“The Enduring Alliance”
How NATO was Created Using History as a Tool for Policymakers

Peter Killea Asbury
Fitzgerald

History Department
Dr. James Lewis

A Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts at Kalamazoo College
2023
Introduction:

History is an essential guide to understanding the present and shaping future events. Historical patterns emerge that can be used in determining the best course of action for policymakers in the present. Historians Richard Neustadt and Richard May, in their book Thinking in Time, presented a compelling methodology for how decision-makers can best use history in thinking about challenges they are confronting. Furthermore, whether they knew it or not “Washington decision-makers actually used history in their decisions, at least for advocacy or for comfort, whether they knew any or not.” [need a citation here?] Other historians in a more modern context, like Niall Ferguson and Graham Allison—Allison recently authored a book titled Destined for War, which examined the possibility of the United States going to war with China based upon historical data. These two academics advocated for historians to act as advisors to presidents, using the field of applied history to take a current predicament and try to identify analogues in the past. This paper will use the concept of applied history to explain how policymakers, the public, and journalists in the post-World War II era, sought to understand and explain the concept of Western European unification. This era, sometimes labeled the “golden generation” for foreign policymaking, and its practitioners being labeled the “Wise Men,” is a fundamental turning point in American foreign policy; the institutions constructed at this time remain the foundation upon which American foreign policy continues to be built. Nevertheless, this period was fraught with disagreement and improvisation. How did policymakers and politicians justify their decision to expand the United States’s power through institutions like NATO? There were a plethora of methods; this paper will focus on the employment of historical
argumentation, analogy, and myths, used to argue for and against U.S. engagement with the post-war security architecture in Europe.

After World War II ended, policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic focused on how to rebuild Europe after destruction on an unimaginable level. In the United States, most proponents of European unity envisioned a Europe rebuilt in the form of an economic union that mirrored the formation of an American federation. As the Cold War gathered pace, European integration was seen not only necessary for humanitarian purposes, but would also aid the United States in its increasingly tense rivalry with the Soviet Union. The construction of a Western Europe that was economically self-sufficient and militarily cohesive, would effectively deter the Soviet Union from serious consideration of armed aggression. The Brussels Pact, the precursor to the North Atlantic Treaty, had been the European answer towards the creation of an inter-European military pact, one that the United States supported but had no intention of joining. Initially American policymakers believed that the Marshall Plan (American funds to rebuild Europe) and the Truman Doctrine (Truman's famous speech outlining American policies abroad in the postwar) would be sufficient for Soviet deterrence, however, the year 1948 proved to be a calamitous one, where events, rather than negotiations, drove action towards American commitment to Europe.

The United States faced a difficult choice after the end of the Second World War: to extricate itself from world affairs and reorient American foreign policy in isolationism, or to continue the internationalism of President Roosevelt and to establish a new world order. The resolve to assume responsibility for a task of this magnitude was far from assured. Policymakers had to confront a world that had been ravaged by World War II;
only the United States, having emerged from the war *stronger* economically, militarily, and politically, had the ability to lead the West. Given the scale of destruction, immediate concerns arose regarding the survival of people, rather than the construction of ideological and competing blocs. However, visions of a working relationship with the Soviet Union soon soured, with pronounced policy differences, especially after the ascension of Harry Truman to the presidency in April 1945. Truman took a more hawkish attitude towards the Soviets than Roosevelt had, and competition soon became the impetus behind U.S. policy; given the ideological competition with the Soviet Union, the administration soon formulated the policy of containment that would be the guiding doctrine for the duration of the Cold War.

Achievements like the Truman Doctrine, the North Atlantic Treaty, and the Marshall Plan were not foreordained. In fact, despite the reverence for these policy achievements today, yet the administration was far from bipartisan. Journalists like Walter Lippmann, writing in *The Atlantic*, condemned the Truman administration. The United States, he wrote, has “fought the battle of freedom, nobly, perhaps, but that we have not fought it well.” Lippman pointedly observed, “It is most significant, I think, that in this country and in Great Britain, the men who have been trying to settle the war are a different set of men from those who conducted the war. This is most unusual.” The lack of military experience among postwar policymakers helped explain why, to Lippmann, that, “the peacemakers have had no conception of a general settlement and so great a misconception of the strategical situation which the war had produced.”

Lippmann was particularly critical of the United States’ blunders in early peace

---

3 ibid, 38.
settlements in regards to Eastern Europe. The United States was at a "great disadvantage" that its foremost strategists "had no personal experience and responsibility" for the conduct of war, and "a great misconception of the strategical situation." Foreign policymaking in the Truman administration was messy, fractious, and partisan in the early Cold War.

The Cold War required progressive and oftentimes improvisational thinking on behalf of policymakers to adjust to changing dynamics on the Eurasian continent. Initially, the administration’s intent was to construct a "world-wide rule of reason—to create an enduring peace under the guidance of God." Yet, despite these lofty goals, one reason for American success in the Cold War was adaptation to the reality of competition with the Soviet Union. The United States could not unilaterally develop a liberal world in its image given the growing standoff with the Soviet Union. Initially, officials were captivated by the notion of global peace espoused by President Woodrow Wilson’s version of liberalism of the early twentieth century. Wilson’s vision was essentially the only template that provided guidance to policymakers in the construction of a liberal world order. After World War I, Wilson had argued that "preventing the next great conflagration required transforming international affairs. America must stymie the forces of instability and aggression by leading a liberal trading system, promoting democracy and self determination, and erecting an international organization that would provide collective security." Policymakers had drawn on these ideas and channeled them into postwar institutions, primarily the United Nations, but also economic institutions like

---

4 ibid, 38-39.
Bretton Woods. Wilson had envisioned the League of Nations to be a “general association of nations...formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.” The U.N. did what Wilson could not, and came to symbolize the great hopes in the construction of a new global order that would lessen the possibility of another world war. Despite these lofty goals, American-Soviet relations prevented meaningful progress on solving global issues. Thus, for America and the West, “building a strong, cohesive Western community involved ratcheting back America’s wartime ambitions: the United States could not create ‘half a world until it ‘gave up on transforming the whole world.”

Soon after the war, it became apparent that while Europe was being divided by the great powers into spheres of interest, the immediacy and scale of postwar destruction was the immediate challenge in the postwar period, and the circumstances in Europe were dire. As President Truman said in a statement in 1946, “only through superhuman efforts can mass starvation be prevented,” making survival, not global reconfiguration, the immediate challenge. To stabilize and rebuild Europe, America’s primary concern in European affairs became the economic rebuilding of Europe. To understand the needs of Europe and to conceive of the best policies going forward, policymakers turned to history. American elites conceived of the rebuilding of Europe as similar to the American revolution and the alignment of the thirteen colonies into a cohesive political and economic unit. The Marshall Plan, designed by George Kennan, was seen by American

---

officials and journalists as the best way to unite Europe. If Europe were economically
united, it would then allow for political, and perhaps, eventually, militarily, organizing
Europe into one. However, it soon became clear, first to European officials and then to
Americans, that solely economic aid would not revive the battered continent. European
officials acknowledged the benefits of the Marshall Plan, but made it clear that without
security guarantees that it would be useless if the continent were constantly in fear of
invasion.

Given the change in American security considerations, the United States was
forced to reconsider its security obligations and areas of interest; the United States, after
the end of the war, became involved in a security guarantee with the countries of the
Western Hemisphere. The security alliance was called the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro. The
Treaty of Rio had deep historical resonance given the interventionist history of American
foreign policy in Central and South America. American involvement in postwar Europe
drew heavily upon the Rio Treaty, which itself was a product of the Monroe Doctrine.
Some even claimed that the North Atlantic Treaty was simply the extension of the
Monroe Doctrine. Whatever the case may be, it was clear that the geographical
considerations regarding America's security were far broader after World War II,
especially given the attack on Pearl Harbor.

To address postwar American and European security concerns, policymakers on
both sides of the Atlantic conceived of new regional organizations that would be
organized under the auspices of the United Nations. However, it is clear that few of the
policymakers involved in the genesis of the North Atlantic Alliance would have
envisioned what it ultimately became. The divergence in intention came in 1951 with the
stationing of additional U.S. soldiers in Germany, which added to the number of troops already there for occupation. This development made the United States the dominant power of NATO, making it crucial that the United States remained an active player in the alliance without upsetting the general power balance on the European continent. This was certainly not the original intention; as explored later, American purpose in the Alliance was to remain involved in the revival of Europe. However, due to the broader patterns of the Cold War, it remained untenable for the U.S. to be both engaged in Europe and maintain its isolationist tendencies.

Despite attempts to establish credibility with the U.N. and the great hopes of preventing future wars on the scale which the world had just witnessed, relations with the Soviet Union soon soured, with consequential disagreements emerging over postwar policy. The business of the U.N. was stymied by Soviet intransigence to U.S. policy. The United States was able to achieve this competitive advantage against the Soviets by “transcending the rhythms of competition within the Western world.” This strategy, of creating a world freed from the anarchy of international politics, allowed the United States to seize command of international politics in a competitive international environment. Originally articulated by George Kennan in his analysis of Soviet foreign policy, in the “Long Telegram,” Kennan’s famous cable sent from the U.S. embassy in Moscow to the State Department’s headquarters explained that the Kremlin’s “neurotic” view of world affairs was rooted in Russia’s history; Russian rulers, Kennan explained, have generally held a tenuous grasp over the Russian people, fearing that their legitimacy was “archaic in form, fragile and artificial in its psychological foundation,” making Kremlin policies insular and antagonistic towards contact with the west, fearing the result

\[10\] ibid, 30.
of Russians learning about the outside world, or if the outside learned about the world within.\textsuperscript{11} In considering historical Russian geopolitics, it helped him, and U.S. policymakers, to understand the type of regime they were designing policies to counteract. For Truman and his foreign policy team, the task fell to them to put containment into coherent policies that would address the problems which Kennan had so masterfully described. During the Cold War, America pursued a strategy intent on constructing "situations of strength."\textsuperscript{12}

**Chapter 1: European Postwar Unity**

Despite the surge in support for Western European unity, the question remained, what did American and European policymakers, journalists, the public and intellectuals, think Europe should look like? There was no single idea regarding how Europe should best be organized; "The very fact that vague terms such as union, unification, unity, or even federation,"\textsuperscript{13} led to different proponents of union each believing their policy ideas were being advanced, and caused confusion regarding what and how far the idea of Western unity would go. Conceptions of European unity were inchoate, with ideas coming from the press, the official sphere, and the public, in both the United States and Europe. In the United States and Europe, the term, a “United States of Europe” became a shorthand for what European and American policymakers and intellectuals envisioned Europe would resemble after reconstruction, yet this term was subject to wildly different interpretations. Irrespective of the divide between the United States and Europe regarding

\textsuperscript{11} George, Kennan. "George Kennan's 'Long Telegram,'” *Woodrow Wilson Center,* February 22, 1946.
\textsuperscript{12} Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York, 1969), 378.
\textsuperscript{13} Kaplan, 52.
how Europe should be federalized, there were enormous divisions within Europe itself, socially and politically, regarding how European unity should be realized. There were many conferences and summits in the postwar period where advocates of a federalized Europe met to discuss unity, yet, rather than display unity, these meetings highlighted "the diversity of principles," the only common thread among them was their desire to "create a united Europe."\(^{14}\) Despite the various groups and approaches to European unification, there emerged four general approaches to the subject. The oldest conception was the formation of a new concert of power in Europe, hoping to "combine the existing European states" so as to present a "united front" especially directed towards the Soviet Union. This movement's dominant principles concentrated on political-military relations, rather than economic or social. This includes ideas put forth by prominent statesman, like Winston Churchill, who proposed in 1946 that the continent of Europe, ravaged economically and politically, should assemble as a "Western bloc designed to further the ideal of world peace within the framework and under the guardianship of the United Nations," in the form of a "United States of Europe.\(^{15}\) The second general approach was the formation of Europe primarily through economic means; European integration would come through a "customs union" or another form "system affecting an economic rationalization of the continent." A third approach, advocated by thinkers like Pierre de Lanux, a French diplomat and author, who wanted a Europe "that would be committed to the task of preserving world peace and civilization, only achievable through the creation of a strong, European federation for the enforcement of order, and suggested a

\(^{14}\) Ernst B. Haas, "The United States of Europe." *Political Science Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (December) 1948, 530.

\(^{15}\) David, Anderson, "Churchill Urges Federated Europe," *New York Times*, May 10, 1946, 10,
permanent European police force of some 50,000 men, as well as a European air force." This proposal would have created a centralized European state and instituted sweeping social and economic reforms. Finally, the fourth approach sought the exact opposite to the conception of a centralized European state; rather, this was favored by more conservative social groups which desired a Europe organized along communal and spiritual lines. These competing proposals each had their merits to European policymakers, however, it was Britain that became the spearhead for European unity projects, led by Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary.

The Americans concept of unity was related to the United Nations and global organization, rather than specifically to Europe. One such group, Americans United for World Government, in 1947, had 20,000 members and was led by prominent statesmen and journalists like Mrs. J. Borden Harriman, former minister to Norway, and Raymond Swing, an influential journalist. These organizations blamed the usage of the veto power by the security council powers as inhibiting cooperation and unity. Another group, the World Federalists, combined with the Americans United for World Government into one organization with the goal of convoking a constitutional convention to amend the United States Constitution, so as to form a world government. Global federalists drew from the founding of the United States in articulating their ideas; “We were a small island of liberty in a despotic world 173 years ago when our Declaration of Independence was issued...But this July 4th...we have become the leaders in a fight for a free and peaceful world...this means our own freedom at home has become dependent on the progress of

---

liberty everywhere.” The American Revolution was frequently cited in understanding how to reconstruct Europe, but depended very much on what an interested party was arguing for or against. There were other invocations from outside of government regarding European unity; journalist Clarence K. Streit, who’s 1939 book, *Union Now*, advocated for the joining of Anglo-American democracies, and which after the war came to encompass fifteen North Atlantic democracies. This model was based upon the American federal union of 1787, and the “framers of the American Constitution.”

Notably, some American isolationist organizations took issue with conceptions of this American role; prominent organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution, who opposed world government or an Atlantic union. In a resolution, they asserted that the American conception of limited government and the advocacy for global government were “two philosophies opposed each other in political, economic, military and moral thinking” and urged their members “to inform themselves and to use their influence wherever possible that freedom may be preserved without the sacrifice of the dignity of the United States.” This resolution used Americans’ fear of expansive government as a rhetorical device in a global context. Large government, in any fashion, would lead to a degradation of American values. The basis of this was traditional conservative ideology in an American sense, yet, as is so often at this time, there was a coalition of ideologies who feared American involvement in adventurism abroad. Involvement in transnational institutional schemes would lead to a “federation of the democracies might lead to an even sharper division of the world between two blocs of

nations.” Like American involvement in World War II, groups against American foreign policy converged to form opposition.

Ch. 2 Uniting Europe Economically

There were prominent Americans who believed in the creation of institutions that superseded the state; many had believed that the U.N. would achieve some of the results desired by global or regional federalists, yet it soon became apparent after its conception that the U.N., despite resting upon great hopes, would likely be unable to achieve this. American policymakers were thinking primarily in economic terms; the Economic Cooperation Act was the result of the policy of uniting Europe through economic means, which not only passed the scrutiny of Congress, but promised in its execution to promote the building of a new Europe with a continental economy rather than merely national economies. The American image of the future was a “United States of Europe.”

Economic integration was critical in fomenting a sense of European identity, voluntarily choosing to join the United States’ plan, in contrast to the Soviets who were imposing economic conditions on Eastern Europe. Rather, economic unity would “depend on just how far the European nations themselves are willing and able to go in integrating their economy into larger units with mass production and mass markets at the sacrifice of an economic nationalism aiming at self-sufficiency... Europe must federate or perish.”

Greater unity would mirror the United States’ formation into a cohesive political unit during the American revolution; American policymakers sought to promote European integration, without militarily involving the United States. The Marshall Plan, unlike

---

pursuing a security pact with Western Europe, was not directed against "any country or
document but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos." To meet the new rhetoric
of the Truman administration after the formulation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947,
journalists offered ideas of their own regarding how to achieve European integration,
demonstrating how American elites were conceiving integration fundamentally through
economic means. Lippmann proposed a European economic union underwritten by
American aid that could forestall economic collapse. His idea was American aid
administered by European "supranational institutions, [that] would pave the way for the
eventual economic integration of Europe. The old European state system would be
replaced by a Europeanized version of American federalism. Lippmann was not alone in
viewing economic integration as the solution to Europe’s woes. In an article from 1946 in
the New York Times, an economic federation of Europe under French leadership was
advocated as a means of solving the Continent’s problems…The report, called “An
Economic United States of Europe Now,” argued precisely that: a Europe modeled after
the federal model of the United States.23

Examples of this analogy were apparent in American society during the early
postwar world, too, not just in elite circles. The play, “The Great Rehearsal” came out in
the fall of 1947, recounting the founding of the Constitution of the United States. Its
popularity lay not solely in its nationalist message, but also served as an analogy to
reconstructing the postwar world. The play, a reviewer wrote, should teach Americans
“how to learn to think internationally, not nationally,” and should serve “as a history and
an analogy.”24 The desire of constructing a Europe based upon American federalism

could be done “only by Europe itself,” as Senator William Fulbright argued.\textsuperscript{25} The embodiment of this conception of American thinking was George Kennan, one of the primary architects of the United States’ European policy and the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan demonstrated Kennan’s principles of belief which were that European recovery should be predicated upon economic integration and European self-reliance; “Military union should not be the starting point. It should flow from the political, economic and spiritual union—not vice versa.”\textsuperscript{26}

Integration had to address the problem of Germany in order to be successful, and there were disagreements between the U.S and its former wartime allies on how to do so. Secretary of State Marshall and those in the State Department believed that France and the United Kingdom’s continued antagonism towards Germany was shortsighted. Kennan, in a January 1948 memo to Secretary Marshall, stated that Germany in “any European union” would be of “prime importance.” Britain and France’s actions towards Germany, he believed, were “a poor way to prepare the ground” for eventual German integration into European institutions.\textsuperscript{27} Senator Fulbright, former President Herbert Hoover, and other American policymakers, believed that European integration could not begin with the “enforced dismemberment of Germany.” Doing so would keep Germany in “economic chains,” which would “keep Europe in rags.”\textsuperscript{28} Given the scale of destruction Germany had unleashed upon the world in the twentieth century, it was understandable that many were wary of a reestablished Germany, yet American and some European policymakers wanted not to punish Germany but to rebuild it. World War I

\textsuperscript{27} ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} “A United States of Europe,” 47.
served as a useful analogy for policymakers after the war; reflections upon World War I diagnosed issues that had occurred in the peace process in 1919, and how to rectify past mistakes. In 1919, peace negotiators had confronted steep challenges in regards to establishing an enduring peace. On the one hand, the public wanted a peace that would “remove the possibility of a second war,” yet wanted an “early demobilization” that left no means to enforce the peace. Furthermore, the immediacy of the negotiations made the peace process untenable; had peacemakers reached a deal in 1922, rather than 1919, the treaty might have been “saner and therefore more durable.”

Peace would not come rapidly, rather, it would come “gradually, in successive phases.” Senator Fulbright mirrored this sentiment of peace being a slow, arduous process, one that would not be achieved easily. “Peacemaking,” he wrote, “does not begin or end with a single conference.”

Establishing an endurable peace would take sustained effort, policymakers believed. This diagnosis, an occupation and a long peace process, would inevitably lead to the Allies adopting a far more active role in reestablishing Germany; despite American reluctance, the United States was the only country capable of maintaining the peace. Fulbright and other internationalists believed that the United States “must assume the leadership and responsibility for peacemaking, if we are to translate into action the profound longing of the peoples of the world for a just and durable peace.”

This assumption of responsibility and a preponderance of power meant the United States had to accept its role as the leader of the West, and not be afraid to impose policies on its allies. Again, like much of the postwar European policy, American foreign policy

30 ibid
strategists believed that economic self-help would enable rebuilding. This prescription, too, would enable Germany to rebuild and to eradicate Nazism.

Shortly after the war, policymakers carefully considered what had led Germany down the path of Nazism that had led to an even more destructive war than the first. The objective of the United States’ post-Potsdam policy in Europe was to create an integrated community of like-minded nations that could resist Communist domination and, if necessary, serve as an “effective ally against Soviet military aggression. The rationale behind this strategy was based upon historical lessons: in regards to Germany specifically, United States policy was to “prevent” it from associating itself with the Soviet Union, “as it did after World War I.”33 In order to achieve these goals, Germany would need “much more freedom to develop economically and politically...if the objective of avoiding another Russo-German Rapallo pact.”34 American policymakers, again, believed that economic policy was a means of achieving both European integration and German (and European) economic recovery. If Germany were integrated into the Western European economy—its contingent upon European cooperation—then Germany might have been incentivized to once again prepare for war. By having economic arrangements that would facilitate trade with the other major European powers, Germany would be unable to develop a domestic economy capable of producing the necessary war materials. However, if integration failed, Germany would then, “gradually develop another nationalistic policy” and pursue the means of domestically producing “at home all those products necessary to an aggressive policy.”35

33 James, Reston,. “U.S. is Uncertain Over Integration,” The New York Times, November 13, 1949, 3.
34 Reston,. “U.S. is Uncertain Over Integration,” 3.
Europeans, particularly the French, feared the revival of a powerful Germany that was powerful enough to upset the balance of power in Europe. However, American policymakers were not thinking of German revival altruistically. Rather, it was a carefully considered strategy concerned with countering the Soviet threat. In what became known as the “western strategy,” American and British policymakers conceived a German strategy not to suppress Germany but to avoid the mistakes that resulted in World War II.

James Byrnes, who preceded Marshall as U.S. American Secretary of State, outlined American policy towards Germany using cautionary lessons of American behavior in foreign affairs to explain the Truman administration’s thinking. The United States had believed that it could avoid European wars and refused to join the League of Nations; yet this intransigence did not prevent American involvement in another European war. The United States would not make the same mistake again. One issue with the Treaty of Versailles was the competing goals of the Allies; Britain wanted to reestablish the German economy, while France and other Allies desired reparations for the enormous destruction of the war. Even more destabilizing, in particular the territorial readjustments of the Versailles Treaty which created new nations and resettled populations in Central and Eastern Europe. The Allies after World War II also faced a far different geopolitical situation. Germany itself was far more devastated in terms of its physical infrastructure than it had been after World War I. Furthermore, given the structure of international relations in 1919, states were far more willing to act on their own accord. When the Weimar government defaulted on its payments in 1923, the Belgian and French militaries occupied the Ruhr mining region, leading Germany to print more money in order to pay the French, which led to hyperinflation. The lack of a hegemonic power meant more
anarchy in the international system, even more apparent given the failure of the League of Nations.

If the Allies were to dismantle Germany’s industrial capacity instead of allowing integration, it is conceivable that Germany would develop with the East, rather than in a peaceful manner with the West. The Soviet menace thus served as the impetus for creating an economically strong Germany; an economically strong Germany would not be enticed by Soviet machinations, adding to a bulwark against the Soviet Union. Furthermore, anti-German rhetoric in France was due to the domestic political situation, where the French Communist Party was a part of the post-war governing coalition, making the party a significant political actor. French leaders had to carefully avoid obvious anti-Soviet policies. In fact, French non-Communist leaders’ thinking was actually more in line with the thinking of the other Western powers than public rhetoric would suggest.36

Officials were thinking of not only how to rebuild Europe after mass destruction, but also as a means of containing Soviet expansion and efforts to undermine Europe, and there was a relatively bipartisan consensus that Europe needed economic aid in order to do so. John Foster Dulles, a prominent Republican foreign policy advisor, believed that “our way of life and our national security are at stake,” between the “destructive power” of the Soviets and the “creative force of the United States.” Once unity between European states was achieved, contended Dulles, Soviet efforts to undermine Europe would be “lost” and attempts at destabilizing Europe “will be abandoned,” by the

Soviets. Economic unity based upon the American model would lead to a “solid front” to oppose the Soviet Union. This solid front would stem from first uniting their economies. Dulles was certainly not the only prominent official making this case, let alone the only Republican. Former President Herbert Hoover also believed that the Marshall Plan would stimulate the possibility of a “federation of Western Europe,” that would strengthen the “forces of peace and defense.” In 1948, Hoover, invoking the American Revolution, said, “We are only at Valley Forge in the struggle for peace and disarmament;” the situation was bleak: the United States had “no certainty of military allies in the world.” However, officials believed that without economic support, each country would be on its own, looking to the United States for “material and moral support,” and a regional defense initiative modeled after the “agreement of Rio,” which could preclude the United States for the time being, would result in European economic and military autonomy. Dulles recognized those opposed to the Marshall Plan in the American public, but he couched the need for economic unity in grave terms, noting that despite the high cost of the Marshall Plan, it would “enable western civilization to survive.” Furthermore, by supporting the Europeans economically in 1948, it would be more cost-effective in the long term. Witnesses in front of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, including Dulles, argued that if Congress did not pass the European Recovery Program, the military would press for far more to be spent on defense, making the ERA look “like a bag of peanuts.” Fulbright, too, argued that the ERA made logical business sense, a means of America winning repayment of the enormous investment it

40 ibid, 1.
had made in the recovery of Europe. "There is no simple, all-inclusive answer to this question," Fulbright observed, "but one of the essential conditions to any solution is the reestablishment of industry and commerce within the framework of a stable political system." If the Marshall Plan were to be adequately financed, and its goals were to build and sustain free institutions in Europe, these societies would "gain such strength and unity that they will no longer need outside help." Again, among policymakers, there was an understanding that the United States wanted to provide the impetus for European self-help and recovery. Dulles made this clear in his advocacy for European institutions so that the United States did not need to provide outside help, as did Hoover when he suggested that Europe, in conjunction with the Marshall Plan and economic recovery, should devise a treaty based on the Treaty of Rio and under the auspices of Chapter VII of the U.N., without American involvement. A European regional organization would give more credence to the United Nations; invoking the history of isolationism, Hoover believed this strategy would "avoid the United States being involved in military alliances." As stated, economic unity was rather bipartisan, at least among internationalist Republicans and Democrats. American involvement in the economic reconstruction of Europe was intended to develop a cohesive political unit aimed at stopping the spread of Communism. Yet, despite American hopes, European leaders understood that economic aid alone would not guarantee sufficient recovery. What was needed were American security guarantees that would enable a sense of stability and security from aggression, both internal and external, that would enable rebuilding. How to attain American security guarantees then became a primary focus, particularly of Britain.

41 Kaplan, 50.
Chapter 2: The Treaty of Dunkirk and Western Union

The impetus for a common European defense came from Ernest Bevin, Britain's Foreign Secretary who, after the breakup of the Council of Foreign Ministers in December of 1947 due to Soviet intransigence, suggested to American Secretary of State George Marshall that Britain establish a Western union of some sort. It was intentionally vague, yet Marshall was intrigued and sent John D. Hickerson, an official in the State Department, to learn more about what Bevin had in mind. An official in the Foreign Office laid out his thinking: Bevin wanted two security arrangements. One that would be a small alliance between the U.K., France, and the Benelux countries with explicit defense agreements, and a second, larger arrangement with "somewhat lesser commitments" with the U.S. and Canada. Bevin's suggestion was followed by a major speech to the House of Commons on January 22 in which he announced that Britain, in establishing a wider circle would have "to go beyond the circle of our immediate neighbours." Britain would have to consider associating other historic members of European civilisation, including the new Italy, in this great conception. Britain was now thinking of Western Europe as a unit.

Initially, European unity was clearly a British project, and appeared to be Bevin's own initiative, however, his thinking was undoubtedly influenced by ideas like Winston Churchill's. Churchill, directly after the war, had also advocated for an Anglo-American alliance that would have involved "joint use of all naval and air force bases," and, eventually, "common citizenship." Another of Churchill's initiatives was also a United

---

43 Henrikson, 6.
44 Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 5th set., 446 191948): col. 383ff
Europe, that would be “free of nationalistic hates and rivalries.” 45 Churchill believed, like Bevin, that it would be the “duty of Britain and France to lead the movement.” Bevin did not mention a U.S. role for the alliance, yet the speech generated the kind of enthusiasm in the United States among officials that could lead to greater U.S. involvement that Marshall had been reluctant to engage in. Writing in The New York Times, Herbert Matthews proclaimed that Bevin’s speech signaled “Britain’s willingness to take part in a United States of Europe and to work toward that goal.” 46 Yet, Britain’s commitment was specifically to “Western Europe” which was a “new entity” which was somewhat “artificial…” conceived less from “culture or history” and instead from the reality that militarily, the Soviets controlled Eastern Europe. 47 What Bevin had proposed was more concrete than Churchill’s idea; the model that the Foreign Office used to conceptualize Bevin’s proposal of bilateral alliances was the Treaty of Dunkirk which had been ratified by Britain and France in 1947. It was an old-fashioned, traditional military alliance that provided for the immediate assistance by Great Britain and France to come to one another’s aid in the event of an attack upon either by Germany. Britain’s intention using this model was to form a network of bilateral alliances with the Low Countries; the focus of the Dunkirk Treaty was not the Soviet Union, rather, it was the fear of a resurgent Germany. By tying in other continental countries, they could acknowledge France’s “emotionally felt and doctrinaire insecurity” regarding Germany, hoping to “partially dissipate it.” 48 Interestingly, Bevin did not believe that the principal threat to Europe was

47 Henrikson, 7.
48 Henrikson, 7.
the Soviet one, rather, Britain had to "shield its western half," which he did not believe could be achieved without help from the United States. 49

Marshall and his subordinates were intrigued by Bevin's proposal, yet, the State Department's reaction was remarkably similar to when the Treaty of Dunkirk had been ratified. The prospect of continued animosity towards Germany in the form of bilateral treaties was "narrow-minded and backward-looking." Any effort to cement this fear of German revanchism into international law was, to Marshall, futile and "beside the point." The true threat to Europe was "Soviet domination." Rather than forming bilateral alliances, American policymakers believed a "multilateral alliance of European states" would have the appropriate effect of meeting the Soviet danger. Furthermore, a multilateral alliance would further encourage European integration and the prospect of the creation of an American-inspired, federalized Europe. Secretary Marshall also made it clear that he wanted no public pronouncements of American involvement in joining a European organization, deflecting against possible accusations of American involvement in an entangling European alliance. In a cable from Marshall to the British Ambassador to the United States, Lord Inverchapel, he encouraged the prospect of a European security pact, but made it clear that the United States would let the Europeans sort out how to best organize. The United States "warmly applauded" Bevin's efforts and he wanted "the United States to do everything which it properly can in assisting the European nations in bringing a project along this line to fruition." 50

49 Henrikson, 8.
American policymakers had their own ideas on how to best organize Europe; officials at the State Department, like Hickerson, preferred a model based on the Rio Treaty which had been signed recently and included American adherence. To meet the newer and broader Soviet danger, American officials believed "a multilateral alliance of European states would be the appropriate form of cooperation."\(^1\) Kennan, too, shared Hickerson's skepticism regarding Bevin's proposal of bilateral alliances; he argued that alliances should not be predicated upon militarism, but rather political and economic. Not only was Bevin's plan viewed with skepticism by American policymakers, it was also made clear by Belgium and the Netherlands that the "power they feared was the power of Russia." Their foreign ministers also believed that the only country in the world that could bring such a military pact to fruition was the United States.

In the face of obvious American hesitancy, Bevin did not relent in his efforts to win support for any sort of American commitment, and believed that eventually the United States would be enticed to join a Western Alliance. Despite this optimism, Marshall was not forthcoming, and believed that European security should not have any American commitment other than rhetorical support. The United States and Britain thus found themselves at an impasse. "Without assurance of security, which can only be given with some degree of American participation, the British Government are unlikely to be successful in making the Western Union a going concern," while the United States felt that until Europe was suitably organized, no formal commitment could be made. The State Department was in the process of conceiving a policy stance when events in Prague changed the calculus of both European and American policymakers.

The impasse broke in early 1948 due to several events that generated considerable alarm in the West. These crises added fuel to several policies that would have taken months, if not years, to come to fruition had it not been for Soviet actions. On the 25 of February, the Soviet-backed Communist Party of Czechoslovakia assumed control over the government, installing a puppet regime in the process. The Prague events led to widespread alarm in the West; policymakers and foreign policy thinkers feared the results of this calamity, and its effects upon the rest of Eastern Europe. Journalist Joseph Alsop wrote, “Eventually, if the present process is not reversed by western pressure or internal difficulties, all of Eastern Europe will be governed by completely totalitarian dictatorships, as absolute, as unscrupulous in their employment of terror and as slavish before the Kremlin, as the dictatorships of Marshall Tito and Georgi Dimitrov.” He believed that “much evidence suggests Finland is next on the list after Czechoslovakia.”

The March Crisis changed power relations between the West and the Soviet Union. Czechoslovakia had been at the mercy of the Soviet military since it had been liberated in 1945. Furthermore, Western forces in Germany were sparse, more preoccupied with occupying Germany than acting as a deterrent to Moscow. Opposite the United States and its allies, Moscow had nearly 30 Red Army divisions, amounting to nearly half a million men, scattered through eastern Germany and Eastern Europe for occupation and defensive purposes. All told, the Soviet army in Europe outmanned the West by more than three to one. The takeover of Czechoslovakia seemed to establish a new phase in Western-Soviet relations. It furthered the argument that European unity efforts without

American security guarantees would mean that Europe would be under constant threat, preventing the successful implementation of the administration's other policies.

The Czech crisis was problematic enough for American policymakers, yet this was not the only crisis they would face in February and March of 1948 that would significantly reshape American military posture. General Lucius Clay, the U.S. military governor in Germany, sent a cable on March 5 in which he stated: "For many months, based on logical analysis, I have felt and held that war was unlikely for at least ten years. Within the last few weeks, I have felt a subtle change in Soviet attitude which I cannot define but which now gives me a feeling that it may come with dramatic suddenness."53 The New York Times said, "it is no exaggeration to say that General Clay's job has been just about the most important in the world...General Clay has given an impression of calm firmness that has been good for the nerves of the democratic world, as it must have been disconcerting to the Russians."54 If one of the most respected men in the military establishment was predicting the possible sudden onset of war, it was enough to alarm official opinion in Washington.

These multiple crises hastened the establishment of the Western Union; Bevin took his chance and opened discussions in Brussels. Western European officials were so alarmed by the March crises that policy differences were put aside. France and Britain, after originally wanting a series of bilateral treaties, conceded to American proposals and agreed to consider a multilateral treaty directed towards any aggressor, not only Germany. The result was the Brussels Pact which was signed on March 17, 1948. The Treaty was an amalgamation of both the Treaty of Dunkirk, given its reference to the possibility of

revived German aggression, but also highlighted the desires of the Benelux countries, France, and the United States, highlighting a commitment to individual and collective self-defense as defined by Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, making it viable against Soviet aggression. U.S. officials watched the deliberations in Brussels attentively; President Truman offered the support of the United States in a speech to Congress, yet American officials still struck a cautious tone. (The Brussels Pact, or the Western Union, are interchangeable.) Officials in the State Department drew up a memo to define what the United States' stance should be regarding American participation in a European self-defense pact. The United States' primary objectives in Europe were to help European nations sufficiently develop their military infrastructures in order to increase their confidence in case of confrontations with the Soviet Union; the memo also recommended that the United States should "not now participate as a full member in the Western Union but should give it assurance of armed support." Eventually, the Brussels Pact could potentially "serve as the core of an eventual close working association" in which the United States "may ultimately find it advisable to participate as a close associate or member."55 In practical terms, American involvement meant at minimum military shipments, and at most, U.S. association with the European effort. Yet, American involvement would hinge upon the success of the Western Union and whether the Brussels powers could effectively join together.

Chapter 3: Gaining American Commitment

Soon after the passage of the Brussels Treaty, the United States became engaged with the Canadian and British governments in discussions regarding security of the North Atlantic. While the United States had celebrated the passage of the Brussels Pact, the Truman administration wanted these meetings in order to discuss security that directly concerned the United States itself. The purpose of these discussions was for the United States and its allies to discuss the nature of an American commitment to the North Atlantic. The United States was considering several options during these meetings: the first was a world-wide Article 51 under the U.N. Charter. This was dismissed relatively early as "too cumbersome and too long in implementation," to be reasonably implemented. The second was an extension of the Brussels Pact; this, too, was not seen as good policy by the State Department. Involvement in the Brussels Pact would work against the very policies that the State Department was trying to implement; Hickerson believed that since the United States wished to "see the eventual development of a United States of Western Europe (possibly later of all Europe)...It would lose its utility for this purpose were the US to join."56 Since the Truman administration's European policy was to develop an autonomous Western Europe that was not overly reliant upon the United States, if America became a member of the Brussels Pact it would undermine the other enormous policy undertakings like the Marshall Plan. The third policy option was an Atlantic Pact; this, too, raised issues, such as German involvement. Officials also considered changing it from "Atlantic" to a "Western" pact. However, surprisingly, policymakers were not thinking of this solely in terms of European defense, instead, they

were drawing heavily upon Article 51 of the U.N., conceiving of drawing many countries into a defense pact, or establishing disparate regional self-defense organizations.

The Rio Treaty had its roots in the Monroe Doctrine, which was a proclamation issued by President James Monroe in 1823 with three parts. The first was that the United States considered the Western Hemisphere closed to further European colonization; secondly, the United States would "consider any attempt" by European powers to "extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." And third, the United States would not participate in European political affairs. The Monroe Doctrine has had an enduring legacy in American foreign policy and gone through many expansions and revisions; under President James K. Polk in the 1840s, it was revived to limit British claims to land in the Oregon Territory; by the end of the nineteenth century, Secretary of State Richard Olney declared, "the United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition," in what became known as the "Olney corollary." The Monroe Doctrine had long been associated with interventionism, isolationism, and neutrality, now faded from the scene as the United States became the leading internationalist nation. During a pan-American conference in 1947, the republics of Latin America enacted a treaty which "multilateralized" the Monroe Doctrine. The Rio Treaty "obligated" the nations of the western hemisphere, including the United States, to come to the aid of attacked members when a two-thirds majority agreed to act. The Monroe Doctrine had been in effect "internationalized." Despite the Treaty of Rio being multilateral and institutionalized in a

ratified treaty, the understanding of the Monroe Doctrine by policymakers was still deeply rooted in pre-World War II foreign policy.

The history of the Monroe Doctrine was frequently invoked in advocating for a European defense pact based upon the Rio Treaty, but also in understanding the significance of an American-led European defense pact and the broader strokes of American foreign policy. In 1947, after the declaration of the Truman Doctrine, James Reston of the New York Times, compared Truman’s speech to Roosevelt’s lend-lease program, as well as the Monroe Doctrine. The Truman Doctrine’s similarity to the Monroe Doctrine was that it “warned” others that the United States would “resist efforts to impose a political system or foreign domination on areas vital to our security.” The Monroe Doctrine was interpreted differently depending on what need it served policymakers, however, it is clear that in 1947, those who analogized President Truman’s speech were connecting containment to the Monroe Doctrine. Containment professed that the United States should compete everywhere that the Soviet specter was, and to contain Soviet expansion to its then borders. By coupling these two foreign policy theories, the United States’ national security was any area threatened by communism, and any area that was threatened by communism, was vital to the national security of the United States. This conception of the expansion of vital areas of interest to the United States is on display in the language of the Truman Doctrine: for Truman, “when we so recognize an act of aggression anywhere, we will commit ourselves morally to join resisting it.” After this address, journalists claimed this to be a “new and broadened Monroe Doctrine,” with the United States acting as “the principal defender” of the “Western

59 Reston, 3.
Proponents of this muscular foreign policy believed that the real danger for the United States was not being aggressive enough in staring down the Soviet Union. Among “experts,” the “danger of war lies in a display not of American strength but American weakness...concealing and not facing the conflict might result in the nations’ drifting into war.” This language reflected the increasing intensity between the United States and the Soviet Union and marked the path towards the militancy of containment.

Interestingly, despite the Monroe Doctrine being rooted in the isolationist tradition of American foreign policy, in which the United States purposefully avoided entanglement with Europe in addition to acting as a unilateral power, it was still frequently invoked in understanding American involvement with the world after World War II, and most policymakers had a consensus understanding of the Monroe Doctrine’s legacy. The Monroe Doctrine implied American domination in the Western Hemisphere; the United States would determine foreign aggression and act accordingly; despite some thinking of the Monroe Doctrine in altruistic terms, it was really a “portion of the U.S. system of self-defense. It symbolized besides all this an intricate iconology of pride, strength, isolationism, and nationalism.” These notions were all present in the Truman Doctrine and the Rio Treaty. Furthermore, this conception of America’s transatlantic commitment was favored by believers in European autonomy as well as practitioners with more isolationist tendencies, like Michigan Senator Arthur Vandenberg. What they had in mind were unilateral Presidential declarations—or Presidential in conjunction with Congress—that would satisfy security guarantees. However, while this might placate the United States’ European allies in the short run, it was objected to as a long-term solution.

---

62 Reston, 3.
63 Sessions, 261.
Like so much of American foreign policy, a presidential resolution or decree could be disregarded by a subsequent administration, a distinct fear among European negotiators. And while a unilateral arrangement might be favored by the American public at this time, it could become politically untenable within the United States in the future due to the paternalistic nature of such a relationship. Furthermore, Europeans also feared the unilateral nature of a Presidential decree; the recipients of free security might become resentful towards the United States, perceiving themselves as “satellite” countries and overly reliant upon the United States not only for their own economies, as in the Marshall Plan, but possibly also their military establishments.

In an article published in the New York Herald Tribune, Gill Robb Wilson contended that the Monroe Doctrine had been established when foreign danger came solely from the sea; navies at that time were primarily an “Anglo-American weapon” which meant that “the Monroe Doctrine was sufficient to protect the Western Hemisphere.” America’s security concerns were changing due to technological advancement, and in the age of airpower, the Monroe Doctrine would no longer suffice. The Rio pact would not be a “sufficient expression of American security policy in the day of the airplane...The United States is not secure unless the entire Atlantic basis is free of the threat of aggression.” In this same vein, advocates for the North Atlantic Treaty tried to portray this arrangement as “simply an eastward extension of the sphere of the Monroe Doctrine...the pressing outward of the boundary of the New World...past the vague mid-Atlantic line to the iron Curtain.” Military power had changed the calculus of the Monroe Doctrine to a great degree; the United States could not declare unilaterally that

---

65 Wilson, 4.
66 Henrikson, 25.
the Western Hemisphere was its own to preside over. The threat, much like the
Communist specter, was everywhere. This thesis was in line with the thinking behind
Kennan’s containment policy; by reconceptualizing the Monroe Doctrine, American
policymakers could use historical precedent to guide decisions regarding the possibility
of European security. The expansion of American national security threats to essentially
anywhere that Communism was making inroads meant that advocates for a European
defense treaty, based upon the Rio Treaty, advocated for the United States to “recognize
aggression against our European neighbors in the same light in which we have long
recognized potential aggression against our neighbors in this hemisphere.”

The Rio Treaty was favored by policymakers as it was a regional arrangement
under the auspices of the U.N. charter, and had received support from the U.S. Senate.
One technical point that had received little consideration, too, was that historically threats
to peace in Latin America had come not only from outside the hemisphere, but from
within as well. The text of the Rio Pact had been drafted so as to “encompass action
against aggression from within the alliance itself.” The 21 parties in the Rio Pact had
agreed that “an armed attack against one or more of them...shall be considered an attack
against them all.” This became known erroneously as the “Monroe Doctrine formula”
which as discussed previously was misleadingly due to the Monroe Doctrine’s
unilateralism, as opposed to the multilateralism of the Rio Treaty. The attraction of
substituting the Treaty of Rio to an Atlantic setting was that Germany could be included
in the pact without “depriving the French of the protection they felt they needed”
against Germany. With this assurance of French and British security, a Western security

68 Henrikson, 9.
69 Henrikson, 9.
pact could simultaneously act as a bulwark against Soviet aggression, the external aggressor, similarly to the Rio Pact. The language of the Rio Treaty and its theory on the balance of power thus served as a useful roadmap; furthermore, Rio could also be used as a ploy to deflect accusations of American belligerence towards the Soviet Union.

The Monroe Doctrine had long been employed as an example of what should be America's guiding foreign policy doctrine: unilateral, isolationist, and nationalist, yet in the postwar era it had been reconceived to match America's foreign policy interests, yet it was not the only one. After World War II, American sentiment was decidedly internationalist, leading to a shift in understanding traditional isolationist doctrine. Herbert Hoover, once an ardent isolationist, speaking at Washington's Birthday Dinner in the presence of George Bidault, who was then the foreign minister for France, who advocated strongly for a regional pact like the one signed in Rio de Janeiro, stating, “he was sure that Washington would amend today his declaration against ‘entangling alliances’ in the face of Europe’s needs and misery.”70 This was a powerful rhetorical argument, especially coming from Herbert Hoover, a former president himself. To argue that Washington would have advocated for an alliance with Europe was astonishing, and also shows how clearly American foreign policy had changed due to World War II, bringing more bipartisanship into what role the United States would fill in the postwar space. Others used Washington's Farewell Address, dogma in the isolationist realm of American foreign policy, to advocate for the United States to pursue stronger transatlantic ties. One author in The New York Times wrote, Washington in “his Farewell Address [Washington said] that “Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none or a very remote connection.” Washington wanted the new republic to “have nothing to do

with the political intrigues or the squabbles of European nations." However, despite these clear proclamations, he “would not have demanded that his words stand as gospel for all time.” The North Atlantic Treaty would allow the United States to “recognize aggression against our European neighbors in the same light in which we have long recognized potential aggression against our neighbors in this hemisphere—namely, to quote President Monroe’s words, “as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States.”

Chapter 4: A Transatlantic Treaty

Given the weight of arguments against membership in the Brussels Union, members of the talks reached the conclusion that a “formal Atlantic-wide treaty relationship” would be the best way of establishing peace among Western Europe countries and the United States. In a Republican-controlled Congress this was far from assured of happening; support came from Arthur Vandenberg, a Republican Senator of Michigan. Vandenberg had once been a staunch isolationist but had become more internationally minded during the 1940s and had helped the Truman administration secure legislative achievements like the passage of the Marshall Plan and the ratification of the Rio Treaty. The Vandenberg Resolution was passed on June 11, 1948, by a bipartisan vote of 64 to 4. The resolution was “committing the United States to the principle of military aid to defensive alliances formed among the world’s free nations.”

This legislation was ostensibly to strengthen the United Nations, yet it is clear from the

---

72 James, Monroe. “Seventh Annual Message to Congress,” December 2, 1823.
language that the resolution merged intellectual components of the Rio Treaty and the Marshall Plan: "Association of the United States, by Constitutional process, with such regional and other collective arrangements as are based on continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, and as affect its national security." The "regional and other collective arrangements" demonstrated the influence of the Rio Treaty on Vandenberg's thinking, and the "self-help and mutual aid" is the thinking behind the Marshall Plan. Yet, the Vandenberg Resolution was not without its detractors; Joseph Alsop believed that the resolution's "cautious, preliminary character" was indicative of the nature of American foreign policy making as "cumbersome." If it were not so, America would have responded "immediately and decisively to the challenge of Western European Union," and "American participation in the Atlantic community would now be a fact." This indictment of the Vandenberg Resolution depicts "two parallel trends: the break with isolation and yet the spasmodic or unconscious retreat into the old habits of the past." This tension caused "hesitations and inconsistencies," with a desire to enact deep change, but fearing and hesitating upon following through on policies.

It was again events, both foreign and domestic, that changed American calculus in regards to an alliance with the North Atlantic countries. On June 24, 1948, the Soviet Union blocked the Western Allies' railway, road, and canal access to the sectors of Berlin under Western control. General Clay saw this as the beginning of what he had predicted in his dire memo warning of a war that could begin immediately. The Soviet's "blockade of the German capital constitutes a threat to the peace," one New York Times reporter wrote, and this characterization was affirmed by General Clay. The crisis represented a

---

74 Vandenberg, Arthur. 1948. "Vandenberg Resolution." NATO.
major turning point in Soviet-American relations, and a significant loss in geopolitical prestige for the Soviets. Not only was it damaging to the Soviets, it also compelled the United States and its allies to “take measures of military preparedness, including the return of American airpower to Europe, which would otherwise have been impossible.” Thus, not only was the Berlin Airlift an enormous public relations win for the United States, it also constituted further steps in American military involvement in Europe.\(^{76}\)

While this change constituted a shift in American public thought, in the official sphere, the final push came after the election of 1948, which was a predicted victory for Republican nominee, Thomas Dewey. Talks among the powers had expanded to include the French, Belgian, and Dutch governments, but were proceeding slowly due to America’s domestic politics. When Truman won an upset on November 2, 1948, it opened a new phase of talks. The American Senate was included in deliberations, and Dean Acheson, Truman’s choice to succeed Marshall as Secretary of State, was assigned to become the chief negotiator. Acheson faced a multitude of issues to consider in negotiations: Acheson had to adhere to the Vandenberg resolution that urged the development of regional arrangements under the auspices of the United Nations, as well as the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro, which “provided for consultative action, not necessarily immediate war entry, in case any one of the signatory powers were attacked.” On the other hand, the Brussels pact committed each signatory to come to the aid in case any were attacked. One author in *The New York Times* predicted that in the course of negotiations, despite the difference in these two concepts, that in practicality the United States would, “have a moral and pragmatic commitment that would be fully as binding upon the United States as the most legalistic hard-and-fast alliance.” He believed that

even the Rio Pact "which specifically reserved to the individual nations the right to use
force, interpreted an attack upon one as an attack upon all." Yet, policymakers at the State
Department were assiduous in their language regarding American involvement: in the
event of an act of a declaration of war or armed attack on another party in the treaty, "the
treaty would not provide that any country automatically declare in such a
contingency...Moreover, some cases it might be more advantageous to the security of the
area as a whole if certain countries did not become involved in war unless directly
attacked." In essence, despite the difference in language, the two treaties would
essentially have the same effect. Furthermore, as argued, the language of the treaty would
in fact be less important than "the detailed structure which will bolster it," such as a
"consultative council and beneath this a council a defense or chiefs of staff committee."
The United States would also most likely have to develop "Agreements on a lend-lease
arms program, secret ones [agreements] on joint strategy and the coordinated use of
troops...[which] would, in fact bind us even more firmly to the fate of Western Europe
than would use the legal terminology of a treaty." Thus, despite the intense focus on
language and what obligations the United States had to Europe, in practical terms, the
United States was now explicitly involved in the balance of power on the continent; it
had a significant military presence still in Germany, and would be supplying arms to
countries part of the treaty to rearm European militaries. Despite the hesitation on the part
of the United States, the more it became involved in Europe, the less likely it was to
disengage.

Foreign Relations of the United States."
The borders of the North Atlantic Pact were another question for Acheson’s consideration; the United States desired to widen the North Atlantic pact for geopolitical purposes in regards to the treaty. The first was what type of commitment should the United States pledge to the alliance. American policymakers had to bridge the gap between the Brussels Treaty and the Rio de Janeiro Treaty, yet the question remained of “the kind of bridge that is to be built.” This included the strategic need of broadening for geopolitical purposes to include Portugal, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, and one day, Italy. All of these countries had their own strategic reasons for the United States to desire their inclusion. Another country that America deemed vital to the Alliance was Italy; Italy’s inclusion had the effect of widening the scope of the borders of the Alliance, once again expanding America’s sphere of interest in Europe, indicating the components of realpolitik and strategic military thinking that were being applied to the North Atlantic pact. Italy’s receiving of supplies and adherence to the Alliance further dissolved World War II power relations and was indicative of the power patterns that had emerged during the beginning of the Cold War. Portugal, too, under the Salazar regime “gave the alliance a slight fascist tinge,” which would have been even more so had Franco’s Spain been included. Furthermore, the incorporation of Algeria, and other colonial holdings, the incorporation of Italy, a former enemy of the Allies during World War II, reminded the world that many countries who were a part of the North Atlantic Treaty negotiations had been or were still empires.

Acheson, in negotiations, also had to contend with the overall purpose of the Alliance. The Atlantic pact “is intended to do in the military and political sphere what [the] ECA is doing in the economic sphere—fill in the vacuum of power left in Western

78 Henrikson, 20.
Europe since the war and restore the balance of power in Europe." His thinking was guided by historical examples of power relations in Europe. In order to balance reassurance to the Europeans that America could be relied upon to come to their defense, as well assuaging Congress and the American public that the United States would not be dragged into a war. Firstly, the theory of deterrence provided the foundation upon which American policymakers built the treaty that would provide a balance-of-power in Europe. A balance-of-power system ensures that domination, coercion, or aggression by one state unto others is, at best, prevented, or, most importantly, deterred. Both the United States and Britain pursued reconstruction of a balance-of-power in Europe after the war; Britain deliberately pursued this given their foreign policy tradition: "for more than 300 years against Philip of Spain, Napoleon and the two German dictators of this century," Britain had consciously pursued a balance-of-power order in Europe. Acheson was tasked with trying to "restore the balance to establish a "just equilibrium" in Europe," to prevent the Soviet specter "expanding like a black cloud toward the Atlantic, blotting out individual freedom as it goes." A balance of power was understood in conjunction with deterrence theory: if the United States and its allies were "equal to the power of the Soviet Union and its satellites, the latter group will hesitate to insist on policies that might bring it into war with nations of equal strength." While Western nations might have preferred the hallmarks of a liberal international order, like a "disarmed community of nations" which would be enforced by international law under the auspices of the U.N., this was

impossible. The U.N. had “no power...to enforce decisions against a major power.”

Thus, familiar power relations filled the holes that the U.N. left. Furthermore, American officials were thinking of a balance of power in historical terms; Henry A. Wallace, who had served in the FDR cabinet, believed that “the weight of history does not support the popular illusion that the balance-of-power doctrine was always unsound, productive of wars, and opposed to justice.”

Rather, war generally came when the balance of power was upset: war came not “when England held the balance between Spain and France, but when she allowed Napoleon to destroy the balance; not when Britain maintained the balance against the rising powers of Bismarck, Kaiser Wilhelm and Hitler, but when she permitted the ‘just equilibrium’ to become unbalanced.”

These historical examples served Acheson and other policymakers during negotiations on the North Atlantic Treaty; if a balance of power were established by American involvement, what was the best way to establish credibility? This policy became Article 5, which guaranteed “that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” If an armed attack were carried out, members “will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith...such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”

Accordingly, “promise would become a substitute for performance.” A balance of power established upon deterrence was a cost effective way of making the treaty more appealing to American leaders. The value of the treaty was the perception and the way it was sold to the public of being a security guarantee that would cost

82 ibid.
83 ibid.
85 Henrikson, 22.
nothing, however, this portrayal of the treaty costing nothing was certainly overstated and a tactical way of ensuring its ratification. The language of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty was closer to the Rio Treaty than the Brussels formula in regards to military help. The independent decision-making was carefully guarded and did not stipulate that an armed response was even necessary. The main significance, however, of Article 5, according to Henrikson, is the statement of Article 5 whereby an attack against North America would be "an attack against them all." This proposition significantly altered America's historic distinction between the Old World and the New World.

Chapter 4: Presenting the North Atlantic Treaty to the Public

President Truman, after months of secret negotiations, was faced with the task of detailing the plan to the American people. Policymakers and advocates for the Treaty's ratification had to answer three important questions: "How did it come about and why is it necessary? What are its terms? Will it accomplish its purpose?" A major issue that the Truman administration and its congressional allies had to respond to was the assertion that this regional pact, despite being legal under international law, would undermine the United Nations. After addressing this immediate concern, the Truman administration then set about convincing the public that this treaty was necessary; these explanations relied heavily upon historical links that bound the two continents together.

Policymakers had to contend with how to respond to attacks that the North Atlantic Treaty would severely undermine the United Nations. President Truman addressed this in his speech of April 4, 1949, the day of the treaty's signing. Truman was explicit in his assertion that the North Atlantic Treaty was subservient to the U.N., and it
was merely an extension of the U.N.’s values. “Each Member of the United Nations is under a solemn obligation to maintain international peace and security.” Therefore, each member was bound to settle “international disputes by peaceful means,” and to “refrain from the threat or use of force against the territory or independence” of any other country. The North Atlantic Treaty would aid these countries in their quest to promote peace. Under the auspices of the United Nations, the North Atlantic countries “hoped to establish an international force...[for] preserving peace throughout the world.” Clearly, Truman and his advisors were taking extreme care to let both the public and other leaders, that the intention of the Treaty was not to degrade the power of the U.N. The North Atlantic Treaty would merely be a policy tool to aid the U.N. in its goals. Acheson, in a major radio speech after the treaty’s finalization, offered his reasoning in direct relation to the United Nations, not naming the Soviet Union explicitly, instead saying that the U.N., was not working as hoped because “one of its members has attempted to prevent it from working.” By blaming the Soviet Union for the failings of the U.N., the United States could deflect against insinuations that America was abandoning the very institution it had helped to create for regional defense arrangements. U.S. policymakers in the State Department argued that, rather than weakening the U.N., the North Atlantic Treaty would instead strengthen it to be “strong enough to be an effective instrument for peace.” Even though it was a defensive regional military pact, officials were constantly suggesting that the North Atlantic Treaty was a vehicle for peace and against aggression.

Truman was explicit in this, stating that the Treaty was “not directed against the Soviet Union, nor its satellite states.” Other advocates for the Atlantic Pact, like Senator Arthur Vandenberg, argued that rather than the North Atlantic Treaty being an alternative to the United Nations, the Atlantic Pact involved. Officials used the history of the United States and Europe to draw common historical threads that could be utilized to provide justification for the establishment of an Atlantic Pact; history thus served as a powerful rhetorical tool to exploit the relationship and what linked the North Atlantic alliance together. He drew on history, proclaiming “the very basis of western civilization, which we share with the other nations bordering the North Atlantic…is the ingrained spirit of restraint and tolerance,” which stood in stark contrast to the “communist belief that coercion by force is a proper method of hastening the inevitable.” Ideologically, too, the North Atlantic Treaty was merely bringing countries together that had similar political cultures: “democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law” were all shared values. Truman, too, in a speech at the treaty’s signing, believed that the nations represented were “joined by a common heritage of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law…With our common traditions we face common problems.” Yet, clearly Truman, Acheson, and other officials were distorting the reality of this situation, as the countries that were included in the treaty were not only democracies. Italy was a state that very recently had been led by a fascist government, allying itself with the Axis powers and had subsequently been the target of an Allied invasion. Yet officials reasoned that, “From a political point of view an unattached Italy was a source of danger.” Thus, if Italy had closer relations with the West, the more control Western institutions could exert over them, and push back against communist inroads. Furthermore, this conception omitted
the painfully obvious contradiction that many of these countries still had colonial possessions, and, despite decolonization, were empires.

As Truman stated, the North Atlantic Treaty was less the creation of a new geopolitical alliance, but rather the recognition of the realities and links that bound this geographical area together. Acheson, too, justified American involvement by proclaiming that the treaty was not so much creating a new community, but rather building upon an old one. He linked countries as diverse as Canada and Portugal by minimizing the tradition of isolationism, stating that successful international institutions are “those that recognize and express underlying realities.” The North Atlantic alliance was one such reality, “based on the affinity and natural identity of interest of the North Atlantic powers.” The North Atlantic Treaty which now unites them is the product of “at least three hundred and fifty years of history.” This community, “which has spread across the continent, [and is] connected with Western Europe by common institutions and moral and ethical beliefs. Similarities of this kind are not superficial, but fundamental.” Acheson and other policymakers presented the North Atlantic Treaty as inevitable, the result of natural historical process rather than diplomatic maneuvering. Other officials linked these disparate entities based upon political realities of competing geopolitical blocs: The pact would “untie free nations whose common interests and common frontiers [that] are imperiled by aggression.” By presenting the pact as simply the alignment of “free” nations against a common threat, it deflected accusations of the Truman administration casting off traditional American beliefs in isolationism; claiming this was merely the recognition of reality made the concept more palatable. One fascinating rhetorical tool in particular that was used by Acheson when defining the alliance was to highlight the
significance of the ocean; the oceans were the ultimate symbols of U.S. isolation from the Old World for two centuries; Acheson turned this symbolism on its head, arguing that the sea is what links the United States with Europe, rather than dividing it.

Officials in advocating for the ratification of the North Atlantic used a method of historical argumentation called “counterfactual history.” Examples of this type of rhetoric can be seen in the frequent invocation of recent European affairs as both a lesson and a warning. Acheson in his speech stated that the United States has “learned our history lesson from two world wars in less than half a century.” This lesson taught the United States that “the control of Europe by a single aggressive, unfriendly power would constitute an intolerable threat to the national security of the United States.” Given the threat that an aggressive foreign power posed to the United States, Acheson used history as an example of what “lessons” America should take away from these disastrous wars as well as justification for linking the United States to the Atlantic community.

Other advocates for ratification employed counterfactual history in arguing for ratification of the Treaty; Senator Tom Connally, in a statement in the U.S. Senate said, “I am completely convinced, that if the Kaiser had known in 1914 that his ruthless attack upon Belgium and France would have led Great Britain and the United States to hurl their armed might against him, he never would have crossed the Belgian frontier.”

Lewis Gaddis has argued that counterfactual history is used to “help to establish chains of causation,” that are interesting thought experiments which can allow for decision making in the present. This was a strong rhetorical argument given the scale of destruction during the world wars, but also was a covert warning to the Soviet Union of an American

89 Excerpts from statement by Senator Tom Connally, made before the Senate of the United States on July 5, 1949, and printed from the Congressional Record of July 5, 1949, p. 8984).
military response if they decided to cross into Western Europe. President Truman in the same April 4 speech, also used counterfactual history, believing that if this document had “existed in 1914 and in 1939...I believe it would have prevented the acts of aggression which led to two world wars.”90 This form of revisionism uses history as a device to imagine different pasts; ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty would have prevented the two greatest calamities of the twentieth century, the type of historical thinking “which can stimulate the imagination” and to “envision alternative futures.”91 Truman stated that America and its allies “do not believe that there are blind tides of history which sweep men one way or the other.” Rather, history is determined by the actions of individuals who “overcome obstacles that seemed insurmountable and forces that seemed overwhelming.”92 Individuals could “determine their destiny. They can choose slavery or freedom—war or peace.”93 As a warning to what would happen if the Treaty had not been ratified, Truman believed it imperative that history not be allowed to repeat itself, drawing on the failures of the Allied powers after World War I to establish a working international order. Using the past as Truman did, “informs judgments of the past as a predictor for the future given what is happening at present.”94

Legislators and statespersons also used history to inform arguments for a new balance of power in Europe. Senator Connally believed that with Article 5 in place, it would ensure that any aggressor attacking a member of the alliance would be deterred, as

91 Neustadt, May. Thinking in Time, preface.
they would be attacking all members. Connally offered a counterfactual historical precedent involving Article 5 and Nazi Germany, saying that "if Hitler had known in 1939 that the United States and the other United Nations would have stood together against his marching millions, he never would have launched World War II."\textsuperscript{95} The North Atlantic treaty would have had a tremendous deterrent effect upon any aggressor. Connally condemned the inaction of the "free nations of the world to make clear in advance for their determination effectively to oppose aggression was in large measure responsible for the two great wars of our time."\textsuperscript{96} Connally’s repudiation of the "free nations" and the failure of international institutions like the League of Nations, and treaties like the Kellog-Briand Pact (under which signatories renounced war as a policy instrument), served as examples of why the North Atlantic Treaty was needed. No country in the North Atlantic Treaty who would "resist future aggression" would not "find itself fighting friendless and alone."\textsuperscript{97} Furthermore, the Atlantic Pact would serve as a policy tool in preventing future disastrous wars and serve as an instrument of peace and the "right of self-defense" against aggressors. Indeed, the North Atlantic Treaty was not just a European self-defense pact, rather, it was much more: "The only alternative (to the Atlantic Pact) [is] not a practical or acceptable one, [it] is uncertain, indecision, and a lack of unity on the part of the free nations of the world."\textsuperscript{98} The future, imagined without the Atlantic Pact, would thus closely resemble the past, where aggression would go unchecked and human misery would be certain. Indeed, the uncertainty of the future given the intensity of the competition with the Soviets and the specter of nuclear warfare

\textsuperscript{95} Senator Tom Connally, 8984. \\
\textsuperscript{96} ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{97} General Omar Bradley on the North Atlantic Pact, April 5, 1949, \textit{New York Times}. \\
\textsuperscript{98} Connally, 8984.
served to make the possible future even more dreadful than the world wars had been. Connally's rhetoric was similar to that of Acheson's and other policymakers were justifying the Alliance by explicitly linking it with the United Nations, and having the North Atlantic Treaty merely serve as an extension of the U.N. Having a balance of power that involved the United States in Europe was essential to prevent future wars from taking place.

Much of the rhetoric focused on the Soviet Union, both overtly and subtly, to advocate for ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty. Truman in his speech at the signing of the treaty argued that the virtues of the United States could be found in its perusal of creating unity; unity "borne out by our experience...in creating one nation out of the variety of our continental resources and the peoples of many lands." The American project of creating unity out of diversity stood in stark contrast to the "method of the police state," the Soviet Union, "which attempts to achieve unity by imposing the same beliefs and the same rule of force on everyone." Acheson, on the same occasion, used rhetoric in a masterful way, saying the word "communism" itself only once. Yet, it was clear in his language to whom he was referring. At one point he stated, "allegations that aggressive designs lie behind this country's signature of the Atlantic Pact": and that an "aggressor" wanted to keep Western countries divided. "The aggressor" that Acheson referred to is intentionally vague; it created an ambiguous enemy based upon fear, which supplanted the psychological energy that had been trained on the Nazis. In doing so, Acheson used the ideologically charged political atmosphere of postwar America to meet

---

his and other policymakers' goals, joining the Soviet specter with that of the Nazis, continuing the ideological component of U.S. involvement in World War II.

In terms of American obligation to the North Atlantic Treaty, officials generally downplayed the responsibility of the United States, focusing instead on how an arrangement in this manner was beneficial to the United States in its fight against communism. In fact, American commitment was purposefully opaque. David Calleo, an American foreign policy scholar notes, that ambiguity has been the heritage of the North Atlantic Treaty and its subsequent iterations since its inception. Policymakers, politicians, journalists, both European and American, have found in the North Atlantic Treaty whatever “they were looking for...NATO’s ambiguity was heightened by the way it was sold to the American public.”100 Furthermore, despite the language of politicians and officials having focused on “peace,” there is no doubt that much of the thinking behind the Alliance was based in realpolitik. To claim the alliance was preordained is a fantasy, this was a new grouping based on calculations on the part of the West; the countries and cultures ignored that these countries had constantly been at war with one another for hundreds of years. To link disparate countries morally and culturally was easier and made for better rhetoric than simply stating the obvious: that certain countries were strategically important in the control of Europe. For instance, Acheson had to contend with the strategic importance of Portugal and that as the possessor of the Azores, its contribution to western defense was obvious. This highlighted the paradigm of realist foreign policy being used to counter the power of the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

NATO today is the world’s foremost military alliance; it has endured since its inception, weathering the Korean War, which was a vast departure from its original intention, and set the stage for how the organization would behave in the international arena. Its membership, too, has radically expanded; after the Berlin Wall fell and the collapse of the Soviet Union, former Warsaw Pact members moved to join the alliance, and NATO’s eastward expansion seemed to have no limit. Given events today, it is important we have an understanding of the original conception of NATO and the charged political environment in which it was founded. Much of the world lay in ruins, Europe had been devastated, and the world needed a new order to prevent another global conflict.

Despite a widely held belief that different political arrangements were needed on the European continent, there were differing opinions on how to do so and what such an arrangement would look like. Eventually, it was Ernest Bevin, Britain’s Foreign Minister, who initiated conversations and initiated the idea of Western unity. Bevin believed that bilateral pacts stretching across Western Europe would be the answer to Western unity. However, to American policymakers, Western unity was a vexing question. American officials were fixated on economic cooperation and unity first and foremost, which would cajole European nations into economic circumstances whereby political and military unity were feasible to attain. This was articulated by the State Department’s foremost policymaker, George Kennan, who devised containment. In the vein of containment, Kennan conceived the Marshall Plan, which sought to promote sufficient economic recovery and unity among European countries, with the intention of developing strong enough economies, which would enable political, military, and social cohesion. This was
not solely altruistic on the part of American policymakers; a strong, vibrant Europe would be an enormous asset in stopping the perceived spread of communism taking hold in Western Europe.

However, it soon became clear that economic recovery would not be enough. Western European countries had just been ravaged and occupied by Nazi Germany. There was understandable angst among Western European countries about a resurgent Germany, but also the threat of an imperial Soviet Union that had soldiers stationed in East Germany. European leaders thus sought security from the only ally who could provide it: the United States. Despite the United States' far more internationalist attitude due to World War II, it did not envision a security guarantee with its European allies. Indeed, it was events that changed policymakers' realization that if European economic recovery were to be achieved, it would require some sort of security guarantee. American policymakers encouraged the formation of the Brussels Pact, a formal, multilateral security guarantee among the Western European powers. This pact, in essence, showed that European leaders were taking American encouragement of self-help seriously, but also made apparent that without U.S. involvement, Europe would be perennially insecure.

American security thought drew upon the recent success of the Rio Treaty, the origins of which could be drawn to the Monroe Doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine was a unilateral, isolationist, decree that declared the Western Hemisphere an area of security interest for the United States, and declared that European powers could not establish new colonies in Central and South America. In conjunction with the later-issued “Olney Corollary,” and the “Roosevelt Corollary,” the Monroe Doctrine was revised in the twentieth century to address the realities of America's role in the world. Advocates for a
North Atlantic Treaty believed that by simply extending the sphere of interest from the Western Hemisphere to include Western Europe, it would simply be a continuation of a line of American foreign policy thought. Given the expansion of America’s security interests as well as the development of airpower, advocates believed that the oceans, once the symbol of America’s protection, its bastion of protection from the corruption of the Old World, were no longer relevant. As shown by Pearl Harbor, enemies could attack U.S. soil; this anxiety was further heightened by Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons. Other isolationist doctrines were drawn upon to justify the expansion of the United States’ security interests; as we have seen officials and journalists argued that Washington’s Farewell Address would have been revised to meet the current realities of the postwar world. This revision of isolationist doctrines and sentiments was due to the internationalist mood of the public in the United States, the willingness of America to come into a leadership role, and American interests expanding. American officials and figures thus justified American involvement abroad by claiming that internationalism was in fact inherent in the traditions of American foreign policy, that American engagement in Europe was simply the expansion of existing doctrine, or that those, like Washington, would change their sentiment given the scale of destruction in postwar Europe.

Talks among European and American officials had several issues to contend with; specifically, Acheson had to contend with crafting an alliance that would meet strategic and legal justifications. Strategically, Acheson and the foreign policy establishment wanted an expanded alliance that would account for geopolitical advantages, like the inclusion of Italy and perhaps one day Spain, even though the inclusion of fascist regimes went against the language and idea of the alliance. Acheson also had to contend
with what guarantees the alliance would provide; drawing heavily on the language of the Rio Treaty, specific clauses in the alliance made it clear that the United States reserved the right to decide when intervention was necessary. The purpose of the alliance also had to be considered; despite the new thinking and alignment of states, it was also clear that members of the alliance, like the British and the Americans, were conceptualizing the alliance as a return to a balance-of-power system.

Finally, the speeches of policymakers and public officials regarding an Atlantic pact and their use of history in explaining why the North Atlantic Treaty was necessary. Much of the reasoning was obvious: that a pact in this manner would have prevented the World Wars; this use of history is known as "counterfactual history;" this argumentative device allowed Truman, Acheson, and others, to dispel with the tradition of avoiding entangling alliances in Europe, to have disdain for the Old World corruption, and to send the United States down a very different and consequential path. However, perhaps the more interesting rhetoric came when officials justified American involvement in the North Atlantic Treaty as essentially foreordained. The links of democracy, liberty, equality, were all inherent in the political cultures of these countries, providing a natural basis for a military alliance. Not only was it political cultures, as Acheson said, it was also the sea which linked these countries together; this was a masterfully subtle way of turning the symbols of American isolation into geographical links between the North Atlantic Countries.

The reasoning behind policymakers' advocacy for the Atlantic Alliance was also deeply rooted in anticomunist rhetoric; after World War II, Acheson and others used ingrained fears in the American public of Nazi infiltration, and harnessed these feelings
towards the Soviet Union. This heightened the Cold War stakes; Acheson in particular conveyed a menacing, ambiguous, and amorphous threat that knew no borders, and was infiltrating the government at the highest levels. However, concurrently, officials also realized the seriousness of guaranteeing security to Europe, and the enormous rupture that it might entail if the Soviet Union felt that its security were threatened. Thus, they were careful to label the North Atlantic pact as an instrument of peace, rather than a tool of war, seeking to belay the diplomatic and military damage that such a pact might incur. One government official even lamented that he wished that the people behind the Iron Curtain were able to read the Treaty, to realize its peaceful intentions. Yet, clearly American strategists were thinking of the alliance in terms of realpolitik, and how to leverage American strength in Europe to both rebuild Europe, but also to confront the Soviet Union.

The importance of the North Atlantic Alliance, and now NATO, cannot be overstated; Kaplan believed that this change in American foreign policy indicated a second American Revolution. While this claim is subject to debate, it is undoubtedly true that American involvement in Europe after the Second World War was an enormous achievement, with implications that are still deeply relevant today. The North Atlantic Treaty soon became the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, implementing institutional components to the original treaty. This was a precursor to the eventual stationing of soldiers under NATO auspices in Germany, and the involvement of NATO troops in the Korean War. The use of history in the initial founding of the North Atlantic Treaty proved to be the guide for policymakers, much as it is today. Whether they were ill-conceived or not is difficult to answer; history is oftentimes used incorrectly in policymaking, drawing
upon the wrong history, or only having a basic understanding of extremely complex events. However, given the relative success that the United States enjoyed in the Cold War, warts and all, it is perhaps too early to tell whether or not NATO has been a success. John F. Kennedy once said that, “History is a relentless master. It has no present, only the past rushing into the future. To try to hold fast is to be swept aside.” History served as a master in the creation of NATO; it offered myths, lessons, possible futures, basis for action, and the hope to create a new world that could end the forces of misery that defined the twentieth century. As in Kennedy’s time, we are in a time of “maximum danger,” and an understanding of history is perhaps now more important than ever.
Secondary Sources:


Hudson, Daryl J. "Vandenberg Reconsidered: Senate Resolution 239 and American Foreign Policy." *Diplomatic History*, vol. 1, no. 1 Jan. 1977, pp. 46-63. JSTOR,


Newspaper Articles:


Policy Documents

Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th set., 446 191948): col. 383ff


Excerpts from statement by Senator Tom Connally, made before the Senate of the United States on July 5, 1949, and printed from the Congressional Record of July 5, 1949, p. 8984).
