at Qingdao (Tsingtao) open. Secretary of State Acheson thought the United States should disengage from Chiang as soon as possible and direct its efforts toward a rapprochement with Mao and the Communists. Counseled by the State

Department's "China Hands," Acheson believed it feasible "to detach [China] from subservience to Moscow and over a period of time encourage those vigorous influences which might modify it."[11] But he faced an uphill battle convincing Congress and overcoming the "China Lobby," which wanted stronger measures to resist the spread of communism in the Far East and additional support to save what remained of Chiang's regime.

THE H-BOMB DECISION AND NSC 68

The third and most fateful development that went into reshaping U.S. security perceptions was the discovery, reported to President Truman on September 9, 1949, that the Soviet Union had detonated a nuclear device similar in design to the implosion bomb the United States dropped on Nagasaki 4 years earlier. Without warning, the American nuclear monopoly had ended. The Intelligence Community later determined that the test—"Joe 1"—had taken place on August 29, 1949.[12] While analysts at the Central Intelligence Agency had known for some time that the Soviet Union had an atomic energy program, they miscalculated the Soviet Union's capacity to produce fissionable materials and failed to appreciate either the high priority Stalin attached to acquiring nuclear weapons or the crucial role Soviet espionage played in expediting the project.[13] As a result, they consistently underestimated both the extent of the Soviet effort and when it would come to fruition. Prior to Joe 1, the most recent interagency assessment of the Soviet program, dated July 1, 1949, placed the "probable" date for a Soviet atomic capability in the mid-1953 range, with the "possibility" of a nuclear test as early as mid-1950. Weighing the evidence, the consensus of the Intelligence Community was that the Soviet Union's "first atomic bomb cannot be completed before mid-1951."[14]

While the White House downplayed the achievement, the danger posed by growing Soviet military power was impossible to ignore. Up to that time, the Truman administration had relied implicitly, if not explicitly, on its nuclear monopoly to underwrite its policies. "As long as we can outproduce the world, can control the sea and can strike inland with the atomic bomb," Secretary of Defense Forrestal had once observed, "we can assume certain risks otherwise unacceptable."[15] With that formula now rendered suspect, it was no longer clear whether the United States could continue to mount effective deterrence and containment of the Soviet Union with the military capabilities it had on hand.

The most urgent need was to reassert the American lead in atomic energy. At issue was whether the United States should embark on a "quantum jump" into the unexplored realm of nuclear fusion and the development of "super" bombs based

on hydrogen or thermonuclear design. Such weapons in theory could produce yields a thousand times greater than fission bombs. In November 1949, seeking advice on how to proceed, President Truman turned to the "Z Committee" of the National Security Council (NSC), composed of Secretary of State Acheson, Secretary of Defense Johnson, and the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, David E. Lilienthal.[16] As the committee's military advisors, the Joint Chiefs acknowledged that high-yield super bombs would be hard to deliver and therefore would have limited military applications. All the same, the chiefs believed that for political and psychological reasons, it was absolutely imperative to proceed with a determination test. "Possession of a thermonuclear weapon by the USSR," the JCS insisted, "without such possession by the United States would be intolerable."[17] Lilienthal, however, harbored misgivings. Believing the H-bomb morally repugnant, he found the military's growing dependence on nuclear weapons deeply troubling and became convinced that the United States needed increased conventional capabilities and a renewed commitment to obtaining international control of atomic energy more than it needed thermonuclear weapons.[18]

On January 31, 1950, President Truman approved a compromise crafted by Acheson. As the first step, the President directed the AEC to explore the feasibility of the H-bomb, thus setting in motion a research and development program that would culminate on November 1, 1952, with the world's first thermonuclear explosion—a 10 megaton device that completely vaporized the Pacific atoll where the test was held. Meanwhile, he instructed the State and Defense Departments to review the country's basic national security policy.[19] Acheson shared Lilienthal's concern over the military's growing dependence on nuclear weapons, not least of all because he felt it limited diplomatic flexibility. But he also thought the United States had to have the H-bomb because "we do not have any other military program which seems to offer over the short run promise of military effectiveness."[20] In recommending a review of basic policy, Acheson later explained, he hoped to find some middle ground that would restore greater balance to the country's military posture and expand its ability to meet unforeseen contingencies.[21]

The Joint Chiefs embarked on the review with no such preconceptions or expectations. The previous November, Secretary of Defense Johnson had removed Admiral Louis Denfeld as Chief of Naval Operations on grounds of insubordination for his role in the "Revolt of the Admirals," which had challenged Johnson's authority through highly publicized attacks on his economy measures and the Air Force's strategic bombing capabilities.[22] Since then, Johnson had further tightened his control of the Defense Department and military spending. Confirming rumors and press reports, Johnson notified the Joint Chiefs in late February 1950 that the

military budget for FY52 would remain at approximately the same level as that projected for FY51. Since the Secretary's estimates made no allowance for inflation, except for the Air Force, Johnson's hold-the-line spending policy amounted to a net decrease in programs for the Army and Navy. Using the Secretary's budget guidance as their frame of reference, the Joint Chiefs initially had to assume that any changes the State-Defense review might recommend would be modest at best.[23]

State's participants in the review had other ideas. Though ostensibly a collaborative effort, the dominant influence throughout was the new director of the Policy Planning Staff, Paul H. Nitze. A Wall Street bond trader before World War II, Nitze was well versed in statistics, which, as Vice Chairman of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, he used to great effect in analyzing the results of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Joining the State Department after the war, he had emerged as one of State's senior economic analysts and was instrumental in developing the Marshall Plan. A pragmatist and problem-solver by nature, Nitze gave a higher priority to the role of military power in foreign policy than his academically-minded predecessor, George F. Kennan, who had fallen out of favor with Acheson.[24]

JCS contributions to the review group's work came via the Joint Strategic Survey Committee (JSSC), represented by its Air Force member, Major General Truman H. Landon. Nitze recalled that initially Landon presented modest proposals to correct minor deficiencies in the existing force posture. He soon realized, however, "that we were serious about doing a basic strategic review and not just writing some papers which would help people promote special projects of one kind or another." From the quick change in Landon's outlook, Nitze detected that "there was, in fact, a revolt from within" brewing at the Pentagon against Johnson's fiscal policies and strategic priorities.[25]

The review process stretched from mid-February to early April 1950, when the State-Defense review group presented its findings (NSC 68) to the National Security Council. About a third of the report was a close analysis of the Soviet threat, drawn from intelligence estimates that indicated an inordinately large investment by the Soviet Union (up to 40 percent of its gross national product) in military power and war-supporting industries. By mid-1954—the "year of maximum danger" in the report's estimation—the Soviets would have a nuclear stockpile that could threaten serious damage to the United States. Extrapolating motives from capabilities, NSC 68 concluded that "the Soviet Union has one purpose and that is world domination." To frustrate the "Kremlin design," the paper urged the adoption of "a comprehensive and decisive program" resulting in "a rapid and sustained buildup of the political, economic, and military strength of the free world." While NSC 68 strongly endorsed the maintenance of effective nuclear capabilities for deterrence

purposes, it also called for significant expansion of conventional air, ground, and sea forces "to the point where we are militarily not so heavily dependent on atomic weapons."[26]

Missing from NSC 68 were any cost estimates for the buildup or a projected allocation of resources among the armed Services. Both omissions were intentional—the first, in order not to frighten off President Truman from accepting the report, the second, to avoid provoking competition and friction within the Pentagon. According to one of his biographers, Acheson wanted to avoid overwhelming Truman with "programmatic details" by offering him instead "a general analysis oriented toward action."[27] Privately, Nitze and others who worked on NSC 68 estimated that it would require expenditures of $35 billion to $50 billion annually over the next 4 years. While Nitze made these calculations known to Acheson, there is no evidence that the Secretary of State conveyed them to Truman. The report conceded that the program would be "costly" and probably would require higher taxes to avoid deficit budgets. But it did not dwell on these points.[28]

Truman, for his part, continued to treat costs as his uppermost concern. Immediately after receiving NSC 68, he directed the creation of an ad hoc committee of economic experts to go over its findings and recommendations.[29] The consensus of this group was that, while the report's proposed course of action would be expensive, it would not place undue burdens on the economy as long as adequate safeguards were in place. The lone dissenting view was from the Bureau of the Budget, which saw adverse consequences for the economy should military spending rise sharply.[30] Truman agreed and said as much during a meeting with his budget director, Frederick J. Lawton, on May 23, 1950. "The President indicated," Lawton noted in his minutes of the meeting, "that we were to continue to raise any questions that we had on this program and that it definitely was not as large in scope as some of the people seemed to think." Translating the President's guidance into hard numbers, the BOB projected NSC 68 increases of $1 billion to $3 billion annually over the next 2 to 3 years.[31]

At the Pentagon, the Joint Chiefs were under similar pressure from Louis Johnson to curb expectations that NSC 68 would result in dramatic increases in military spending. Though Johnson paid lip service to the report, he resented its implied conclusion that the country's defense posture had become enfeebled under his trusteeship and took offense at what he saw as Acheson's unwarranted interference in Defense Department business. Going through all the proper motions, he directed the JCS and the Services to assemble estimates of the "general tasks and responsibilities" mandated under NSC 68, but to bear in mind that until the President indicated otherwise, guidelines and ceilings previously established for the FY 52 budget remained firmly in

place.[32] Confident that he had the matter in hand, Johnson left Washington on June 12, 1950, accompanied by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (CJCS) General Omar N. Bradley, USA, for a tour of the Far East to discuss security arrangements for a Japanese peace treaty with General Douglas MacArthur, the theater commander.

On the eve of the Korean War, the fate of NSC 68 remained uncertain. President Truman had yet to approve the report and there were unmistakable signs that if and when he did, it would produce a considerably smaller buildup than its authors intended. The American defense establishment was already far larger and more costly than any country had ever known in peacetime, and to propose significant increases could have provoked a divisive national debate. Although NSC 68 offered ample evidence that the Soviet Union posed a growing threat to Western security, nothing in the report confirmed that spending three, four, or even ten times more on defense would afford better insurance against a Soviet attack than the existing investment of resources. Only after the outbreak of the Korean War would it become clear that the existing defense posture had failed to deter Communist aggression.

ONSET OF THE KOREAN WAR

Like the Soviet nuclear test the previous August, the North Korean invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950 (Korea time), caught official Washington off guard. Even though NSC 68 had warned policymakers and military planners to be on the alert, no one expected a blatant act of aggression so soon. With most of its limited assets concentrated on Europe, the Intelligence Community had paid relatively little attention to the Far East prior to the North Korean attack. As one Army intelligence officer described the situation, "North Korea got lost in the shuffle and nobody told us they were interested in what was going on north of the 38th parallel." If war broke out or if a Communist takeover occurred, intelligence analysts expected Indochina rather than Korea to be the target.[33]

Gathering information on Korea posed special difficulties. Wary of outsiders, MacArthur had banned the OSS from his theater in World War II and was suspicious of allowing its successor, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), into his midst after the war. Operating under severe restrictions, the Agency came up with generalized estimates that credited North Korea with limited capabilities for military aggression. As late as June 19, 1950, the CIA predicted that the Communists would confine their actions against the south to propaganda, infiltration, sabotage, and subversion.[34] An Army (G-2) intelligence report generated around this same time was more precise in identifying signs of enemy troop movements and the like, but by the time this information reached Washington, the war was in full swing.[35]

Carefully planned and executed, the North Korean invasion had Stalin's blessing and support and involved approximately 90,000 North Korean troops, armed and trained by the Soviet Union. Early reports were vague, but as the fighting intensified it was apparent that this was no mere border skirmish, as initial reports suggested, but an all-out assault with the ultimate aim of destroying the American-supported Republic of Korea (ROK) in the south and absorbing the Korean Peninsula into the Communist orbit.[36]

Despite the seriousness of the situation, the Joint Chiefs initially saw no grounds for American military intervention, since at the time the United States had no formal defense commitments with South Korea. Divided in 1945 as an expediency at the 38th parallel to facilitate the disarming of Japanese troops by U.S. and Soviet forces, Korea had evolved into two distinct political entities—a Communist regime in the north headed by the Moscow-trained and Soviet-supported Kim Il-song, and a more democratic, U.S.-backed government in the south led by Syngman Rhee.[37] While aware of South Korea's vulnerability, the Joint Chiefs needed the occupation forces stationed there for duty elsewhere and wanted to limit further U.S. involvement. In September 1947, they declared the country to be of "little strategic interest" to the United States, the first step toward withdrawing U.S. troops. Completed in the spring of 1949, the withdrawal left behind large stockpiles of war materiel and a 500-member U.S. Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) to train and equip ROK forces against any threat from the north.[38] A few days prior to the invasion, during his trip to Tokyo in June 1950 with Secretary of Defense Johnson, General Bradley discussed the situation with Brigadier General William L. Roberts, USA, who had recently stepped down as KMAG's chief. "The ROK Army," Roberts assured the Chairman, "could meet any test the North Koreans imposed on it."[39]

The Communist success in routing the ROK forces shattered these comfortable assumptions and forced a hasty rethinking of U.S. policy. Like his predecessor during the early stages of World War II, President Truman met regularly with his top advisors and took a hands-on approach to the crisis; but unlike Roosevelt, he turned for advice more to civilians (in this case Secretary of State Dean Acheson) than to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Owing to earlier decisions leading to the withdrawal of U.S. forces and the downgrading of South Korea's strategic importance, the JCS had not given much thought to the possibility of military action on the Korean Peninsula. When the crisis erupted, they lacked contingency plans for dealing with the emergency and had to improvise with impromptu assessments, personal opinions, and hastily drawn orders for mobilizing and moving forces.[40] Exactly why the Joint Chiefs were so unprepared and slow to respond remains unclear, but it doubtless reflected to some extent their continuing indifference toward Korea's strategic

importance and the personnel ceiling under which the Joint Staff operated at the time. Even though the 1949 amendments had doubled the size of the Joint Staff, it remained a relatively small organization with limited capabilities.

Acheson, in contrast, appeared at these meetings with the President fully briefed and prepared, invariably bearing detailed memorandums and lists of recommendations that reflected dedicated staff work. Within hours of the news of the attack, he placed before the President proposals to expedite additional assistance to the South Koreans, to establish a "protective zone" around South Korea with U.S. air and naval forces, and to mobilize international opinion against the attack through the United Nations. Over the next several days, Acheson offered more recommendations, all moving inexorably toward large-scale U.S. military intervention under UN auspices. Six months earlier, Acheson, like the JCS, had more or less written off Korea and the rest of the East Asian mainland. But under the pressure of new events and still smarting from Republican attacks that his policies had "lost" China to the Communists, he had had a change of heart and saw the North Korean attack as a test of American will. "To back away from this challenge, in view of our capacity for meeting it," he wrote in his memoirs, "would be highly destructive of the power and prestige of the United States."[41]

The Joint Chiefs agreed that the North Korean attack challenged American resolve. But they accepted the need for military intervention with the utmost reluctance and initially hoped that air and naval power would suffice. The most readily available ground forces in the region were those of the Eighth Army, whose four divisions were all below authorized strength and short of critical weapons and equipment.[42] More aware than anyone of the constraints imposed by years of frugal defense budgets, the JCS made no attempt to disguise their belief that all-out intervention would be a highly risky business, requiring the mobilization of Reserve and National Guard units and emergency appropriations at a minimum. Should the war spread, warned the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the use of nuclear weapons would be the next step, a view shared by other senior commanders.[43] Above all, the JCS hoped to avoid committing U.S. ground troops but stopped short of recommending against such a move. Later, in explaining to Congress how the decision to send troops into Korea had come about, Louis Johnson observed that he and the Joint Chiefs had "neither recommended it nor opposed it."[44]

On Truman's shoulders rested all final decisions. While accepting Acheson's advice that the United States needed to make a forceful stand in Korea, he moved cautiously and intervened in incremental steps. Starting with the authorization of air and sea operations below the 38th parallel on June 26 (Washington time), he progressed to the commitment of U.S. ground forces 4 days later. Showing renewed

interest in the fate of Taiwan, he ordered elements of the Seventh Fleet to take up station in the Formosa Strait to deter a resumption of the conflict between Chiang and the Chinese Communists.[45]

While accepting the need for action, Truman resisted the notion that the current emergency might compel a military buildup on the scale proposed in NSC 68. Sidestepping the problem, he inadvertently trivialized the dangers of intervention by publicly describing the North Korean attack as the work of "a bunch of bandits" that a "police action" could handle.[46] His description made it appear the United States could turn back the North Koreans and comfortably meet defense obligations elsewhere. But with the situation continuing to deteriorate, the President notified Congress on July 19, 1950, that at the urging of his military advisors, he was calling up units of the National Guard and would need additional military appropriations and authority to remove the ceiling on the size of the Armed Forces. Even so, he continued to defer action on adopting NSC 68 as administration policy and asked the National Security Council to reassess the report's requirements, with a view to providing recommendations by the beginning of September. Despite the ongoing conflict, he told the Bureau of the Budget that he did not want to place "any more money than necessary at this time in the hands of the Military."[47]

THE INCH'ON OPERATION

Truman believed that if the war in Korea could be contained and won quickly, he might get by with relatively modest increases in defense spending and other security programs. What he did not take into account was General Douglas MacArthur's penchant for independent and unpredictable behavior. American military policy had traditionally given commanders in the field wide latitude to deal with situations as they deemed appropriate. In MacArthur's case, however, there were inherent liabilities in extending this practice too far. During World War II, when the JCS had functioned as a high command, they had been able to exercise a degree of control over MacArthur through the allocation of resources and through the powers they derived from their unique relationship with the President. But from 1947 on, the JCS no longer had such sweeping authority. Meantime, MacArthur operated from his headquarters in Tokyo with a lengthening list of titles, including all-encompassing powers as head of the American occupation and Commander in Chief, Far East (CINCFE), which gave him authority over U.S. land, sea, and air forces throughout the theater. As of July 8, 1950, he also served as the United Nations commander (CINCUNC) in accordance with a UN Security Council resolution.[48]

In Korea, MacArthur found himself waging a war heavy in political overtones which, despite his vast authority, imposed limits on his military flexibility. He responded by treating the policy pronouncements and directives he received from both Washington and the UN as advisory and thus subject to interpretation. Seeking to stem the enemy advance, he ordered the destruction of North Korean airfields a day before President Truman authorized it. By early August 1950, he had antagonized the White House and the State Department with a trip to Taiwan and public statements afterwards (including a proposed message to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, later withdrawn at Truman's insistence) suggesting the restoration of military collaboration and a de facto alliance between Chiang Kai-shek's regime and the United States. His repeated requests for more U.S. combat troops to shore up the South Koreans reflected not simply the gravity of the situation, but also his longstanding contention that policymakers in Washington misunderstood the Far East and underestimated its strategic significance. By and large, the Joint Chiefs were in accord with MacArthur's assessments. But they could sense a showdown coming between MacArthur and the Commander in Chief and had no desire to be caught in the middle.[49]

Despite their differences, Truman and MacArthur both saw the war in Korea as a diversion from larger issues and wanted it brought to a swift conclusion. With this end in mind, MacArthur proposed a counterattack involving a risky large-scale amphibious landing in the enemy's rear. After the contretemps over Taiwan, Truman was so irritated with MacArthur that he gave "serious thought" to replacing him with Bradley. But he dropped the idea because he thought the Chairman would consider it a demotion.[50] Even though he disliked MacArthur personally, Truman needed the general's expertise to execute the counterattack. During World War II, MacArthur had developed and perfected amphibious operations to a fine art, and he proposed to apply his skills again to rout the North Korean People's Army.

The most questionable part of the operation was MacArthur's choice of Inch'on, a port west of Seoul, as the landing site. While a successful invasion there would put UN forces astride enemy supply lines and block a North Korean retreat, extensive mud flats and tidal variations made landing conditions treacherous. "I realize," MacArthur observed at one point while planning the operation, "that Inchon is a 5,000 to 1 gamble, but I am used to taking such odds. We shall land at Inchon and I shall crush them."[51] In fact, the odds were better than MacArthur let on. Thanks to a hastily arranged signals intelligence (SIGINT) intercept program, U.S. code breakers in Washington had succeeded in penetrating North Korean communications in late July 1950. From that point on, MacArthur and the JCS had a fairly full picture of the North Korean order of battle and knew that after weeks of heavy

fighting, the North Koreans were running low on replacements and supplies. Most important of all, the intercepted messages disclosed that there were no large enemy units in the Inch'on area to oppose a landing.[52]

Coordination between MacArthur and the JCS for the Inch'on operation was haphazard. In early July 1950, the Joint Chiefs began hearing rumors that MacArthur was planning a counterattack. Despite repeated requests for details, it was not until July 23 that he apprised the JCS of his intentions.[53] MacArthur planned the attack, code-named *Chromite*, for mid-September and needed additional reinforcements which, if granted, would leave only the 82d Airborne Division in the strategic reserve. There followed a succession of high-level conferences at the Pentagon and the White House culminating in the decision to send a JCS delegation headed by General J. Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff, and Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations, to Tokyo to discuss the matter with MacArthur and his staff. Reassured that the Inch'on landing was feasible, albeit risky, they returned to Washington and persuaded their colleagues to agree to allocate the additional units MacArthur wanted. On September 7, the JCS notified MacArthur that he had the authority to proceed.[54]

From this point on, citing operational security needs, MacArthur rarely communicated with the JCS until after the Inch'on operation on September 15, 1950. With access to the same SIGINT that MacArthur and the JCS had, President Truman later insisted that he was not in the least bothered by MacArthur's behavior and had the "greatest confidence" the landing would succeed.[55] As a precaution, however, should the operation fail and a change of commanders become necessary, he gave Bradley a fifth star, reaffirming his authority. At the same time, in a move that many observers considered long overdue, he replaced Louis Johnson as Secretary of Defense and named General George C. Marshall as his successor. An admirer and personal friend of MacArthur's, Johnson was too closely identified with the general for President Truman's comfort, while his economy measures and disagreements with Acheson had become a distinct liability. With the Inch'on operation looming, the President used the occasion to put his house in order for the larger tasks that lay ahead.[56]

As MacArthur predicted, *Chromite* was a stunning success that quickly turned the tide of battle against the North Korean invaders. By the time the operation took place, MacArthur had at his disposal a UN force of nearly 200,000 ground combat troops, including 113,500 Americans, 81,500 South Koreans, and 3,000 British and Filipinos. Within a week, his forces had driven to the outskirts of Seoul, the South Korean capital. On September 27, they linked up with Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker's Eighth Army, which had pushed north from where it had taken up

defensive positions near Pusan on the southeastern coast. Seoul fell to the United Nations Command (UNC) on September 28, and the next day MacArthur restored the government of President Syngman Rhee to its capital. By the end of the month, the North Korean army had ceased to exist as an organized fighting force. Still, as much as a third of the 90,000 North Koreans who had participated in the attack and most of the North Korean high command made their way north across the border and began to regroup. At great cost and effort, the UN coalition had thrown the aggressors back, but it was in no position yet to declare total victory.[57]

POLICY IN FLUX

The greatest military triumphs of MacArthur's long career, the Inch'on landing and the ensuing rout of the North Koreans were also a huge relief to Truman and the Joint Chiefs, who had thrown practically everything into the attack the United States could muster on such short notice. The victory, however, left the cupboard bare. Realizing that forces would need to be replenished and rebuilt, both to finish the job in Korea and for general rearmament, President Truman on September 29 took the step he had long postponed—approving NSC 68 and referring it to the Executive departments and agencies "as a statement of policy to be followed over the next four or five years."[58]

Whether President Truman would actually implement NSC 68 to the full extent its authors envisioned remained to be seen. Prior to Inch'on, the Joint Chiefs had assumed that there would probably be an extended conflict in Asia and an open-ended emergency requiring large-scale augmentation elsewhere of the Armed forces. To meet estimated requirements, they projected an active duty defense establishment by the end of FY 54 of 3.2 million uniformed personnel (double the current strength) organized into an Army of 18 divisions, a Navy of nearly 400 combatant vessels (including 12 attack carriers), and an Air Force of 95 wings, with a third of them dedicated to strategic bombardment.[59] But given the Inch'on success, Truman began to doubt whether a defense establishment of such size was needed. When he approved NSC 68, he told the National Security Council, with General Bradley present representing the JCS, that "costs were not final" and that "there were certain things that could be done right now, while others should be studied further."[60]

Truman's ambivalence reflected the continuing uncertainty surrounding the situation in Korea and its impact on American defense obligations elsewhere, Europe especially. Even though MacArthur had the North Koreans on the run, his failure to deliver the coup de grace meant that the conflict could go on indefinitely. The Joint Chiefs had no desire to keep large numbers of U.S. forces tied down in

Korea, but they did not want U.S. troops to leave until the campaign had run its course. At issue was whether to seek modest objectives, such as restoration of the status quo ante, or the complete destruction of the North Korean armed forces and the reunification of Korea under UN authority. Anticipating that UN forces would eventually regain the initiative, State and the JCS had debated this matter at length during July and August 1950, but had been unable to come up with a definitive answer. The best they could recommend was a wait-and-see policy. All agreed, however, that the longer the fighting lasted, the greater the chances of Soviet or Chinese intervention, that the risk would increase significantly if or when UN forces approached the Chinese and Soviet borders, and that MacArthur should be cautioned against launching major military operations north of the 38th parallel without consulting the President.[61]

Inch'on and the ensuing rout of the North Korean army created opportunities that seemed too good to pass up. Toward the end of September 1950, Secretary Marshall advised MacArthur to feel free to continue operations north of the 38th parallel, with the implied objective of liquidating the remnants of the North Korean army. A week later, on October 7, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution reaffirming its desire to unify Korea. Nonetheless, Truman remained uneasy over the possibility of Soviet or Chinese intervention. Unable to persuade MacArthur to return to Washington for consultations, Truman agreed to fly to Wake Island in the Pacific—a 15,000 mile trip—for a hastily arranged review of plans and strategy on October 15. General Bradley was the only JCS member to accompany the President.

Though it lasted barely 2 hours, the Wake Island conference was perhaps the most fateful meeting of the war. Despite SIGINT intercepts indicating a massing of Chinese troops in Manchuria just north of the Yalu River, MacArthur dismissed the possibility that the Chinese might intervene. Should they do so, he was confident that he could defeat them with airpower. "If the Chinese tried to get down to Pyongyang," he said, "there would be the greatest slaughter." Bradley was skeptical, but since the SIGINT intercepts were inconclusive on Chinese intentions, he had no basis for challenging MacArthur's analysis. Convinced that the North Koreans were beaten, MacArthur predicted the end of organized resistance by Thanksgiving, the withdrawal of the Eighth Army to Japan by Christmas, and the redeployment of one of its divisions to Europe in January 1951, leaving two U.S. divisions in Korea for security.[62]

Proclaiming the Wake Island meeting "successful," Truman returned to Washington "highly pleased" with the outcome.[63] Despite its brevity and superficiality, the meeting produced two important results. First, it gave MacArthur a green light to proceed with military operations above the 38th parallel and, implicitly, to use his

forces to reunify Korea. And second, it reassured Truman that he had made the right decision to hold back on military spending in anticipation that the war would soon be over. NSC 68 notwithstanding, Truman believed that the buildup had peaked and that the time had come to level off. By early November 1950, the Office of the Secretary of Defense was pressing the Joint Chiefs to reconsider their force-level projections for FY 52 and to reduce manpower requirements to fit within "a realistic military budget."[64]

Meanwhile, MacArthur's spectacular earlier successes were about to prove short-lived. The first hint that he had underestimated the enemy threat came in late October 1950 as UN armies approached the Manchurian border. In a surprising new development, ROK units encountered Chinese forces that expertly concealed their real strength. Based on prisoner interrogations, the Central Intelligence Agency distributed findings in early November 1950 confirming that the Chinese had begun infiltrating around mid-October and now had one and a half or two divisions operating in Korea.[65] (The correct figure was 18 divisions.) MacArthur initially assumed that these troops were part of a limited covert intervention, but within a few days came fresh evidence, as MacArthur characterized it, that the Chinese were "pouring across" the border from Manchuria into North Korea.[66]

MacArthur wanted to isolate the invading Chinese by using U.S. B–29s to bomb the bridges spanning the Yalu River, Korea's frontier with China. In the view of some critics, MacArthur's intention was to expand the war and turn it into a crusade against communism in the Far East. The Joint Chiefs never subscribed to this thesis, but they did worry that an aggressive air campaign extending into Manchuria might give the Soviets an excuse to intervene alongside the Chinese. Consequently, even though the JCS gave MacArthur a free hand to bomb below the Yalu River, they cautioned him to exercise "extreme care" to avoid hitting targets in Manchuria or violating Chinese air space.[67]

While MacArthur and the JCS debated how to handle the Chinese, the UNC advance continued, with some Allied units reaching the Yalu by November 21. Disaster struck 4 days later as the People's Liberation Army unleashed a full-scale offensive, inflicting heavy casualties. As General Bradley described the situation to the President, the Chinese had "come in with both feet."[68] Seeing no other choice, MacArthur ordered an immediate withdrawal back down the peninsula. On November 28, he notified the JCS that he now confronted as many as 200,000 Chinese and 50,000 North Koreans and "an entirely new war."[69] An easy march north to destroy the remnants of the North Korean army and to reunify Korea now became a headlong retreat south.

IMPACT OF THE CHINESE INTERVENTION

The Chinese intervention changed everything. Almost overnight, JCS planners found themselves scrapping plans to curtail the buildup and developing new ones to accelerate the rearmament program and to expand its base. Instead of using mid-1954 (NSC 68's "year of maximum danger") as their culmination point, the Joint Chiefs, working with OSD and the National Security Council, moved the date up to mid-1952 and reprogrammed manpower and force targets accordingly. Truman, fearing that the costs would bankrupt the country and send the economy into recession, hesitated to commit to a stepped-up effort. But by the end of November 1950, with the Communist onslaught in high gear, he acknowledged that the situation required sweeping action. What was needed, he said, was a more rapid expansion of military power, to "prevent all-out world war and [to] be prepared for it if we can't prevent it."[70]

The ensuing buildup became the largest "peacetime" rearmament in American history up to that time, later surpassed only by the Reagan buildup of the 1980s. From a FY 50 base of around $12 billion, defense outlays rose to $20 billion the following year, to $39 billion in FY 52, and to $43 billion in FY 53, the last budget enacted under the Truman administration. During this same period, Active-duty military personnel increased from 1.4 million to 3.5 million, the Army expanded from 10 to 20 divisions, the Navy grew from 238 major combatant vessels to 401, and the Air Force more than doubled in size from 48 to 98 wings. While the emphasis on nuclear retaliation remained, significant improvements in conventional capabilities signaled the return to a more robust, balanced force posture. In addition, the military assistance program, atomic energy, foreign intelligence, the Voice of America, and Radio Free Europe all received substantial funding increases. Overall, the allocations for defense and related national security programs climbed from 5.1 percent of the country's gross national product (GNP) in FY 50 to 14.5 percent in FY 53.[71]

With greater resources becoming available, the JCS directed the Joint Staff to step up the preparation of strategic plans that looked beyond the immediate budget cycle in the annual Joint Outline Emergency War Plan (JOEWP). These longer range plans attempted to anticipate the scale of effort for a global war with the Soviet Union and its allies years in advance. The most fully developed long-range plan, known as DROPSHOT, was under consideration when the Korean War began and projected a large-scale conventional mobilization for a war fought along World War II lines in 1957. Never approved, DROPSHOT was withdrawn in February 1951 and superseded by REAPER, a mid-range plan that anticipated a war in 1954. Among its innovations, REAPER attempted to incorporate an active defense of

Europe and to take into account the impact of a nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union. Inter-Service differences over the allocation of assets, however, left REAPER's approval in limbo. Increased defense spending could ease—but not eliminate—the inter-Service competition for funds and resources.[72]

Given the difficulties of reaching inter-Service agreement and the complexities of trying to develop individual plans to cover all contingencies, the Joint Chiefs decided in July 1952 to phase in new procedures to meet their strategic planning obligations. Under the new system, the JCS embraced a "family" of plans, each updated annually: the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP), which replaced the JOEWP, indicating the disposition, employment, and support of existing forces available to the unified and specified commanders to carry out their missions; the Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP), estimating Service requirements for the next 3 years; and the Joint Long-Range Strategic Estimate (JLRSE), a 5-year projection of force requirements emphasizing research and development needs.[73] Though subjected to frequent refinements and adjustments, these formats remained the joint strategic planning system until the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 compelled a reassessment of planning procedures resulting in the adoption in 1989 of new arrangements vesting sole responsibility for discharging JCS strategic planning functions in the CJCS.[74]

A further consequence of the Korean War buildup was to restore the Joint Chiefs of Staff to a close approximation of the prestige and influence they had enjoyed during and immediately following World War II. With a war in progress, the President needed reliable military advice, and in the aftermath of the Chinese intervention, as MacArthur's views and recommendations became increasingly suspect, Truman turned more and more to the JCS. In fact, the President had been moving in this direction ever since approving a series of reforms in the summer of 1950 to enhance the role of the National Security Council and to improve its coordination with the JCS. Prior to these reforms, the Joint Chiefs had operated on the Council's periphery, with their role confined mainly to commenting on NSC papers referred to them by the Secretary of Defense. Nor had Truman, who had never wanted the NSC in the first place, made more than limited use of it.[75] But with the advent of NSC 68 and the expectation that it would generate additional expenditures, the President decided to upgrade the NSC's capabilities to assess and coordinate programs.[76] In June–July 1950, he approved a reorganization of the NSC staff that included naming former ambassador to Moscow W. Averell Harriman as his special assistant for national security affairs and creating two new interdepartmental advisory bodies—the NSC Senior Staff and a mid-level support group, the Staff Assistants—both with JCS representation. As a result, the Joint Chiefs gained

direct access to the NSC's inner workings and a regular voice in the development of NSC products.[77]

Among the reforms that President Truman ordered were curbs on the number of participants at NSC meetings. Convinced that the presence of too many subordinates inhibited discussion, Truman confined attendance to the Council's statutory members and a handful of senior advisors. Rather than having all the chiefs (including the Commandant of the Marine Corps who acquired limited participation in JCS deliberations in 1952) present, Truman asked that only the CJCS, General Bradley, attend on a regular basis.[78] This practice did not bar the Service chiefs from attending as needed, but it did underscore the Chairman's emerging role as their spokesman and his importance as a key high-level advisor in his own right. Bradley was initially uncomfortable addressing problems from anything other than "a military point of view." But according to Acheson, he gradually came to realize that political, diplomatic, and military issues at the NSC level were often indistinguishable and needed to be dealt with accordingly.[79]

MACARTHUR'S DISMISSAL

Korea was the last war in which the Joint Chiefs were in the chain of command. Under a practice initiated in World War II and reaffirmed by the 1948 Key West agreement, the Service chiefs functioned as executive agents for the JCS. During the Korean War, the Army Chief of Staff, General J. Lawton Collins, served as their executive agent to the Far East Command. It was through him that MacArthur received his orders. But after the Chinese intervention, communications between MacArthur and the JCS became somewhat erratic, and the general's reports were less reliable, requiring Collins to play a more direct and personal role. Collins, soft-spoken with a boyish appearance, was as serious as they came in discharging his duties. A veteran combat commander who had fought in Europe and the Pacific in World War II, Collins was not easily misled or swayed. He visited the theater frequently, toured the battle front, and brought back sound and impartial analyses that the other chiefs and senior policymakers usually found eminently more useful and reliable than MacArthur's often sketchy and slanted reports.

Based on Collins's reports and other information reaching them, the JCS became increasingly skeptical of MarAthur's capacity to discharge his responsibilities. Overly confident after the stunning success of the Inch'on landing, MacArthur was psychologically and militarily unprepared for the setbacks of November–December 1950 brought on by the Chinese intervention. Seeking a freer hand to retaliate, he proposed to bomb targets in Manchuria and to impose a naval blockade against

Communist China. The alternative, he argued, was evacuation of UN forces from Korea. MacArthur never directly requested authority to use atomic weapons, but he implicitly raised the possibility with the JCS on several occasions. He presumably knew of President Truman's decision in the summer of 1950 to stockpile nonnuclear components (bombs minus their nuclear cores) on Guam. Under the current JOEWP, the JCS intended the Guam stockpile for attacks by the Strategic Air Command against Vladivostok and Irkutsk in the event of general war. But at the first signs of Chinese intervention, the Army General Staff started exploring the tactical use of these weapons in or around Korea and sounding out the State Department on the diplomatic ramifications.[80]

The Joint Chiefs sympathized with MacArthur's predicament and did what they could to protect his freedom of action. But after the Chinese intervention, they were under heavy pressure from the White House and the State Department to localize the war and avoid escalating the conflict. Though they had studied the use of nuclear weapons since the war began, they generally agreed that there were too few targets and too few bombs to make a difference unless faced with a looming "major disaster."[81] Furthermore, administration policy stressed international cooperation and collaboration through the UN, where opinion favored the reunification of Korea, but not if it involved taking risks that could widen the war. The British were especially uneasy, as evidenced by Prime Minister Clement R. Attlee's hasty visit to Washington in early December 1950 in response to rumors that the United States was contemplating the use of nuclear weapons in Korea. Having only begun to develop a nuclear capability, the British saw themselves as yet in no position to take on the Soviets, even as part of an American-led effort.[82] Denied permission to launch operations outside the Korean Peninsula, MacArthur became progressively more frustrated and outspoken, and told the press at one point that his orders from the President and the Joint Chiefs were "an enormous handicap, without precedent in military history."[83]

By late January 1951, Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway, USA, the new commander of the Eighth Army, had reenergized UNC forces with a limited offensive that was driving the enemy north. As of mid-March, UN armies were again in possession of Seoul and had established a relatively stable line across Korea in the vicinity of the 38th parallel. In view of the success of Ridgway's campaign, MacArthur became convinced that, despite their superior numbers, the Chinese were far from invincible and could still be driven out of Korea. Acheson, however, saw the situation differently and persuaded Truman that the time was ripe for negotiations, with the aim of restoring the status quo ante.[84] Around the end of March, MacArthur effectively scuttled Acheson's initiative by publicly issuing a virtual

ultimatum that gave the Chinese the choice of an immediate ceasefire or a rapid expansion of the conflict aimed at toppling their regime. MacArthur's statement violated administration policy across the board and set the stage for a showdown with the President. But before the full impact could settle in, another incident occurred—the release on April 5 by House Republican Leader Joseph W. Martin, Jr., of a letter he had recently received from MacArthur urging "maximum counterforce" in Korea and a second front against the Communist Chinese launched from Taiwan. The letter closed with MacArthur's celebrated exhortation: "There is no substitute for victory."[85]

Characterizing MacArthur's letter as the "last straw," Truman moved to relieve him of command on grounds of insubordination.[86] On April 6, 1951, the President met with Acheson, Marshall, Harriman, and Bradley to explore a course of action. Harriman wanted MacArthur's immediate dismissal. But Bradley, deeply distressed, was skeptical whether MacArthur's behavior constituted insubordination, as defined in Army regulations. Buying time, he persuaded Truman to let him discuss the matter with his JCS colleagues as soon as the Army Chief of Staff, General Collins, returned to town.[87]

MacArthur's conduct put the Joint Chiefs in a difficult position. All signs indicated that Truman was going to sack MacArthur. If the chiefs recommended against his relief, they would only be fueling the controversy. In fact, the JCS had lost confidence in MacArthur's leadership and judgment, and wherever feasible were taking steps to work around him. Toward the end of March 1951, they received intelligence that the Soviets had transferred three divisions to Manchuria and were massing aircraft and submarines for a possible attack on Japan or Okinawa. Fearing a major escalation of the war, the Joint Chiefs asked the President to transfer custody of nine nuclear cores from the Atomic Energy Commission to the military for deployment to the western Pacific and to approve an order authorizing CINCFE to carry out retaliatory strikes against enemy air bases in Manchuria and China should the Soviets attack. On April 6 (the same day he met with his senior advisors to discuss MacArthur's future), President Truman approved the draft order and the custody transfer. But instead of placing the bombs under MacArthur's control, he turned them over to the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg. Ordinarily, the JCS would have dispatched the retaliation order immediately to CINCFE. This time, they elected to withhold it and to keep it secret out of concern, as Bradley put it, that MacArthur might "make a premature decision in carrying it out."[88]

The chiefs assembled on Sunday afternoon, April 8, in Bradley's Pentagon office rather than the "Tank" where they conducted official business. Though informal, the proceedings resembled those of a court of inquiry. Weighing the

evidence, they talked for 2 hours. In the end, they concluded that, while MacArthur may have been guilty of poor judgment, the case against him for insubordination did not stand up. Even so, they believed the President would be fully within his rights as Commander in Chief to remove MacArthur in the interest of upholding the principle of civilian control of the military. If the President wanted to fire MacArthur, the JCS would not stand in the way. The next morning Bradley and Secretary Marshall conveyed the chiefs' views to the President. Two days later, on April 11, the White House press office revealed that MacArthur was being recalled and that Ridgway would replace him as CINCFE and commander of UN forces.[89]

MacArthur at this time was still a popular and widely respected figure in the United States—a national hero in some circles—and his firing provoked a good deal of outrage. A congressional investigation ensued and for the second time in as many years the Joint Chiefs found themselves explaining and defending their actions on Capitol Hill. This time, however, the hearings were closed to the public. As the inquiry progressed and the substance of its proceedings became known through leaks and edited transcripts, popular support for MacArthur began to sag. The Korean War was dragging on longer than anyone expected and, with casualties and costs continuing to mount, MacArthur's repeated calls for "victory" envisioned sacrifices that fewer and fewer Americans deemed worthwhile. More in line with majority opinion was the administration's determination to seek a negotiated settlement. Attempting to put the matter in perspective, General Bradley told Congress that MacArthur's prescription for victory would have invited an open-ended conflict on the Asian mainland. Had MacArthur's advice prevailed, Bradley added, the United States would have found itself in "the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy."[90]

EUROPE—FIRST AGAIN

Following MacArthur's dismissal, the Korean War gradually receded from the forefront of the Joint Chiefs' agenda, where a backlog of other defense and security problems, mainly relating to Europe, clamored for attention. More attuned to the thinking in Washington than MacArthur had been, Ridgway knew that the President and the JCS wanted him to limit the conflict and avoid any actions that might provoke "a worldwide conflagration."[91] Abandoning the quest for Korean reunification, the Joint Chiefs issued new orders on June 1, 1951, that essentially instructed Ridgway to maintain the status quo. Though he remained free to mount operations to protect his forces and to keep pressure on the enemy, he was to restrict his

activities to a defensive line in the vicinity of the 38th parallel while military talks explored a ceasefire.[92]

The decision to settle for a stalemate in Korea reflected not only the realities of a war gone sour, but also the deeply held belief of many in the Truman administration, Secretary of State Acheson foremost among them, that vital American interests were more at jeopardy in Europe than in Asia. In Acheson's view, the dynamics of the Cold War centered in Europe; it followed that America's "principal antagonist" was the Soviet Union, not Communist China.[93] The Joint Chiefs believed that Acheson's assessment underestimated China's potential threat and capabilities. But they agreed that, owing to limited resources, the United States should not allow Cold War conflicts in places like Korea and Indochina to become the catalysts for a general war with China.[94] Adopting a frame of reference much like the one that had guided their predecessors in World War II, they accorded the defense of Europe first priority.

Though it predated the Korean War, the European defense buildup had barely begun when fighting broke out in Korea in June 1950. Bureaucratic delays in initiating the Mutual Defense Assistance Program and prolonged debate over NATO's organizing defense plan had slowed European rearmament to a crawl. The basic blueprint was a strategic concept (DC 6/1), adopted by NATO's governing body, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), in January 1950. Written to JCS specifications, DC 6/1 was almost a mirror image of U.S. defense policy at the time, with strategic bombardment provided by the Strategic Air Command (and augmented by British Bomber Command) forming the first line of defense and retaliation. Though the NAC decided against including any specific reference to nuclear weapons, their use was clearly implied. In effect, NATO's members now fell under the extended deterrence protection of the American "nuclear umbrella." The European members' main contribution would be to supply the "hard core" of the Alliance's conventional ground, air, and coastal defense forces. Though the Europeans went along with this division of labor, it was an arrangement that few particularly liked since it made no allowance for them to participate in the command, control, or targeting of the strategic forces that formed their primary protection. Not without justification, some Europeans worried that they were now more than ever the potential target of a Soviet nuclear attack.[95]

Before the Communist invasion of South Korea, the Joint Chiefs had neither the inclination nor the resources to mount an active defense of Europe. Exploratory efforts to incorporate such a defense into U.S. emergency war plans in the spring of 1949 resulted in such high projected costs that the JCS dropped the idea. The war plan they later adopted (OFFTACKLE) called for the evacuation of the two U.S.

divisions on occupation duty in Germany and Austria at the first sign of a large-scale Soviet attack. Aware that the planned withdrawal undercut the U.S. commitment to NATO, Army planners pressed for "retardation bombing" of advancing Soviet forces as part of the strategic air offensive, to give the Europeans a better chance of defending themselves and U.S. forces a better chance of getting out. Air Force and Navy planners viewed the Army's proposal as a diversion of resources from the primary objective of destroying the Soviet Union's war-making capabilities. But through persistence, the Army's position prevailed. Retardation bombing was included, both in the OFFTACKLE plan and in a revised targeting scheme adopted by the Joint Chiefs in August 1950. Even so, the immediate benefits for NATO were uncertain. Retardation bombing remained at the bottom of the JCS priorities list and, because planes and bombs were limited, SAC balked at allocating the necessary assets to anything other than strategic objectives. Bombing military-industrial targets in the Soviet Union, SAC planners insisted, would in the long run retard the Soviet advance as much as anything.[96]

After the outbreak of the Korean War, as funding constraints eased, the JCS reassessed their position and agreed not only to expand the scale and scope of SAC's operations in Europe, but also to bolster NATO's conventional posture by enlarging the U.S. commitment in Germany by up to four divisions. In July 1950, at the same time he ordered the deployment of nonnuclear components to Guam, President Truman approved a similar deployment to facilities in the United Kingdom and accepted a JCS recommendation to send two additional B–29 wings to the UK, tripling the size of the in-country medium bomber force. A secret agreement reached earlier, in April 1950, between the U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom and Britain's Air Ministry cleared the way for the deployment.[97] By January 1951, JCS planners had earmarked 60 nuclear bombs for NATO retardation purposes. However, SAC commanders winced at even this limited allocation of assets. As one put it, SAC was "not designed for close or general support of ground forces." Rather, it was an organization dedicated to delivering "an atomic offensive against the heart of an enemy wherever that may happen to be."[98]

Having established broad criteria for target selection, the Joint Chiefs left it up to the new NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), General Dwight D. Eisenhower, USA, and his air deputy, General Lauris Norstad, USAF, to develop a working arrangement with the Strategic Air Command. A veteran of the roles and missions quarrels after World War II, Norstad easily perceived that unless the Air Force paid closer attention to retardation bombing and other nonstrategic missions, it would open opportunities for the Army and the Navy to develop their own "tactical" nuclear capabilities and challenge the Air Force's dominant position

in atomic warfare. Eventually persuaded to cooperate, the SAC commander, General Curtis E. LeMay, met in late 1951 with Eisenhower and Norstad in Europe to coordinate their respective roles in "retardation operations." The agreement reached allowed SACEUR to determine the military significance and priority of targets, but vested command and control of operations in a new Air Force headquarters element in Europe known as SAC ZEBRA, which dealt only with Norstad and designated U.S. officers. Based on this accord, the Joint Chiefs authorized Eisenhower to prepare atomic annexes for NATO war plans and to carry out independent exercises simulating the use of atomic weapons in support of NATO strategy. In May 1953, SACEUR and SAC conducted the first combined test of their ability to coordinate an atomic operation.[99]

Equally, if not more, frustrating for the Joint Chiefs were the difficulties they encountered in trying to shore up NATO's conventional strength. While atomic weapons and strategic airpower were still the West's most formidable means of retaliation, U.S. nuclear capabilities were as yet too limited to protect Western Europe from an all-out Soviet invasion. As General Bradley put it, "We don't have enough atomic weapons to plaster all of Europe."[100] The initial (pre-Korean) NATO war plan was DC 13, the Medium Term Defense Plan (MTDP), built on the principles in the NAC-approved strategic concept. An ambitious 4-year effort, the MTDP received official sanction in the spring of 1950 and called for the creation of a largely European army of 90 Active and Reserve divisions whose job would be to hold attacking Soviet forces as far to the east as possible in Central Europe. Skeptical whether the plan was economically feasible, the Joint Chiefs urged NATO planners to take a closer look at their requirements and to explore a "radical revision downward" of force goals. But since few NATO leaders took these numbers seriously, treating them instead as a "first approximation," there was little discernible incentive for a more realistic assessment. Planning and preparations for a NATO buildup proceeded at a leisurely pace.[101]

Concern that the Communist attack against Korea might be the prelude to a similar invasion of Western Europe finally prompted a reevaluation of NATO plans and timetables. Not only did it galvanize the European Allies—Britain and France, especially—into stepping up the tempo of their rearmament programs, but it also led them to make new requests for additional military assistance, an increase in U.S. troop strength in Europe, and the creation of an integrated high command. A condition of key importance to the Joint Chiefs in acting on these measures was that the Europeans in return accept the rearmament of West Germany, which the JCS had been studying for some time. Though fully aware that German rearmament was bound to be controversial, the chiefs had come to the conclusion that a

German contribution was unavoidable if NATO was to fill the gaps in its Medium Term Defense Plan and confront the Soviets with a credible defense in Central Europe. Anticipating European resistance, the State Department proposed a North Atlantic or European defense force incorporating German forces under direct Allied command.[102]

Insisting on an all-or-nothing approach, the Joint Chiefs persuaded Secretary of State Acheson to adopt a "one package" negotiating stand that linked the creation of the combined command and increases in U.S. troop strength to European acceptance of German rearmament and progress toward meeting MTDP force goals. Presented to the NAC in September 1950, the U.S. package provoked a livid reaction from the French, who were as irritated by the rigidity of the American proposal as by its contents.[103] Given NATO's need for manpower and materials, German rearmament was only a matter of time. But for many (if not most) Europeans, it was too soon after the War to accept such a prospect. While the French showed a flicker of interest in State's European army concept, the idea needed to gestate and over the next several years it reappeared in several guises, the most well-known being the French-sponsored Pleven Plan, which eventually gave rise to the European Defence Community (EDC). Meanwhile, the only large-scale effort to put Germans back in uniform and under arms was that initiated by the Soviets in the eastern zone.

Unable to achieve a breakthrough on German rearmament, the Joint Chiefs bided their time and turned their attention to the appointment of a supreme Allied commander and the creation of an international command structure. Authorized at the September 1950 NAC meeting, these measures were the first concrete steps toward transforming NATO from a paper alliance into a functioning military organization. The key to the entire enterprise was Eisenhower's willingness to serve as NATO's military head, with Britain's Field-Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery as his deputy. Recommended by the Joint Chiefs in October 1950 and announced that December, Eisenhower's appointment as SACEUR placed him back in a job comparable in many ways to the one he held in World War II, but without the same sweeping authority or resources. From offices hastily constructed on the outskirts of Paris, Eisenhower presided over the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), a multinational headquarters staff charged with planning and coordinating the land and air defense of Western Europe. Though Eisenhower took his orders from the NATO Military Committee via the Standing Group, a select interallied body of senior officers, he also communicated regularly with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense.[104]

Based in Norfolk, Virginia, a separate supreme Allied commander, SACLANT, handled naval planning for the North Atlantic. Though authorized by the NAC in

December 1950, the Atlantic Command did not become active until nearly a year and a half later owing to a bitter contest for control between the British Chiefs of Staff and the JCS. The resolution of this issue in favor of the JCS position was as much a reflection of Britain's demise as a world power as it was NATO's heavy dependence on the United States. Clearly, it was a blow to British pride that needed assuaging. Awarding the Channel Command (ACCHAN) overseeing air and naval operations in the English Channel to the British in February 1952 was meant to serve this purpose. In 1953, the British also received the NATO Mediterranean Command (CINCAFMED), headquartered at Malta. Established as part of SHAPE and not, as the British hoped, as a third supreme command, CINCAFMED had limited assets and authority and exercised no control over the U.S. Sixth Fleet, the most powerful naval force in the area.[105]

Under Eisenhower's guidance and energizing presence, the NATO buildup in Europe gathered momentum quickly. From a force of 15 divisions (in varying degrees of readiness) and fewer than 1,000 aircraft in April 1951, NATO grew to 35 active and reserve divisions and nearly 3,000 planes by the end of the year. During the same time, Congress increased funding for military aid, training for European forces improved, and there were combined field maneuvers to test coordination.[106] Perhaps most important of all, in April 1951, following the "Great Debate" on Capitol Hill, the Senate adopted a resolution sanctioning the deployment of four additional U.S. divisions to Europe, in effect sealing the American commitment under the "transatlantic bargain." Eisenhower had hoped for an infusion of up to 20 American divisions and seemed let down when neither Secretary of Defense Marshall nor the Joint Chiefs would support his request. Aware of Eisenhower's disappointment, the JCS advised him in May 1951 that they were working on plans to make up to 14 divisions available to NATO in an emergency, but cautioned that these numbers were for planning purposes and did not constitute an allocation to SHAPE.[107]

Equally important to NATO's future were Eisenhower's efforts to develop a more coherent strategy for Europe's defense. During his tenure as acting JCS Chairman in 1949, Eisenhower had discussed this problem at length with the Joint Chiefs and, since then, had steadily refined his views. The plan he proposed—a "forward strategy" designated MC 14/1 when formally adopted in December 1952—aimed at blocking invading Soviet forces and stabilizing military ground action as far to the east as possible with a strong conventional defense. NATO's last line of defense would be along the Rhine-Ijssel. Air and naval forces operating from the North Sea and Mediterranean would then hit the invaders "awfully hard from both flanks." The admission into NATO in 1952 of Greece and Turkey—two countries with

little in common other than their geographic proximity and antipathy for one another—was meant in large part to bolster this strategy.[108]

The main difference between NATO's initial strategic concept of 1949–1950 and Eisenhower's forward strategy was the increased emphasis on defense by conventional means. Though Eisenhower would not rule out the use of nuclear weapons to augment NATO firepower and delay Soviet forces from advancing, it was well known within the Alliance that the smaller members (Denmark, Norway, and the Benelux countries) were extremely uneasy over the prospect of being caught in a nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union. For those countries, a war involving the use of nuclear weapons on their territory could mean annihilation. By stressing the role of conventional forces and each country's contributions, Eisenhower sought to ease those anxieties and give the Allies a united frame of reference and stronger sense of common purpose.[109]

In assessing NATO's prospects for implementing the forward strategy, the Joint Chiefs believed that Alliance members possessed adequate actual and potential resources "to discourage, if not deter, aggression in Western Europe."[110] They were less sure, however, whether the Europeans had the political will to support and sustain a rearmament effort much beyond the current level. Studies by various NATO fact-finding and advisory bodies raised similar questions, giving rise to speculation that the Europeans put their economic welfare ahead of security. As a result, the JCS were uneasy over the chances of a successful defense, and toward the end of 1951 they adopted contingency plans separate from NATO's that made provision for a possible retreat by U.S. forces from the Rhine to the Pyrenees and evacuation to the United Kingdom via Cotentin-Cherbourg in the event of a NATO collapse. Though Eisenhower was privy to these plans, the JCS insisted that they not be shown to anyone at SHAPE other than U.S. personnel since they clearly conflicted with NATO strategy.[111]

Whether the Joint Chiefs seriously intended to carry through with the evacuation of U.S. forces in an emergency is unclear. The logistics alone were daunting, and it was unclear what would happen to U.S. dependents. More than likely, these plans were meant to "leak" and serve notice to the Europeans in a subtle yet convincing way that they should not take the United States for granted and expect U.S. forces to carry the main burden of defending Europe. The JCS wanted the Europeans to understand that they needed to shoulder more responsibility for their own security by stepping up their rearmament and by accepting a German contribution to NATO.

Gaining the cooperation of the French was hardest of all. Of France's 15 army divisions, 10 were tied down fighting the Communist Viet Minh insurgency in

Indochina. Implying that what American military planners wanted was excessive, the French government suggested a deal: cooperation on German rearmament in exchange for increased American aid to cover more of the cost of the Indochina war and to guarantee France a military force in Europe on a par with Germany's. Eventually, Washington's acceptance of this offer would lead to a huge jump in U.S. security support assistance to France and additional aid underwriting over half the French war effort against the Viet Minh. But it was a price the Joint Chiefs and the Truman administration were happy to pay if it would bring the German rearmament question to a favorable resolution and bolster the U.S. strategic position in the Far East at the same time.[112]

Matters came to a head in late February 1952 at the North Atlantic Council's Lisbon meeting, which resulted in three major actions: the admission of Greece and Turkey into NATO, thus potentially increasing the conventional force base; the affirmation of NATO force-level objectives for 1954 comparable to those in the MTDP; and a breakthrough in negotiations on a continental European Defense Community under NATO command, with a German contribution of 12 divisions. To ease the financial strain of the buildup, the NAC agreed that less expensive reserve units could make up the bulk of NATO's divisions. Yet even with these relaxed requirements and German rearmament, the Joint Chiefs remained skeptical about the Alliance's capacity to meet its objectives. Within the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff, the operating assumption was that NATO would do well to achieve 80 percent of the Lisbon force goals.[113]

An important postscript to the Lisbon Conference was the signing of the ill-fated Treaty of Paris in May 1952. Symbolic of the evolving Franco-German rapprochement, the treaty's stated purpose was to pave the way for creation of the EDC and, within it, a rearmed West Germany.[114] Though the JCS regarded the treaty as a step in the right direction, they found it to be of no immediate help for filling the gaps in NATO's defenses, which only seemed to widen as the year progressed. Faced with balance of payments deficits, declining industrial production, and rising unemployment, the Europeans treated their economic difficulties as far more urgent and worrisome than falling behind on their defense obligations.

A further blow to NATO's fortunes was Eisenhower's departure as SACEUR in April 1952, and the arrival of his successor, General Matthew B. Ridgway, a month later. Ridgway was the first American officer to serve in what became a routine dual capacity—as the military head of NATO through his role as SACEUR, and as the U.S. Commander in Chief, Europe (USCINCEUR). Though highly regarded as a battlefield commander, Ridgway lacked not only Eisenhower's prestige but also his tact and feel for coalition diplomacy. At SHAPE, he alienated many Europeans

by surrounding himself with a mostly American staff. With Eisenhower's departure, Field Marshal Montgomery recalled: "The crusading spirit disappeared. There was the sensation, difficult to describe, of a machine which was running down."[115]

NATO, in brief, was at a crossroads. Despite signs of substantial progress since the Korean War erupted, much remained to be done if the Alliance were to become a credible and effective bulwark against the Soviet Union. According to General Hastings Ismay, NATO's first Secretary General, the Alliance still had only 18 ready divisions by late 1953, half the number called for in the Lisbon goals, facing an estimated 30 Russian divisions in Eastern Europe.[116] Thus far, the burden had fallen most heavily on the United States to provide much of the military power and arms aid to give NATO substance, and to show leadership to set the Alliance on course. While the Joint Chiefs had considerable experience with coalition warfare in World War II, they never had to deal with such problems in peacetime or under an alliance system comprised of so many diverse interests as they faced in NATO. Adjusting took time and would, in fact, prove to be one of the most difficult and continuing Cold War challenges the JCS faced.

The Korean War period was a crucial turning point for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. While it confirmed and strengthened their high-level advisory duties, it also resulted in institutional changes, at the NSC especially, that thrust them and their organization into the mainstream of the policy process. Though not as powerful and influential as they were in World War II, the Joint Chiefs were again at the center of decision. Most important of all was the emergence of the CJCS as their principal representative and spokesman. Functioning in a de facto role that went beyond his official job description, he was a key advisor to the Secretary of Defense, the President, and the NSC in his own right. Much of the enhanced authority and influence that the Chairman—and by extension, the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff—came to enjoy during the Korean War years was the result of General Bradley's presence. Quiet and thoughtful, he projected a common sense approach to problems and a thoroughly professional image that helped overcome the chiefs' reputation for petty quarreling and parochialism in the aftermath of World War II.

Above all, the Joint Chiefs had begun to find their niche and to create for themselves a new institutional role more adapted to Cold War realities. No longer the architects of grand strategy as they had been in World War II, the JCS were part of an interdepartmental "team," functioning within a policy process increasingly dominated by interagency deliberations through the various mechanisms of the National Security Council. Driven by the Soviet A-bomb and the war in Korea, a new consensus had emerged, both at home and abroad, that the containment of communism required a heavier investment in military forces and related programs

than anyone had imagined. Not the most efficient organization for dealing with these problems, the Joint Chiefs as a rule worked well enough together, overcoming or papering over their differences as the need arose to keep the military buildup on track. Whether the chiefs would continue to perform at this level once the pressure relaxed and a more "peacetime" atmosphere returned remained to be seen.

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